

# S.O.S.



the Newsletter of the

## Friends of the Newport Ship



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Free to Members

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*Fig 3. A 19th Century barge during excavation from the River Usk at Tredunnoc*

# Ancient Boats & Ships in the Newport Region

The publication in SOS 8 (Spring, 2006) of Octavius Morgan's 1878 account of the 'ancient Danish vessel' found when constructing the Alexandra Dock, brought to mind that, in 1984, a fragment of this vessel held in Newport Museum was dated to approximately 950 AD. More importantly, I was also reminded that, in addition to Morgan's ship and our 15th century Newport ship, five other ancient vessels have been excavated in the Newport region (Fig.1). These five range in date from the Bronze Age Caldicot fragment of about 1800 BC (Fig.2), to the almost complete Tredunnoc boat of about 1800 AD (Fig.3). In the intervening 3,600 years there are the fragments from Goldcliff of about 1000 BC (Fig. 4), the Barland's Farm boat of about 300 AD (Fig 5), and the medieval Magor Pill boat of about 1240 AD (Fig.6). Four of these were excavated by the Glamorgan-Gwent Archeological Trust between 1987 and 1995; the Goldcliff site was excavated in 1992-4 by a team led by Dr Martin Bell of the University of Reading. Cadw was involved in the funding of the excavation, reporting and publishing of the Caldicot, Goldcliff and Magor Pill sites.

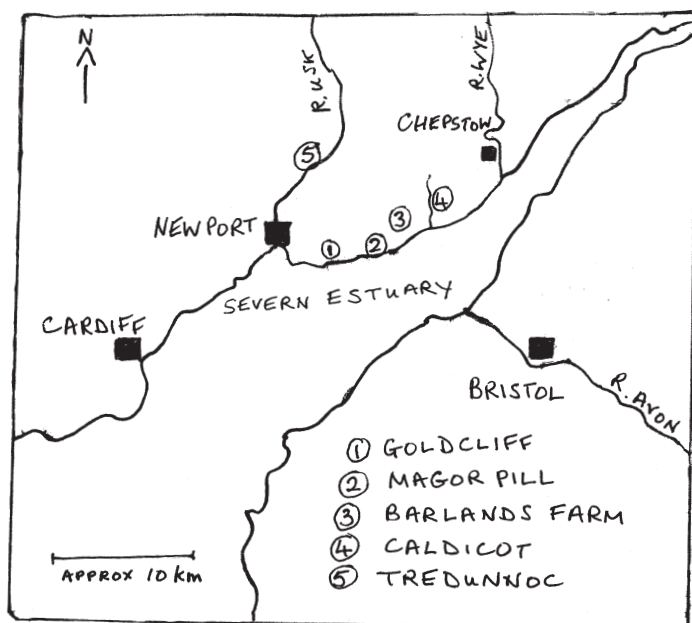


Fig 1. Sketch map showing the five boat sites.

Fig 2. The large prehistoric plank fragment during excavation at Caldicot Castle.



## FROM THE EDITORS

Many thanks to all of you who have contributed to this our 11th Newsletter. We have a fascinating article by Professor Sean McGrail on 'Ancient boats & ships in the Newport region' and what he thinks should be done with them. Other articles include an update on 'tree-ring dating on the ship', 'Did Newport have a Town Wall?' and 'The Bristol Channel'. We welcome the new team members on the Ship Project and thank Kate Hunter and other members for keeping us informed of the progress they are making in various areas. In addition we are grateful for all those who may not be ship experts - but have shown how the Newport Ship has inspired so many. We have a poem by Tessa Palmer and a photograph of a wood carving by the Czech sculptor Martina Netikova. She and her husband, Jiri, were participating in the Caerleon Arts Festival and used the Newport Ship as the basis of a wooden sculpture known as "The Spirit of the Usk" or as "The Sea Nymph" or as "The Guardian of the Ship". You can choose! By the way the Friends have been instrumental in helping Newport Museum and Art Gallery buy the maquette (a working model of the full sized sculpture).

Long may the ship be a source for your interest and activity! Bob Trett and Alan Smith  
PS Don't forget our remaining open days on 29th September 2-5 pm, 10 November 1 -4 pm.

*Jiri Netikova standing by the maquette of the*



*sculpture.*

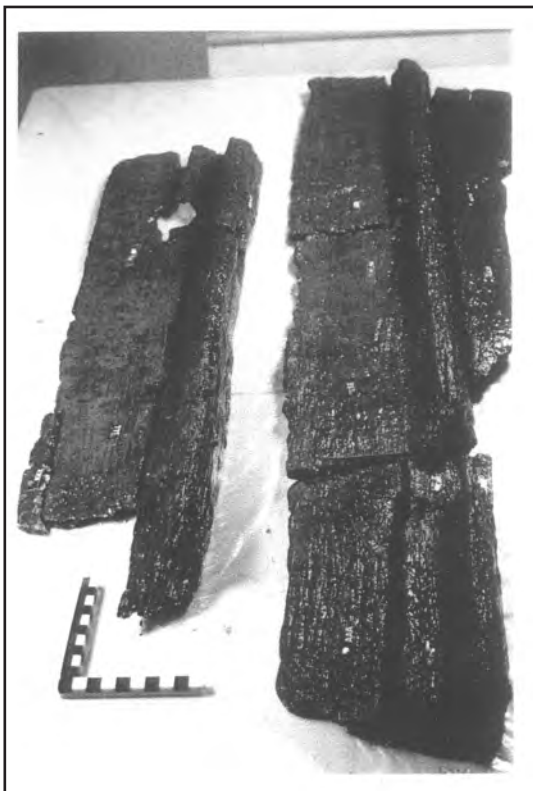
*Collections of Newport Museum and Art Gallery, South Wales.*

*Photograph: Roger Cucksey.*



Fig 5. The Barland's farm boat of 300 AD on completion of recording and before being dismantled.

Fig 4. Two plank fragments of 1000 BC from Goldcliff, near the mouth of the river Usk.



**Caldicot. (ST 488 886) 1800 BC**

A substantial plank fragment from a sewn boat was discovered in 1990 during the excavation of a waterlogged Bronze Age site to the north-east of Caldicot Castle - the site is now an artificial lake. Also found were yew withies twisted into a rope that could have been used to lash this oak plank to another one. The boat that the plank fragment came from would have been of the general size and shape of the near-contemporary Ferriby boat 1 from the Humber Estuary. A cross section of such a boat is illustrated in Figure 7, with the Caldicot plank as second side strake above the Ferriby lowest side strake and outer bottom plank. This Caldicot fragment has been conserved and is now in the care of Monmouthshire County Council Museum Services.

#### **Goldcliff (ST 366 822) 1000 BC**

Two fragments of boat planking, similar to the sewn planking of the Late-Bronze Age flat-bottomed boat from Brigg (Fig. 8) in the Humber estuary region, were excavated at Goldcliff, near the mouth of the Usk, south-east of Newport. They had been re-used to make a small platform on the foreshore.

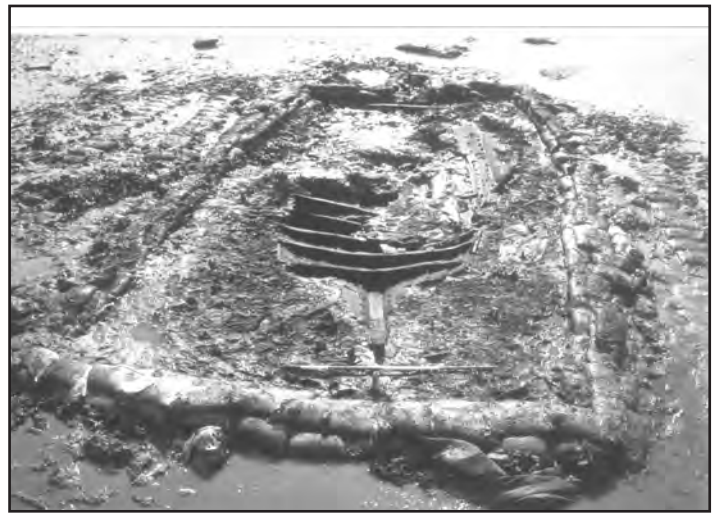
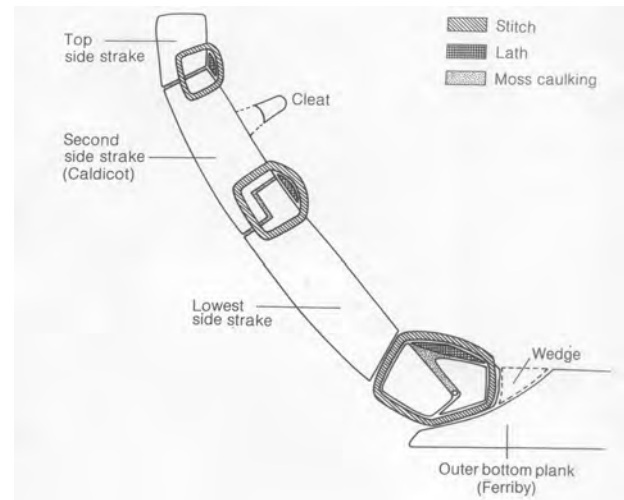


Fig 6. Looking towards the stern of the medieval boat during excavation from the foreshore at Magor Pill.

Fig 7. Composite cross section of a Bronze Age lashed plank boat - the Caldicot second side strake fastened to a Ferriby lowest side strake and outer bottom plank.



This Goldcliff planking, like that of the Brigg boat, had been fastened together by continuous rope sewing, rather than the individual lashings used in the earlier Caldicot and Ferriby boats. The Goldcliff fragments have been conserved and are now in Newport Museum.

#### **Barlands Farm. (ST 405 864) 300 AD**

This boat was excavated in 1993 from a site close to a tidal stream which, in the Roman period, flowed south into the Severn Estuary. The site is now under the Tesco distribution warehouse within the Europark, to the west of Magor and east of Llanwern Steel Works. The stem post, the plank-keel with mast-step, about half of the bottom and side planking, and much of the framing were recovered. This boat had been built in the Romano-Celtic fashion: her planks were nailed to her framing rather than to each other, and she was built framing-first. Some of her features are similar to those of the Veneti boats of south-west Brittany described by Julius Caesar in 56 BC.

The conserved remains are now in store in Newport Museum. A scale model of the original boat, as reconstructed, is shown in Figure 9. She would have measured about 11.4 x 3.2 x 0.9m, and could have carried a load of 4.6 tonnes with a draft of only 0.45m.

#### **Magor Pill. (ST 439 847) 1240 AD**

This boat was excavated in 1995 from a foreshore site at the mouth of a tidal river flowing into the Severn Estuary, south-east of Magor. Parts of her keel and stem post, a quantity of clinker

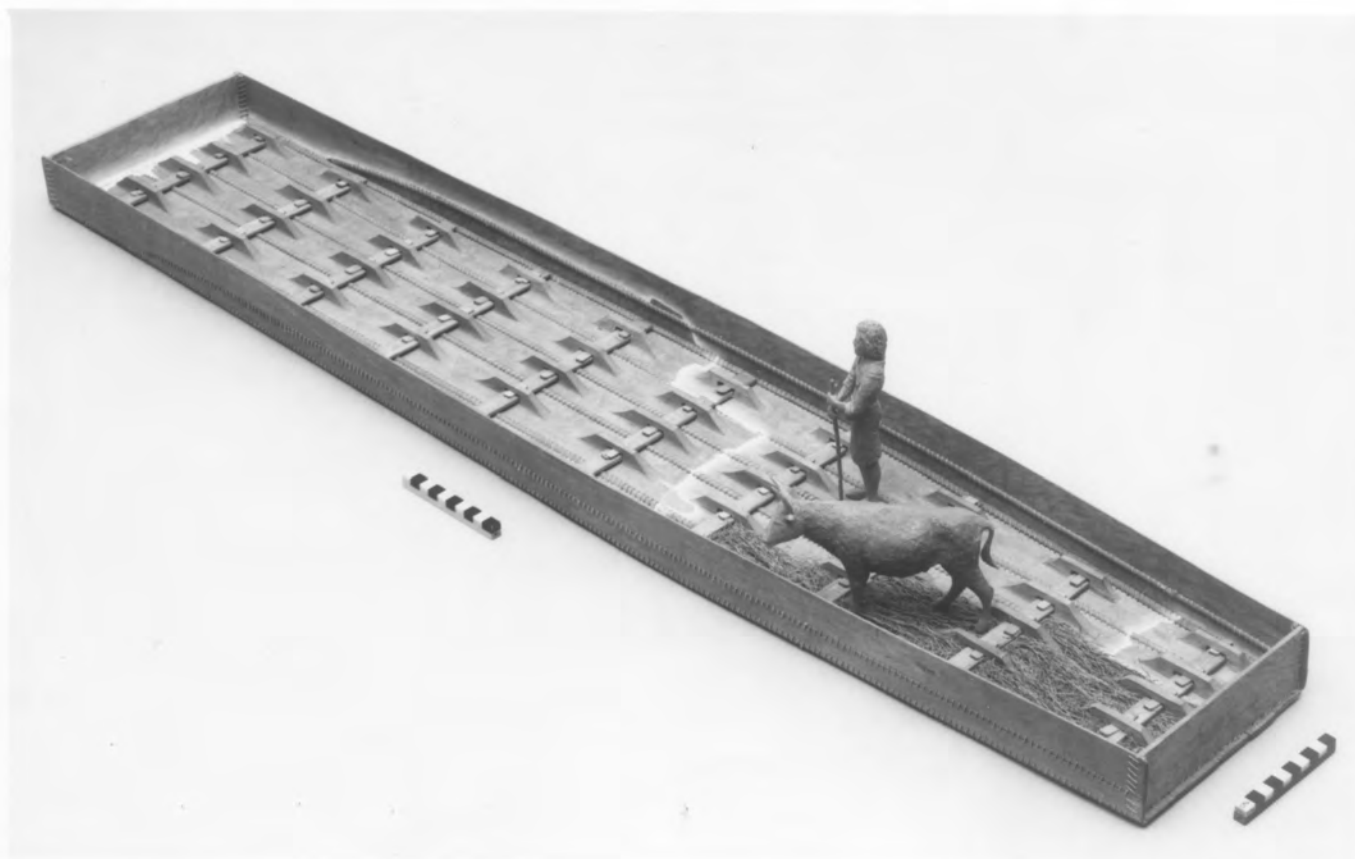


Fig 8. A scale model of the Brigg sewn plank boat - the Goldcliff fragments may have been for a similar vessel.

planking, and a number of framing timbers were recovered.

She was a sailing boat of the Nordic tradition, a development of the Viking ships of earlier centuries. She had been carrying a cargo of high-quality, Glamorgan iron ore. The remains of this boat have been conserved and are now in store at the National Museum & Galleries of Wales, Cardiff.

#### **Tredunnoc (ST387 953) 1850 AD**

This boat was found emerging from the southern bank of a meandering section of the River Usk, just beyond the extent of ordinary flood tides, one mile north of Newbridge-on-Usk. In October, 1987, after the site had been embanked and pumped dry, the area within the dam was excavated to leave the boat on a plinth, and she was recorded in scale drawings and photographs. Before the remains could be recovered, however, flood waters after torrential overnight rain forced the boat out of the river bed and deposited her downstream, from where 80 % of the remains were subsequently salvaged.

This was a double-ended canal barge measuring 19 x 2.7 x 1.15m, with a towing mast stepped in her keelson some one-third her overall length from her bow. She may have been used on the Monmouthshire canal between 1850 and 1900, bringing coal,

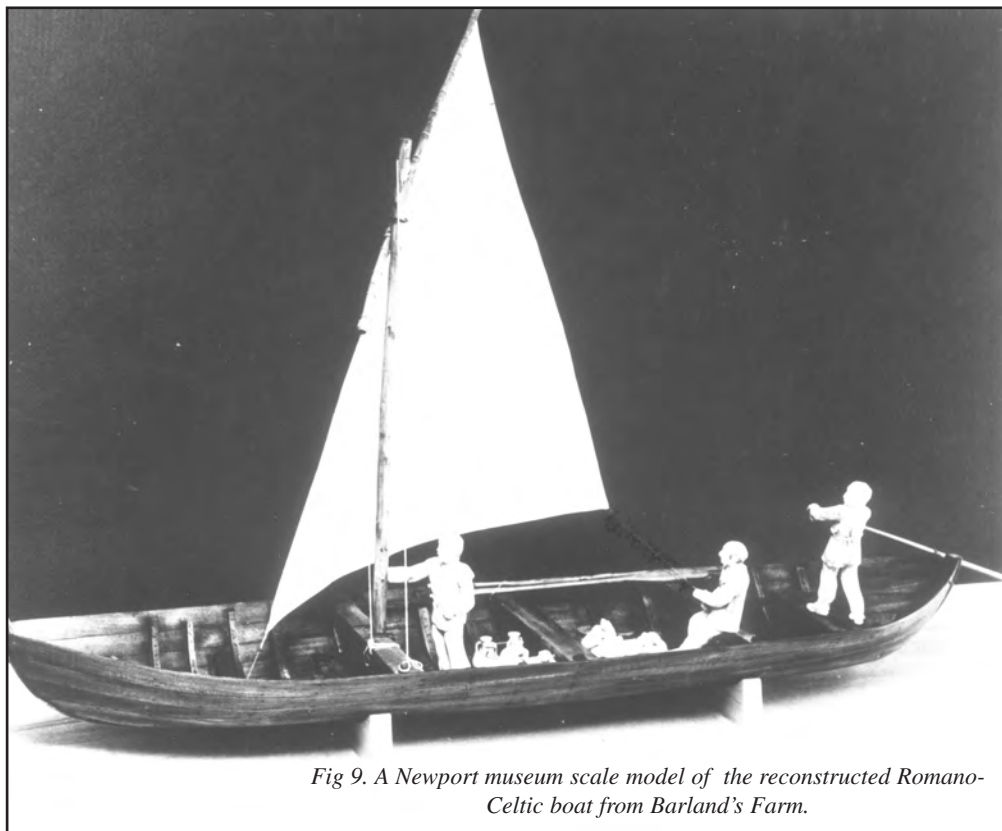


Fig 9. A Newport museum scale model of the reconstructed Romano-Celtic boat from Barland's Farm.

iron and bricks to Newport, although she appears to be a different shape from the barges known to have been used on that canal in recent times. She would have carried about 24 tonnes of this high density cargo, with a freeboard of 0.30m. and a draft of 0.85m. and could have been pulled by a single horse. At the end of her working life she appears to have been brought up the Usk

- to which the canal was connected by locks at Newport -on a spring flood tide to Tredunnoc where she was sunk as a training weir to block off a side channel from the mainstream. This enabled that channel to be filled, and the land farmed. The remains are now in store in Newport Museum.

### The Way Ahead ?

Each one of these five boats played an important part in the economic and social life of south-east Wales. Apart from the Tredunnoc canal barge, they were all capable of voyaging in the Severn estuary as far west as the islands of Flat Holm and Steep Holm, (maybe further west in settled, summer weather). The two prehistoric lashed / sewn boats, from Caldicot and Goldcliff, would have been propelled and steered by paddles; the Romano-Celtic Barland's Farm boat and the medieval Magor Pill boat would have been under sail. Each would have carried goods, animals and people within the estuary, and also along and across the tidal reaches of the several rivers that flowed into the Severn. Clearly, in their day, all five boats were important craft.

These excavations had to be undertaken either because the boat remains would otherwise have been eroded away or because commercial development of the site had been planned. From these excavations and the ensuing research we have learned an enormous amount about ancient boat building and use, and each site has been fully published. A comprehensive publication is one important outcome of every boat excavation; the other main outcome is the public display and interpretation of the remains.

But none of these five boats - all of international importance - has yet been displayed !!

It seems to me that now is the time to consider all these ancient vessels -Caldicot, Goldcliff, Barland's Farm, Magor Pill and Tredunnoc, as well as the Newport Ship. In the Newport region we have a unique collection of ancient boats and ships: there is

no other place in the world - as far as I know - with such a range of types and traditions of ancient vessel, extending over such a long timescale of almost 4,000 years. I suggest that the City of Newport should now urgently consider bringing the remains of all six vessels into one grand ship museum where the people of Newport (and, indeed, the world) can at last see them, learn about them, and thus appreciate their maritime past

Acknowledgment I am grateful to Kate Hunter, Andrew Marvell and Rick Turner for details of the present whereabouts of these vessels.

Sean McGrail

### Further Reading.

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## Dating the Newport Ship

A crucial part of the ship project has always been the use of dendrochronology (dating from tree rings).

Nigel Nayling (University of Wales Lampeter) is an expert of considerable experience in both early ship recording and in dendrochronology. Without his dating of timber from the excavation of the ship it would not have been saved. Since 2002 Nigel has been the leading advisor for the recording project on the ship timbers, and has also continued with his tree-ring sampling programme.

The main difficulty with dating most of the timbers from the ship is that they do not have similar ring sequences to timber (mostly oak) that has already been dated in Britain and Northern Europe. This is one of the reasons why it is thought the ship may have been built somewhere in South Western Europe. Unfortunately it is not yet possible to match the hull planks of the Newport Ship with any dated sequence of tree-rings. The work of creating a data base for areas where the timber may have been felled has still to be done.

However Nigel was able to report to a recent meeting of ship experts that he has measured tree rings from 41 hull planks. Although they can not be dated in terms of when the timber was either growing or felled, 31 of them are cross matching timbers

indicating that they were probably from the same source and part of the original construction of the ship.

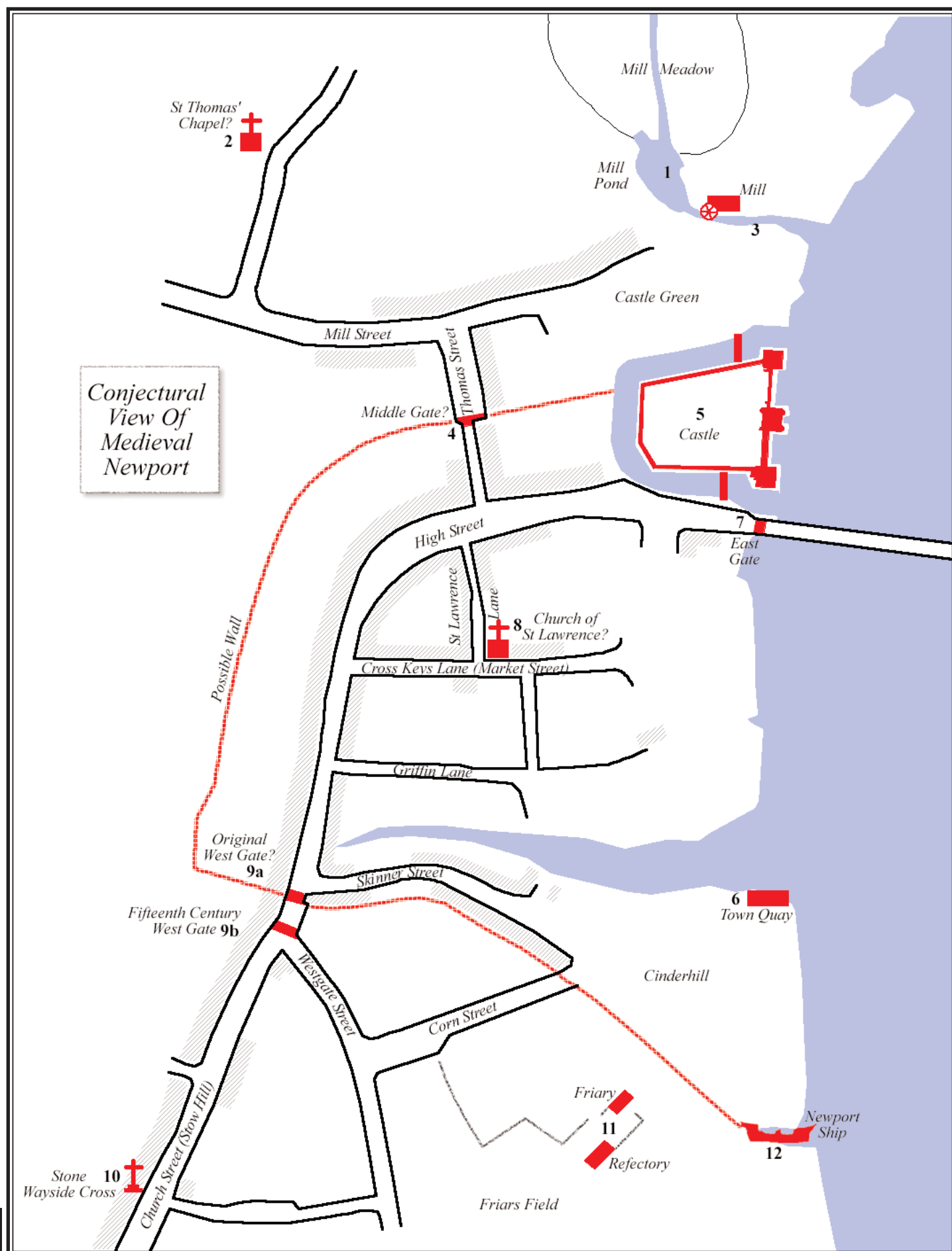
Nigel has had more success with timbers used in repairs to the ship. There are three outboard patches, fitted to correct problems such as cracks in the hull planks, which have sufficient similarities as to suggest they came from the same tree. These have rebates cut into their faces to fit over nail heads on the faces of the hull planks.

Seven other outboard patches without rebates were recorded and five were cross-matched and dated against British timber cut during or after AD 1459. This suggests the ship might have been repaired in British waters some time after AD 1459.

Most of the other dated timbers were sampled during the excavation work in 2002. These include a large "knee" (maybe intended to support an internal cross beam) that was felled in the winter of AD 1465. A "rough out" timber which could have been meant for the aborted repairs to the ship was dated to AD 1467 and a timber used as a shore under the ship was felled in spring/summer AD 1468.

Work still goes on with the dendrochronology. Hopefully before too long a matching sequence of dated timbers from the continent will be available!

# Did Newport have a Town Wall?



Historians have never agreed whether Newport ever had a town wall. The Tudor antiquarian, John Leland, visited the town in the 1530's. In his "Itinerary in Wales" he records:

*Newport is a big town where of that part where the parochie church is, stondith on a hille. The church is S. Guntle (Woolos), Olave in English.*

*There is a great stone gate by the bridge at the east end of the town, a northern the middle of the town as in the High street to passe thorough, and the third at the west end of the town : and hard without it is the parochie church. The fairest of the town is alyn one streate. The town is yn ruine. There was a house of religion by the key beneath the bridge. The castle is on the east side of the town above the bridge.*

Later in the same account he says:

*Newport is in Wentlugh (Gwynllwg) a mile and more by foot path from Caerleon, and standeth on (the river) Usk, having a pretty stronge town ; but I marked not whyther yt were waulled or no.*

No other visitor to Newport has recorded seeing a town wall, although many have claimed there was one there once. For example William Coxe in his "An Historical Tour in Monmouthshire", published in 1801, claims:

*Newport was once surrounded by walls, though no vestiges at present remain.*

However the Newport historian James Matthews in his book "Historic Newport", published in 1910, states:

*That extravagant and unwarrantable statement: "Walls of considerable strength surrounded Newport (!) in the palmy days of the Castle" ought to be dismissed from the mind of every intelligent person, as there is not an atom of evidence that can be brought forward in support of such a recital.*

Since then most historians have been circumspect on the issue, although the presence of gates into the town has never been challenged.

One of the gates mentioned by Leland is the East Gate by the bridge. An engraving of Newport Castle published in 1732, by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck, shows a stone gate with a pointed arch across the west end of a wooden bridge. William Coxe records in 1801 that:

*The pivots belonging to the hinges of the east gate, near the bridge, are discernible in the walls.*

The West Gate is still commemorated by the Westgate Hotel building on its site. The 15th century gate, which crossed the road between High Street and Stow Hill (Commercial Street not existing at that time) was demolished in 1799. It was replaced with a hotel, and this in turn was replaced by the present building in 1884. The proprietor of the Westgate Hotel at that time was Mr Samuel Dean. He recorded that:

*In excavating underneath the old (former) Westgate Hotel, preparing the foundations of the present building, the workmen came across an old spiral stairway, and at the bottom a stone porch, forming the entrance into a subterraneous passage or subway, was discovered, leading under the road (Stow Hill).*

In a 1570 survey of rents in Newport owed to the Earl of Pembroke, there is a reference to "Crooks Gate", which appears to be the West Gate, and probably refers to a prison in the gate. In 1801 William Coxe refers to the West Gate as having been used as the town prison, and that it had lately been taken down. He called it an ancient structure in the gothic

style, built of red grit stone, with a shield charged with a chevron on each side. The shield was probably from the coat of arms of the earls of Stafford, later dukes of Buckingham, who were lords of Newport from 1347 until 1521.

The Middle Gate could not be identified in Coxe's time, and it has been suggested that it stood in the middle of the High Street. However a logical position would have been in Thomas Street. This street no longer exists but used to go from alongside the old Post Office building in High Street, opposite the Kings Head Hotel, towards the present Queensway and the Railway Station. This street provided access from the north of the town.

In addition to these three gates there appear to have been other gates. Newport Castle had both a north and south gate in its curtain walls, and there are records of a Paynes Gate, which gave access to Baneswell.

Of course these gates may not have been defensive structures, and James Matthews even refers to the old West Gate as a Toll Booth. There is also the Public House called the Murenger House, in High Street, which allegedly belonged to the Murenger (an official responsible for town walls and for collecting money for their maintenance). However the Murenger House is Tudor in date, after the assumed walls were no longer effective. It is believed to have been built as a town house for Sir Charles Herbert, High Sheriff of Monmouthshire, and in the 18th century was a public house called the 'Fleur de Lys', not 'The Murenger'. It would appear that the name was introduced at a much later date than the existence of any walls. In any case in 1324 the then lord, Hugh Despenser, obtained freedom for the burgesses of a number of towns, including Newport, from payment of "murage" tax, so presumably there would have been no need for a Murenger.

However there is at least some documentary evidence to Newport having town walls. A 12th century charter by William, earl of Gloucester, refers to granting the Priory of Goldcliff property "outside the walls in Newport". In the Gwent Record Office is a deed dated 1433 in which Humphrey, earl of Stafford, granted John of Newport the right to erect and maintain a tenement "situated on the walls of the town adjacent to Gervery's Gowte". The origin of "Gervery" is probably the personal name Gervais, but "Gowte" means gate, often associated with sluice gates used in drainage.

This is little to go on, but there are many references to the Great Bailey and the Small Bailey of the town. The term 'bailey' usually refers to the external wall surrounding the outer court of a castle, or to the spaces between the circuits or walls of a castle. Yet in the case of Newport these baileys contain a number of properties, which in the 1570 survey were all paying rents to the Lord.

During the Middle Ages the town of Newport was divided by the Town Pill and it is clear from this survey that the Great Bailey was in the area between High Street and the River Usk, around Market Street, Griffin Street and part of Kingsway. The Small Bailey was to the south of the Town Pill and included the area around Skinner Street and what is now the Riverfront Theatre (where the Newport Ship was found). This would suggest that the town was once defended, but whether by a wall or just a ditch is not known.

Further clues come from looking at early property boundaries,

and in particular at a 'Trigonometrical Survey of Newport' published in the early 1850's. Newport Castle once had a curtain wall behind the surviving frontage. This was noted by William Coxe and a small part of the north curtain wall was standing until 1970 when it was removed during road widening.

However in 1885 the antiquarian Octavius Morgan produced a plan of the castle. The ward within the curtain wall was sub-rectangular. The south curtain wall was at a right angle to the main castle range alongside the river, but the north curtain wall was at an odd angle, slanting slightly to the south.

There appears to be no obvious reason for this, but by looking at the Trigonometrical Survey it is possible to line up the north curtain wall of the castle with old property boundaries, now mostly gone. These property boundaries cross Thomas Street, where the street is shown as widening out and where there is a likely position for a Middle Gate. With a few gaps the property boundaries continue west, then curve around the back of High Street and continue to the vicinity of the West Gate. Across the other side of the West Gate property boundaries to the south of Skinner Street continue in a curve until the older boundaries are obliterated by the construction of the old Monmouthshire Canal. By looking at 18th century maps of Newport it is possible to reconstruct a boundary continuing to the river, where an old pill or inlet once existed containing the Newport Medieval Ship.

There is much more that could be said for or against there being a town wall around Newport. One serious problem is that it would appear that no physical evidence of a strong stone defensive wall has ever been discovered. I would counter that with the fact that when I was Curator of Newport Museum there were

only a handful of medieval objects known from the whole of Newport - at least until the ship was discovered. Most of these consisted of two shoe boxes of late medieval or Tudor pottery from Newport Castle, some 14th century pottery from the National Provincial Bank (now NatWest) opposite the Westgate Hotel, and some Tudor or later pottery from the Murenger House. In addition there were two Medieval tiles from St Woolos (outside the town) and part of a 15th century stone cross found in the river. With the 19th and 20th century rapid expansion of Newport little was saved, and most of the Medieval town was obliterated without record.

The present stone castle is known to have been built in the 14th and 15th centuries - so a town wall, if it existed, would have been there already. What if the castle north curtain wall was originally part of the town wall, and then incorporated into the new castle? It would certainly explain the odd angle! Another possible clue is that in 1447-1448 the north curtain wall of the castle was raised by 3 feet (or according to one account by 6 feet). It is interesting to speculate whether this was the old town wall being improved in order to match the rest of the curtain wall of the castle. The west and south wall would have been newer and purpose built.

It is likely that the early defences of the town would have consisted of a timber palisade and a ditch, protected by a timber castle and there is still no definitive proof that a stone town wall did exist or when it was built. Without proper Archeological work in Newport we may never know.

Bob Trett July 2007.



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## THE NEWPORT SHIP

Five bridges has fair Newport town  
To cross betwixt the East and West  
Of muddy banks and waters brown  
To view the castle at its best

Beneath the castle treasure lay  
A ship laid there ere many a day  
From prying eyes and sailor's grasp  
The prow, the planks, the ship's stout mast  
Now saw the light of day at last

The waters' danced in bright sunlight  
And seagulls cried out their delight  
Children chased their shadows bright  
Their wonder was a joy to see  
The Newport ship was home and free

It had travelled here on ocean's wide  
Sailed by men who steered by stars  
Carrying robes of silk of golden bars  
Their journey's end on evening's tide

The burghers of our Newport Town  
Said we will honour their memory  
And keep this ship for all to see  
In this proud port of great renown

*Tessa Palmer 21.10.2006*

# *Learning and Access at the Ship*

When the Newport ship was found in 2002 I was working for English Heritage at the National Monuments Record Centre in Swindon. Many of my lunch breaks were spent discussing the latest on the ship and the issue of whether it would or wouldn't be saved. Needless to say 5 years later I never expected to be part of the team working on the project.

I joined the project in June 2006 as the Learning and Access Officer. My job has been to develop from scratch a learning and access policy for the ship, which includes work linked to schools, universities, community groups and hard to reach audiences. Although it has been challenging at times, I am in the fortunate position of being able to say that I love my job. We have had some great successes in a very short space of time. The following article aims to highlight just a few examples of the work I have so far completed.

In October 2006 I launched a school workshop for 4-11 year olds. The workshop is based around the theme of ship detectives and involves the children taking part in a several curriculum based activities. The workshop concludes with the children dressing up in costume and taking part in role play. We have visited over 20 Newport Primary schools and have delivered 55 one hour workshops. A week of storytelling based around the Newport ship was delivered to five local schools during March and a week of Medieval dance and music is taking place in July.

The first school visited the ship centre in March and there have been many more since. The visits have been designed to be as interactive as possible. The children experience the project first hand. As well as touring the centre to view the ship and to meet the archaeologists the children also take part in a number of activities, including an excavation. Amazingly I have already worked with 3,000 primary school children. Due to the success of the work we have employed Jane Mcleod as a part-time Learning Facilitator to help meet demand. New workshops and activities for Early Years, Primary and Secondary school children will be launched in September.

The project aims to be as inclusive as possible and works with groups or individuals often excluded from projects of this nature. In May I employed a graffiti artist from Cardiff to work with a group of teenagers from Nacro. The group produced a large graffiti mural based around the theme of Newport and identity. I am pleased to say they included a nice big image of the ship in their work and the mural can be viewed at the ship centre on Open Days until it is moved to the museum to form part of an exhibition to be held during October and November. We are planning to do more of this type of work in the very near future and are just arranging groups to work with.

Towards the end of 2006 a volunteer programme was established for the project and so far has been incredibly successful. We have

now worked with over 35 volunteers. These have included secondary school, college and University students and individuals who are either retired, seeking asylum, homeless, have mental health issues or those with specific learning needs. The volunteers have taken part in many aspects of the project from cleaning the ship timbers, working on related databases and also helping out with open days. The excellent work achieved by our volunteers has benefited both the development of the individuals and the project as a whole. The programme goes from strength to strength.

During the last few months I have slowly been recording people's memories and stories linked to the ship project. I have done this through short interviews. These include people who have stories linked to the discovery of the ship to those who have undertaken voluntary work with the project. I will use these interviews in a number of ways, including putting them on our website for others to read and also some of them will form part of a forthcoming exhibition. If you have a story to tell I would love to listen!

If you would like further information on any of my work or if you have ideas for future work, would like to book group tours, lectures or any of our education workshops and activities then please get in touch. You can contact me on 01633 215708 or alternatively email me at: [neil.stevenson@newport.gov.uk](mailto:neil.stevenson@newport.gov.uk)

Neil Stevenson



*Visitors excavating 'archaeological finds'*

# Conservation Assessment

In order to design an appropriate conservation strategy for the Newport Ship, a condition assessment was undertaken at the Ship Centre over a 5 day period in March 2007. The work was undertaken by Ian Ranter and Steve Alien from York Archeological Trust with the assistance of Dr Paola Raima, University of Bournemouth. Further samples were processed in the conservation laboratory at York Archeological Trust.

The assessment aimed at identifying the level of preservation of the ship timbers. It employed a number of standard techniques used for the assessment of waterlogged wood, including measuring the water content and level of iron and sulphur in the tim-

bers and the density of the wood.

The report concludes that there is little physical damage to the timbers and the physical preservation appears to be better than that observed with other vessels including the Barland's Farm and Magor Pill vessels. The hull planking is in an excellent condition and has undergone little decay. The good condition may be explained by the tar on the planking, which will have acted as an effective preservative. The frames have undergone variable degrees of decay while the beech keel and the struts sitting underneath the ship have undergone the most severe level of decay.

The ship team has recently completed the digital recording of the ceiling planking, stringers and the mast step/keelson. The team is currently digitising the large number of loose timbers found inside and around the vessel.



## Meet the new ship team members

My name is Christina Jolliffe, I am 24 years old and from Cardiff. I received a II. 1 in BA Ancient History and Archaeology from the University of Birmingham where I am also part way through studying for an MSc in Environmental Archaeology. In my spare time I like to spend on outdoor activities such as hiking and climbing and I regularly enjoy live music events. Before I came to work on the Newport Medieval Ship Project I was working as a lab and field assistant for Birmingham Archaeo-Environmental and Birmingham Archaeology where I gained good experience of working with environmental samples which has aided my own interest in reconstructing past environments.

My name is Stuart Churchley I am 26 years old and from Central Scotland. I recently graduated from Bournemouth University with a Bsc Honours in Marine Archaeology which provided me with a broad knowledge of maritime history and varied practical experience. Outside of work I enjoy sports diving, fishing and swimming (anything to do with water really). My main field of interest concerns post-medieval ship construction; however since joining the project I have begun to greatly appreciate medieval ships and their cultural significance.



*Stuart Churchley*

My name is Rosie Edis, I am 21 years old and from Taunton, Somerset. I graduated from University of Wales Lampeter with a BA in Archaeology in 2007. In my spare time I enjoy swimming, travelling and reading and have also been active in the Scouts for a number of years.

# Shipwright tools

As some of you are aware, we have now received the tools from the blacksmith, Hector Cole, though they are still waiting to have the handles fitted. However, on the open day on July 14th, Damian Goodburn, the ancient woodworking specialist, and I will discuss the appropriate handles for the tools which he will craft to our specifications. The sooner this is done the better as we are all anxious to try them out.

The tools that we have are a "T" axe, on which, as the name describes, the axe head forms the shape of a "T" and is mainly a finishing axe; a felling axe, the medieval shipwright's multi-purpose tool; an adze, which is best described as having a axe head at a 90° angle to the handle and is also a finishing tool; a medieval hammer, a drawing knife, sometimes mistakenly called a spoke shaver, used to create the bevelled edges of the lands and tapered ends of the scarf joints; two sizes of chisels; small and large spoon augers for the nail and treenail holes, and a pair of 12" dividers.

A second medieval shipwright's axe complete with handle has since been purchased from Hector as well. Along side the tools we have 50 clinker nails and roves, and to compliment this we have a rove strip and a series of nails in the different stages of production that illustrates the various stages of their production. The tool collection is a representation of the tools used by the



medieval shipwrights and at present does not contain all the tools available to medieval trade. For example, we have evidence on the stringers and ceiling planks that they were converted using a saw. Furthermore, we have tools that leave no or little direct evidence on the timbers, such as the draw knife,

dividers, and the hammer. However, the length of the blades on the axes and adze are taken directly from complete tool marks recovered from the timbers. The use of the adze on the ship, though likely, remains questionable. The only evidence observed which may represent an adze is a tool mark in the limber hole of a floor timber.

This is a small niche in which it would be impossible to swing an axe.

Through obtaining an average measurement for the diameter of the treenail holes we were able to determine an approximate diameter for the spoon auger. The method of retrieving the size of the smaller spoon auger, however, was a little less accurate. As the holes left behind by the iron nails were square we could not take measurements of the diameter. As the function of the spoon auger is to make a pilot hole for the nail we could only assume that the auger was slightly smaller than the hole left by the nails.

We have recently acquired a second hand display case from the museum in which to display the tools. It requires some work to convert the case to suit our needs, however, once finished and with the memorial plaque and the tools displayed inside it will look really good and become a welcomed and valued addition to the ever growing exhibition at the ship centre.

We have not yet spent all the money the 'Friends of the Newport Ship' have donated so keep an eye out on the tool exhibition as it will inevitably change as time goes on.

Matthew Simmonds Project Officer Newport Medieval Ship



*Damian Goodburn at work*



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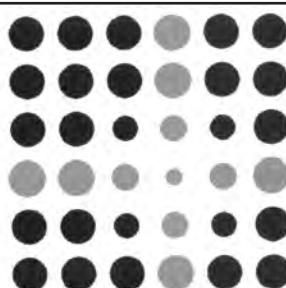
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## ***CHRISTMAS MEAL - NOVEMBER 30th***

This year the meal will be held at the magnificent Caldicot Castle - a four course mediaeval meal served with wine, mead and accompanied by traditional music.

The revelry will start at 7p.m when you will be welcome to have a few drinks at the pay bar. The evening's entertainment begins at 8p.m when our party will be introduced to the Baron and Baroness who will escort us to the Great Hall. (This will be by a spiral staircase and there is no other way of entering the Great Hall. Unfortunately this means that there is no provision for those reliant upon a wheel chair or with mobility problems. For those who would be able to use the staircase with assistance please name a person in the party who will be able to offer this support when you make your booking.)

The four courses of the meal are enough to tickle anyone's taste buds - piping hot Castle chicken and leek broth followed by succulent Savoury lamb ribs in a delicious sauce. Then there is a generous serving of sweet chicken, potatoes and salad, finishing with a glorious sponge cake oozing with raspberry jam and drizzled with lashings of custard and cream. How could anyone resist! There is also a vegetarian option - please state this is your preference when making your booking.

After a superb meal, music and jollity, the evening is expected to end at 10:30. You are welcome to stay at the castle and use the pay bar until it closes at 11:45 or, of course, make your way home with a full tum and many happy memories of a wonderful evening.

The cost per head for this Christmas treat is £38 and is, unfortunately, non refundable. Please make cheques payable to the Friends of the Newport Ship and send to Rosi Hollister at our usual address (found on the front page of this newsletter.)

This will be a most popular event so please secure your place early - it is truly an unforgettable experience - don't miss your chance! Rosi Hollister.

## ***The Bristol Channel***

She is mean and sly, unpredictable and unforgiving, never turn your back on her and never take her for granted. I am of course referring to The Bristol Channel described as one of the most inhospitable places on earth. The Bristol Channel runs from approximately Chepstow to a point near Lundy Island where it opens out to the full fury of the Atlantic Ocean. The Channel bed is littered with thousands of shipwrecks many of which are centuries old. All shapes and sizes even a few German U-boats the Channel is not fussy and will take any unsuspected vessel. But, in spite of all that, for thousands of years man has made a living on the Channel. Ships belonging to the Herbert's of St. Julians plied the Channel and Atlantic to Continental ports. We know they carried a cargo of wine, wool and skins, and that one of their vessels the Gabriel sank off Ireland in a storm and it is possible that Newport's medieval ship could have belonged to the Herbert's and that she succumbed to one of the Channel's many tantrums.

By 1800 a new stone bridge built at Newport restricted large vessels reaching the port of Caerleon. In about 1842 the old town dock (known as the Town Dock) at Newport was well under way and opened in 1843. The Bristol Channel brought great wealth to Newport, Cardiff, Barry and other South Wales ports with the shipment of iron and coal. One of the earliest cargo carriers on a daily basis was Captain Walter Pockett of Swansea who started operations with the Smack Elizabeth in 1840, on summer weekends and Bank Holidays would carry passengers to the holiday resorts of Weston and Ilfracombe. That business ceased in the early 1920s. In February 1860 the former Clyde Steamer Ruby began plying between Burnham and Cardiff and was joined shortly after by the Prince of Wales but the service ceased in September 1860 after less than 12 months. In 1866 the steamer Joseph Hazel bearing the name of its owner, in company with the Prince of Wales started to ply between Cardiff Weston and Ilfracombe. Trade on the Bristol Channel was becoming very competitive. Though passenger traffic was already limited from Newport and other South Wales ports the golden age of the Paddle Steamers as we remember them was about to begin.

Captain William Rowe of the 110 Ton steamer the Welsh Prince of Newport was a well-known figure on the Bristol Channel.



### ***The Welsh Prince***

He had a habit of making things look pretty difficult even a simple job like casting off a rope. He was centre stage and his audience was the passengers. But on September the 22nd 1884 things went very wrong for him. They left Bristol with 42 passengers for a pleasure trip to Weston, the day trippers were to be back on board by six o'clock. As she was in the process of casting off under the eagle eyes of a large number of holidaymakers the last mooring rope wound itself around the propeller. In a heavy wind the small vessel was driven on to Sand Bay where the crew tried in vain to free the propeller. Captain Rowe dropped anchor as the boat was quite near to the shore and raised distress signals this brought out the lifeboat the William James Holt, the Weston lifeboat. It was launched from the Pier. The Welsh Prince at this time was dragging her anchors and frightened passengers had to be restrained from jumping into the sea. Within 15 minutes the lifeboat had reached the vessel and 20 passengers were taken off but not without some difficulty followed by a return journey by the lifeboat to take off the remaining passengers. All passengers were saved without injury. The crew remained on board and as the tide receded and left the vessel high and dry they proceeded to disengage the rope around the propeller. The Welsh Prince was refloated on the following tide and continued sailing the Channel until about 1930 when she was scrapped at John Cashmore's. The ship's bell of the Welsh Prince is now in the Newport Museum. Captain William Rowe is buried at Holy Trinity Christchurch.

Alan Smith