

# The Trinity of Newport & A Voyage to Compostela

By Bob Trett

There is little information about Newport shipping in the fifteenth century because at that time Newport was not a customs port. There are few surviving records relating to local and coastal trade in south Wales, but overseas trade in the area of the Severn was dominated by Bristol where many customs accounts still exist.

So it is interesting to find a number of records relating to a Newport ship called *The Trinity* that was sailing and trading at the same time that our Newport Ship must have been also sailing. The first reference that I have which may relate to *The Trinity* is in 1454. The receiver's accounts for the Lordship of Newport are a record of the income received and expenditure incurred relating to lordship. They were made by the receiver, the local agent of the lord. In 1454 the lord was the duke of Buckingham, Humphrey Stafford, and his receiver was William Kemeys. The accounts state that 3 shillings and 4 pence were paid "to a shipman by way of reward for his coming from Bristol to Newport with Morgan ap Jankyn ap Philip and William Kemeys for a carvel to be made". Morgan ap Jenkyn ap Philip became receiver in 1456, so it is possible he was deputy receiver in 1454.

This would suggest that agents for the duke of Buckingham were involved in the building of a ship in Newport, but this was not the Newport Ship that was discovered in 2002. The dates show that the ship mentioned in the receiver's accounts would have been built a few years after the Newport Ship and that it was of carvel not clinker construction. It also shows that it was necessary to obtain the services of a Bristol shipman to provide the necessary expertise to construct the ship. However this is positive proof that there was a plan to build at least one major ship in Newport at that time.

The first mention of a Newport ship with the name *The Trinity* is on the 6th March 1460 when Henry VI granted a letter of safe conduct for it to trade overseas. The owner of the ship is given as 'Morgan ap Jenkyn ap Philippi' and the master as 'Johannis Lloid'. The safe conduct, with the authority of the king, forbid anyone from molesting the ship or interfering with its crew and cargo, and would have been a necessary precaution in those troubled times. The owner would have had to pay for the safe conduct and its terms stipulated that it lasted for one year.

The customs accounts for Bristol for the 20th April 1461 have another reference to *The Trinity* with a master called 'John Thloyde'. They record that it sailed from Bristol to Ireland with a cargo of 'cloth without grain'. This would mean undyed cloth, with four shippers owning the cargo, Robert Lovet, Elias Benet, William Spencer and John Hawkes.

There is a third reference to *The Trinity*. On the 3rd May 1462 the new king, Edward IV, granted a licence to 'Morgan ap Jenkin ap Philip', the possessor of a ship called *La Trinite* of Newport in Wales of 40 tons burden, for him or his successors or his agents to carry 300 pilgrims from the Port of Bristol to St. James of Compostela in Spain without fear of interference. 300 pilgrims appears a lot for one voyage and it may be that more than one voyage was involved. Other Bristol ships are recorded as having taken four days for the crossing.

Pilgrimage was of huge importance in the late medieval period. It was the inspiration for Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* and people of all classes took part in pilgrimages to a multitude of holy shrines, in Britain and Europe and as far away as Jerusalem.

In England the most popular and important shrine was the tomb of Thomas a Beckett at Canterbury, but often pilgrims would travel from one shrine to another as an act of pious faith or to receive



The voyage from Bristol for pilgrims going to Compostela - map by Anne Leaver

blessings or guidance from different saints.

One of the most important shrines overseas was that of St James the Great at Santiago de Compostela in Spain. From the tenth century onwards Compostela became an increasingly popular destination. It was the reputed burial place of St James and his shrine in the cathedral still attracts many thousands of pilgrims.

The scallop shell has long been associated with the shrine of St James and many pilgrims would have taken shells back with them as a token of their pilgrimage. By the late middle ages many lead hat badges and other souvenirs, including small lead flasks containing holy water and called ampullas, were being sold to pilgrims no doubt including the passengers of *The Trinity*. Many badges and other lead souvenirs have been discovered and often these were in the shape of a scallop shell. Others had emblems relating to other shrines. One ampulla found in King's Lynn depicts a ship possibly used by pilgrims.

Bristol was a centre for ships taking pilgrims to Spain to visit Compostela and *The Trinity* was one of many ships involved with this. But a four day voyage could have been hard for the pilgrims involved. A poem by Geoffrey Chaucer describes the voyage to Compostela and in particular the problem of sleeping next to the bilge pumps.

*"For when that we shall go to bedde,  
The pump was nygh oure beddes hede:  
A man were as good to be dede  
As smell therof the stynk."*

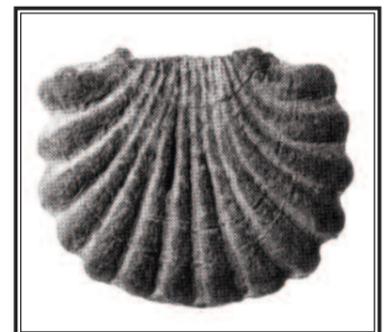
I am grateful to the following for providing me with information for this note. Dr Chris Phillpot for the reference to the receivers account 1454/5 in Stafford Record Office (ref. D641/1/2/22) and to Dr Margaret Condon and the Bristol University Cabot Project for the reference to the licence to convey pilgrims to St James of Compostela in 1462 in the National Archives (ref. PRO C76/146m.15). Tony Hopkins of Gwent Archives translated the medieval Latin. Other references can be found in *The Great Red Book of Bristol Part II*, edited by E.W.W. Veale for Bristol Record Society 1938, and also in *The Overseas Trade of Bristol* edited by E.M. Carus Wilson in 1937. *A Voyage to Compostella* by Geoffrey Chaucer is published by the Early English Text Society vol. 25 1867.

# S.O.S.

News from the  
**Friends of the Newport Ship**



- Clockwise from left:**
- St James of Compostela - drawing by Anne Leaver based on an early woodcut
  - Lead ampulla (flask) depicting a scallop shell
  - Lead ampulla in the form of a pilgrim ship
  - Part of a lead badge or attachment in the form of a scallop shell



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Free to Members

The views given in this newsletter are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Friends as an organisation.

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## The Newport Ship:

L.O.A. (between posts): 28.6 m

Length Extreme: 35.6 m

Beam: 8.9 m

Deadweight: 131,502 kg

Ballast Weight: 73,875 kg

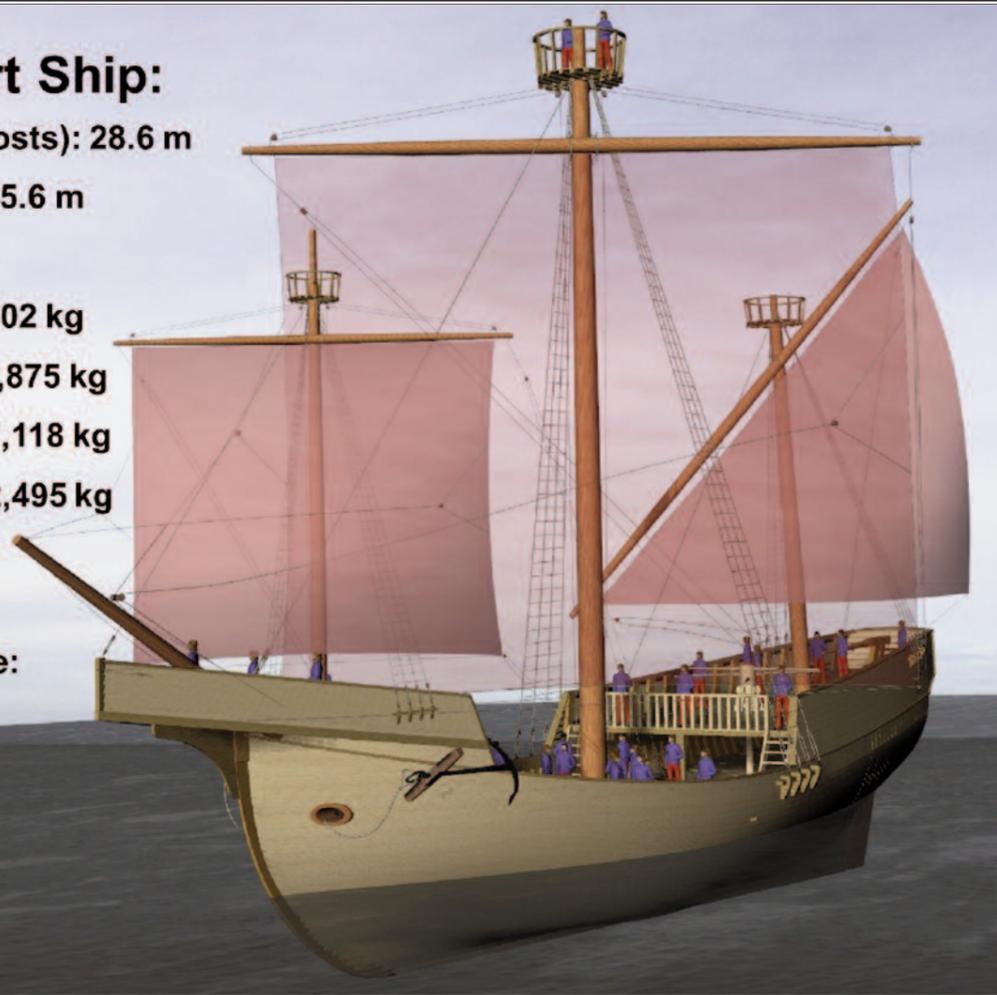
Cargo Weight: 187,118 kg

Displacement: 392,495 kg

Draught: 3.8 m

Freeboard: 2.5 m

Weight to Immerse:  
1789 kgf/cm



The Newport Ship Illustration by Pat Tanner

## Newport Ship Update

by Toby Jones

The past year has seen significant advances in the conservation and archaeological research of the Newport Ship, as well as increases in public outreach efforts and public open days. Our latest open day, on 16th August 2014, saw 308 people visit the ship centre!

Several batches of timbers have been freeze-dried, with good results. The ship's keel and mast partner were recently completed and on display during the summer open days. Approximately one quarter of the ship timber assemblage has now been dried. All of the small finds and other artefacts have also been conserved and packaged or placed on display at the ship centre or Newport Museum.

As many of you will be aware, the lease is coming to an end on the current ship centre, and efforts are being made to procure another building to house the ship project. Newport City Council and Welsh Government are working together to secure a new site. Packing-up in preparation for the impending move is currently underway, with many Friends of the Ship helping box up items in the ship centre. We hope to be settled into new premises later in the autumn. The freeze drier is being moved up to York, where York Archaeology Trust will continue the conservation

work. Wet timbers will be periodically transported up to York on lorries, with dried timbers being returned to Newport for storage and eventual re-assembly and display!

New discoveries continue to be made, with our plant expert, Wendy Carruthers, recently revealing that the remains of Portuguese Crowberries (*Corema album*) have been found in the environmental samples recovered during the excavation. One more trading link to Iberia!

While much of our recent focus has been preparing the movement of the ship centre, research and publication avenues are still being pursued. Two major articles about the ship have been published in hard copy in the International Journal of Nautical Archaeology (copies are available from the Nautical Archaeology Society ([nas@nauticalarchaeologysociety.org](mailto:nas@nauticalarchaeologysociety.org))). Additionally, Pat Tanner is working on new drawings of the capital reconstruction of the Newport Ship, showing her with two decks and three masts, with a cargo capacity of at least 200 tonnes. These drawings will shortly be available for purchase or download.

The project team and members of FONS have given

dozens of talks to local groups over the last year, with many more bookings already taken for next year. In a project first, I recently gave a (very early morning) lecture about the ship (live via Skype) to 35 students at Flinders University in Adelaide, Australia. In other outreach news, Hannah Lawson has written an article about the ship project for Wales Arts Review (the article can be found at <http://www.walesartsreview.org/the-world-of-the-newport-ship/>).

The big event of the summer had to be the Newport Ship Conference held at Bristol University. It was an unqualified success, with speakers from around Europe presenting new research into the economic and political

world in which the ship operated. Proceedings of the conference will be published in the next 18-24 months, and will form a companion volume to the planned archaeological text. For a full summary of the conference see <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/history/events/conferences/newportship2014/> and also the article by Rowena Archer in this newsletter.

Finally we would like to thank our conservator, Marie Jordan, for her three years of hard work conserving the ship and small finds.

Thank you for your continued support!

## The World of the Newport Ship The Bristol Conference 17-18th July 2014

by Rowena Archer

A major two day international conference was organised and hosted from 17th to 18th July 2014 at the University of Bristol, by Dr Evan Jones and Dr Richard Stone, to celebrate the discovery and discuss the first results of the archaeology of the Newport Ship. Found at Newport in 2002, this is the most important late medieval merchant vessel ever recovered and the conference aimed to set these unique findings in a wider historical context. Fourteen speakers from Britain, Italy, Spain and Portugal, with their professional interests in ships, trade, the economies of late medieval western Europe and contemporary politics, regional, national and international, gathered together to support the exciting and innovative archaeological work surrounding this astonishing and superbly preserved vessel. The papers revealed significant overlap in the speakers' interests, something which allowed for major in depth discussion and set an agenda for future work that is needed in order to extract the maximum return from the findings and popularise understanding of the ship on an international level.

The conference papers were organised in a series of concentric circles starting from the focal point of the Newport Ship with papers by Toby Jones (Curator of the Ship, Newport Museum and Heritage Service) and Professor Nigel Nayling (University of Wales, Trinity Saint David) who focussed in particular on the dating of the surviving timbers enabling her working life to be determined as c.AD 1449-1469. In a session on Fifteenth Century Shipping, Dr Ian Friel and Dr Susan Rose presented papers on late medieval ships and the safety of the seas for trading vessels. The conference speakers then moved outwards to consider the local context of the Bristol Channel, with papers by Bob Trett (Newport) and Professor Ralph Griffiths (University of Swansea); and the regional and political contexts, with papers by Professor Peter Fleming (University of the West of England) and Dr Rowena E Archer (Brasenose College, Oxford). On day

two the sessions covered yet wider fields with papers on International Trade from Margaret Condon and Dr Evan Jones (both of University of Bristol). Iberian links, shipping and trade were then addressed by Professor Wendy Childs (University of Leeds) and Dr Michael Barkham (Naval Museum, San Sebastian) and the meeting concluded with papers on the trade between England, the Mediterranean and the Atlantic Seas by Dr Flávio Miranda (Nova University of Lisbon) and Dr Francesco Guidi Bruscoli (University of Florence). A vigorous round table discussion involving speakers and delegates followed.

A capacity audience of over 100 enthusiastic delegates from the worlds of the Newport Ship including archaeologists, heritage agencies (such as CADW and English Heritage), museums and history departments attended. This was a comparatively huge turn out for such a specialist meeting. Besides the lively discussions that followed each paper there was a powerful sense of the importance of this find and the need to make the ship and its context available to as wide an audience as practicable. If sufficient funds are available the conference proceedings will be published as a first step towards greater outreach.

The conference was made possible by support from The Cabot Project funded by Gretchen Bauta; the Friends of the Newport Ship, now numbering over 500 members; the University of Wales, Trinity Saint David; the Newport City council; and the Matthew of Bristol Trust. The conference also enjoyed the support of Nicholas Edwards, Lord Crickhowell, former Secretary of State for Wales. It was clear at the end of this conference that the next step, beyond continuing archaeological and historical research, has to be to find an appropriate site for the proper display and explanation of the Newport Ship and its Context. This is set to make a major contribution to the maritime archaeology and history of the British Isles and Western Europe.