

S.O.S.



News from the Friends of the Newport Ship

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

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Free to FoNS Members

The developments over the last couple of months have been amazing! The launch of our new book ***"The World of the Newport Medieval Ship"*** was most successful and the volume is available in the Cabin at a discounted price of just £25. Many of the contributors came along to the launch event and more ideas were exchanged, and we hope further research will take place.

At that event, we also had colleagues from Albaola (the Basque Maritime Heritage Group) who have been doing further research into the origins of our Ship's timbers and other details which are included in an article within this newsletter.



We are very pleased to announce that Albaola and FoNS have agreed to progress towards the building of a **full scale replica** of the Newport Medieval Ship in the Basque country. Newport City Council will not be directly involved, although we will need the expertise of Dr Toby Jones, our curator, as a major technical resource. It will take a whole lot of effort, time, resources, money and probably a new organisation alongside FoNS to make it happen - but it's part of our dream to see a fully functioning replica sail up the River Usk to visit her older sister. The details of an accord between Albaola and FoNS are currently being discussed and further progress will be distributed as and when available.

Our curator, Dr Toby Jones along with volunteer Bob Evans have been working on the upgrade to the 1/10th scale model featured more fully in his annual report within this edition - but we think that it deserves a place on the front page, especially with the new rudder fitted.

Phil Cox

Chairman, FoNS

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MEMBERSHIP DATABASE AND YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION

Very many thanks to all those of you who have responded to our requests to allow us to continue to process 'your data' and to continue to be able to contact you with news about the project.

This has allowed us to update our membership database and ensure that we remove all references to those who have not responded and those who have declined our invitation to renew their membership.

Excluding honorary members, we now have about 350 members although some still have to pay their annual subscriptions. Please remember to give us any changes to your contact details if you move. If you do not currently receive our bi-monthly newsletters by email, please give us your email address so we can send them to you in glorious colour; any printed copies are provided in black & white!

In the forthcoming year we intend to transfer your personal data out of the now troublesome Excel spreadsheet into a proper membership database sourced from a reputable software provider the cost of which is going to be generously sponsored by one of our members. This will be fully GDPR compliant and make the tasks of the Secretary much easier!

MEMBERS SUBSCRIPTIONS

We have decided to keep the member subscription rates unchanged for another year at £10 single, £15 joint and £5 student but we will have to consider an increase in 2019 due to ever increasing operating costs which we are confident that you will fully appreciate. There are two areas where we would appreciate your active cooperation.

Firstly, member subs are payable annually on 24th August and a huge "thank you" to the many members who have now arranged standing orders to ensure their subs are paid on time. However, there is still a significant number of members who pay their subs throughout the year. In addition, there are some members who are still paying outdated, insufficient subs despite numerous reminders by myself of the current rates. Standing Order mandates are available from me.

Secondly, we have about 50 members who still require their bi-monthly newsletters to be posted to them rather than emailed. The cost of this service is now nearly £3 per annum which obviously significantly reduces the benefit to FoNS of the member's subscription. Many of these individuals already make a voluntary donation to cover the p&p for which we are very grateful. We would much prefer to email newsletters to you but if this is not possible then we would appreciate those members making a donation in addition to their member subs.

Robert Kenny – Secretary, FoNS

THE NEWPORT MEDIEVAL SHIP AND NEWPORT COUNCIL – NEXT STEPS

As the Friends, one of our key aims is to see the Newport Ship reassembled and displayed in a permanent location somewhere in the Newport area. As the last shipment of dried timbers returns from York next year, we will turn our attention to what happens next.

The Ship belongs to Newport Council and we need to work with them to achieve our vision. Despite generous support from other bodies, we estimate that over two-thirds of the cost of the Newport Ship to date has been borne by the Council and its taxpayers. This includes all the boring stuff we do not see like rates, electricity, insurance, and of course the salary for our full-time curator. This is a difficult time for the Council, which has had to make serious cuts to manage within its budget as well as accommodate another major heritage project to restore the Transporter Bridge. It is a measure of the Council's support for the Ship project that they have protected our budget during this process and are continuing to fund our operations in the Ship Centre. The Welsh Assembly has also made a significant contribution by providing a £20,000 annual grant to support the Ship Centre. The Minister for Heritage, Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas, confirmed recently that this will continue for at least the next two years, which will provide the project with financial stability.

We will continue to lobby the Council to press ahead with the Ship reassembly and to seek funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and others to meet the costs. But we cannot expect the Council to make a firm commitment to this project until it has a solution which works. This requires a suitable location somewhere in central Newport big enough to take the reassembled Ship, other maritime exhibits such as the Barlands Farm Boat and associated displays. This is no small challenge in itself – we need a lot of space and many of the possible locations identified back in 2012 have since been redeveloped.

Architects and other professional studies are required to confirm that the accommodation is suitable and that there is a workable technical solution to support the Ship in its reassembled state. Many large ship projects around the world are struggling to find a way of supporting such large wooden bodies and we are grateful for the work being carried out by the engineering department of Swansea University to identify a robust solution which will stand the test of time. When we have found a workable design, the Council will be able to identify the costs involved in relocation, reassembly and future running costs and put in a bid to HLF.

We believe that the future of the Ship is best served by assisting the Council in the completion of the various studies as soon as possible and making sure that among the outputs, there is a solution which is structurally sound and within the budget of any likely HLF grant. We have provided some funding for structural studies and worked with the architects and engineers from Swansea University to identify possible solutions.

By the time the final load of timbers is back, we will do our utmost to ensure that Council has firm proposals that it can consider so we can work with them to urge the best possible future for the Ship.

WE NEED YOU! VOLUNTEERS NEEDED NOW!!

This year is 'Year of the Volunteer' and it is fitting that we formally recognise the efforts of the teams that ensure FoNS works towards our primary objectives.

Our current volunteers work really hard to ensure that the Ship Centre is opened as advertised and that we attend all the events that we can to tell people about the project and encourage them to come down and visit us. As ever, we are looking for Ship Centre **Guides** and **Retail Staff** for our regular Open Days. If you can spare some time (half days are fine!) then we would love to have you as part of the crew.

We are aware that several current committee members are standing down which means that we are seeking new volunteers with new ideas to join the committee to help run the many different activities in which the Friends are involved.

We desperately need an **Education Coordinator** to spearhead our campaign to get into the schools' curriculum and encourage schools visits to the Ship Centre and for our team to get out into classrooms and work with children. New ideas include creating new events for children at the Ship Centre and at events that we attend where having activities for younger visitors will help draw in families. To this end we are looking for volunteers to run activities, perhaps including story-telling, in a space immediately alongside our pitch.

Whatever your skills, I'm sure that we could put them to good use either in the 'front of house' or in our back office to help drive this project forward. Please get in touch with the chairman or any of the committee members and let's see what we can achieve together.

THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEERS

The old adage states "One volunteer is worth Two Pressed Men" or should it be "two pressed persons". In any event it is very true and FoNS is no exception to this belief. Unfortunately, due to age and ill-health many of our long standing volunteers are no longer able to help us. FoNS is fortunate in having many fervent, knowledgeable supporters who are committed to the eventual reassembly and display of our Ship. We desperately need these individuals to act as welcomers/guides at our Ship Centre. An enthusiastic volunteer who has been briefed with accurate information regarding the Ship is an invaluable asset to FoNS. Enthusiasm is infectious. If you are considering becoming a volunteer, do not be concerned about lack of knowledge about the ship. You will be fully supported from day one but we need your enthusiasm more than anything else. Enthusiasm is infectious !!!

Robert Kenny – Secretary FoNS

SHIP CENTRE DISPLAYS

A new project is just being launched that will update or replace many of the displays at the Ship Centre. Most of what we currently show on our displays predates our move to Estuary Road and our knowledge has expanded and our understanding of our history has grown.

A briefing paper has been prepared and will be passed to at least 3 possible providers to allow them to come forward with new ideas of how best to show the project, tell our stories and inspire our visitors. It is hoped that the work to refurbish or upgrade will take place over the winter period during which the Ship Centre is closed to visitors.

Funding for this project will be sought from a number of grant-awarding bodies and as a reserve position FoNS have put aside an amount in case it is required to supplement these grants.

We will also be upgrading our mobile exhibition displays.

NEWS FROM ALBAOLA

At the recent “*World of the Newport Ship*” booklaunch, we were pleased that our guest list included two representatives from Albaola, the Basque maritime heritage group. They are currently engaged in the building of a full scale replica of the San Juan, a whaling support ship that was originally built in 1563 and came to grief in Red Bay, Newfoundland shortly afterwards. The wreck was raised by Parks Canada in the 1970s, fully documented and then replaced in the cold waters where it was being so well preserved.



Xabier Agote was so inspired by the coverage of the wreck's recovery that was reported in the National Geographic magazine in 1983 (as was our own patron, Charles Ferris) that he fought to realise his dream of building a replica. Xabi is now President and CEO of Albaola and is the driving force behind the build and the continuing emphasis on the Basque nation's maritime heritage.

The *San Juan* is approaching completion with her launch scheduled for 2019 and then fitting out ready for sea. Albaola's ambition is to sail her across the Atlantic to visit her older sister. She is a faithful replica and has **no engine**, so she is dependent upon the skills of the master and crew, and the natural elements to get to Newfoundland and return. Initial discussions with Albaola have suggested that a 'first cruise' might include a visit to Newport to highlight the Basque maritime heritage and perhaps support their next project.

So what is their next project? Alongside our recent book launch we had an initial meeting to discuss the potential for the building of a full scale replica of our Ship. The structure that we have and the designs that have been suggested for the complete vessel are enough for building a facsimile of what might have been.

We are now in discussions about an accord that defines how Albaola and FoNS will collaborate on this project. There's a lot to discuss but progress is being made and we will let members know of progress as it happens.

Albaola researchers are also investigating the history of our own Newport Ship. The initial identification of the source of the timbers that shape our Ship was fairly generic, focusing on the forests behind San Sebastian and Bilbao. Further work by Albaola has suggested that our timbers were cut from a specific forest that is privately owned. To this day, that forest is still owned by the same family. Wouldn't it be nice if timbers for any future replica of our Ship could be sourced from that same woodland! There is another possible link as that same family is thought to have commissioned ships to be built and, subsequently, would then have provided captains for those ships.

For more information about Albaola and their current build project, see <http://www.albaola.com/en>

Further investigations from Albaola and elsewhere will be featured in our bi-monthly newsletters.



LAUNCH OF A NEW ACADEMIC BOOK “THE WORLD OF THE NEWPORT MEDIEVAL SHIP”

I first visited the large industrial shed in which the recovered timbers of the Newport Ship were soaking in large tanks some ten years ago. I was fascinated by the whole enterprise since my special research interest as a medievalist is medieval ships. At that time the future of the project was still uncertain and there were many unanswered questions about the ship. The use of advanced digital technology to scan the timbers had only been underway for a short time and little was known about where the ship was built or how she was used. Since then I have kept up with progress via the Friends Newsletter but it was a great pleasure to be at the launch of *The World of the Medieval Ship* not only to celebrate the book but to hear about progress with plans for a permanent display of the vessel. It was also a great opportunity to see some of the newly conserved timbers especially the great knee piece. The work of local supporters, volunteers and academics has been a remarkable success story.

It is hard to overestimate the importance of the survival of this ship to historians of ships, trade and economic life in the late fifteenth century. It is unique; the only known survivor of the vessels which carried the trade of North West Europe, and were sailing not only north to Iceland but south to Portugal and southern Spain.

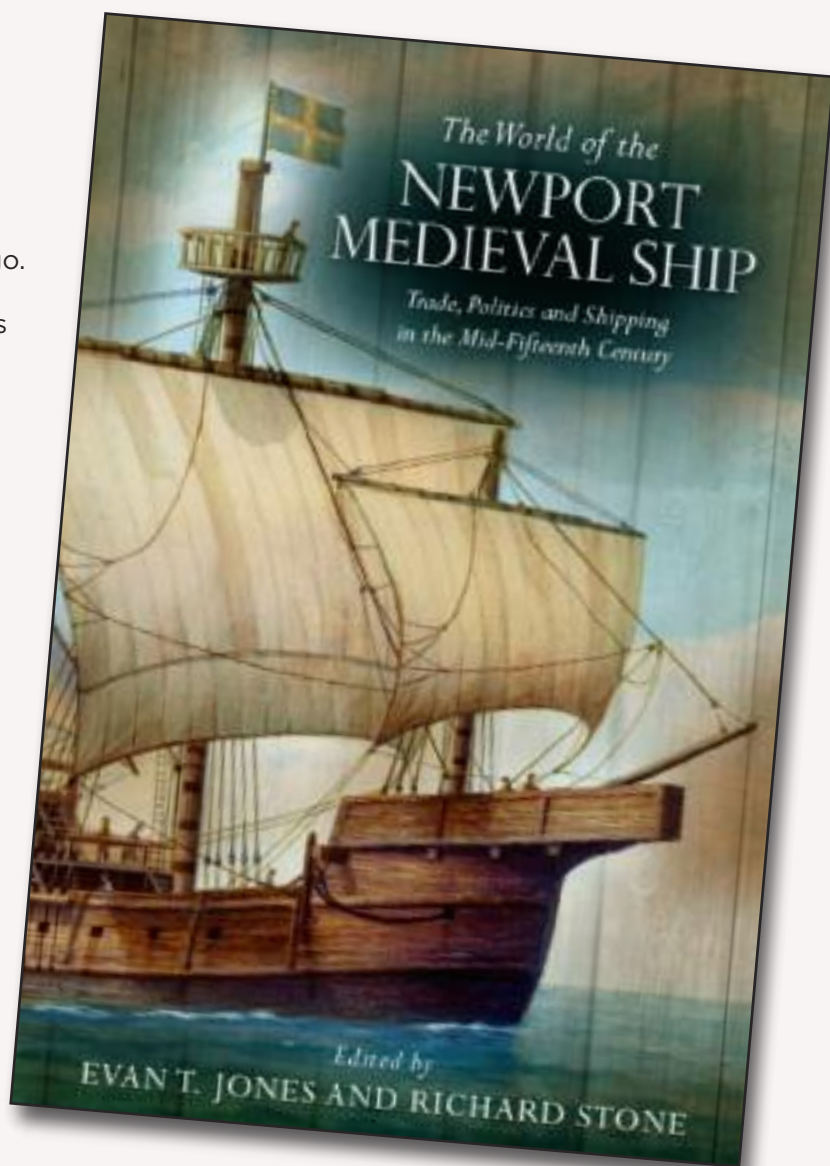
The importance of the ship was asserted and demonstrated at the conference in Bristol organised by Dr Evan Jones in 2014. The book is a collection of essays based on the papers given at the conference expanded by further research. The range of the essays makes plain how important the whole saga of the finding, rescue and conservation of the ship's timbers has been. At the launch it was fascinating to hear Professor Wendy Childs explain trade between England and the Iberian Peninsula in the 1450s, holding out that it may be possible from further documentary work in the National Archives to identify the vessel and the merchants whose goods she carried. Similarly the advances made in the use of dendrochronology to date and place timbers have been so rapid that it is now possible not only to be certain that the ship was built on the Basque coast but that the forest from which the timbers were cut can be identified. The vessel itself has proved to be a great stimulus to new and fresh avenues of enquiry. The launch also brought home how much support the project has had from Newport City Council and how important the contribution from the local community has been. The Friends have done a wonderful job in their tireless advocacy of the Ship and their constant concern for its welfare. It was in all a delightful occasion which made plain how an archaeological discovery of great importance can bring together in successful collaboration specialists of various kinds and local people. As a result more light has been shone on this period of history not only in the Severn Sea and in Wales but in the places and peoples linked by the voyages of this vessel over 500 years ago.

Dr Susan Rose

Contributor to the book with her section on “Violence at Sea in the Late Fifteenth Century”

Susan Rose (PhD) is one of the leading authorities on English medieval maritime history. A former part-time history lecturer at both the Open University and the University of Roehampton, her books include *Medieval Naval Warfare 1000-1500* (2001), *The Medieval Sea* (2007), *The Wine Trade in Medieval Europe 1000-1500* (2011) and *England's Medieval Navy 1066-1509* (2013). She has also published a large number of scholarly articles and book chapters.

This volume is available at the discounted price of just £25 from the Newport Medieval Ship Centre (RRP £29.99)



NEWPORT SHIP CURATOR'S ANNUAL PROJECT UPDATE - AUGUST 2018

We reached a milestone in the ship project in the autumn of 2017 when the last batch of wet timbers was transferred to York Archaeological Trust for freeze drying. FoNS and volunteers from several universities clocked up over 430 hours in a single week during the lifting and shifting operations! YAT are continuing to freeze dry the remaining timbers and hope to be done by the end of 2019. Around 70% of the ship timbers are now in climate controlled dry storage at the ship centre. We are planning to collect more dried timbers from YAT later in the Autumn.

With the hull timber conservation progressing, we have turned our attention to ensuring that the numerous small artefacts are well packaged and optimally stored. A three day conservation seminar was held at the ship centre, with conservation students and an experienced conservator, Dr. Eric Nordgren, working together to survey the entire assemblage.

As a result of this work, two research projects were initiated; one to perform a 'conservation condition assessment' of the small finds and the other to examine and re-treat some of the iron artefacts. The FoNS were awarded a grant from Cardiff University to fund a work placement conservation student (Morgan Creed) over the summer to assist in this work. The conservation work will ensure the long term survival of the artefactual assemblage while also preparing individual items for eventual display.

The ship project has continued to work with the Engineering Department at Swansea University to develop a cradle structure to support the conserved hull.

These reports should be finished in the next few months. In a project related to the cradle research, FoNS volunteer Bob Evans and I have been continuing to work on the 1:10 scale 3D physical model. You may have noticed that the mess of clamps in the stern is now missing. We are testing a new transom mould and doing some rudder research. We are also continuing to add wooden crossbeams at the correct scale as the original beams (like the ones attached to the giant knee on display in the second timber store). Using clear Perspex, we will fashion decks once the hull form and structure is finalised. The physical model is a popular attraction for visitors and continues to serve as an important research tool for nautical archaeologists. We feel it is important to incorporate our latest research into this model which is why it is continually evolving!

It has been a busy year on the publication and archiving front, with several new journal articles and conference proceedings published.



Dr. Eric Nordgren working with dry ice to blast clean the iron artefacts salvaged from our Ship





Bob Evans and Dr Toby Jones working on the 1:10 scale model

The most important of these is a monograph entitled 'The World of the Newport Medieval Ship: Trade, Politics and Shipping in the Mid-Fifteenth Century'. The book was published by the University of Wales Press and represents the proceedings of the major conference held in Bristol in 2014, at which a number of scholars presented research relating to the medieval ship. This invaluable publication provides historical, political and economic context to the ongoing ship archaeological research. This volume would not have been produced without the generous economic support of FoNS.

Other articles about the ship project have recently been published in the Society for Museum Archaeology (2013 Meeting) and the International Symposium on Boat and Ship Archaeology Conference Proceedings (Amsterdam 2012 Meeting). Several more articles are forthcoming, including one on the shrinkage and distortion measured in the conserved hull timbers International Council of Museums - Wet Organic Archaeological Materials Group (Venice 2016 Meeting). The Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments in Wales is scheduled to publish a book called "Wales and the Sea", which will contain sections on the Newport Ship and the Barland's Farm Romano-Celtic vessel, which is also stored at the Newport Ship Centre. Finally, the Archaeology Data Service has updated the Newport Ship archive with the addition of several thousand digital files, drawings, reports and photographs. Whenever possible we strive to make all of our research publicly available and free. Please go to http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/newportship_2013/downloads.cfm for more information and to access these files.

In other news you may have seen the ship project feature on a recent episode of Escape to the Country.

On a related front, the project to catalogue the 1000s of maritime-related books in our library is well underway. FoNS volunteer Sian King is working diligently to classify the collection, making it useful and accessible to future researchers and visitors. If you have any old nautical or maritime books or works dealing with the local/regional history, we would be happy to evaluate them for inclusion in the library.

Like FoNS, the museum is keen to promote the ship project and raise awareness of this unique archaeological treasure. To this end, the FoNS and the ship project are hosting the upcoming Nautical Archaeology Society Annual Meeting in Newport from 16th - 18th November 2018.

Well over 100 delegates are expected to attend. The conference itself will be held at the Riverfront Theatre, with social events and tours being held around Newport. There is also a planned 1 day Maritime Archaeology Course at the Ship Centre on Friday 16th November, which will cover the entire history of the ship project in great detail!

Looking ahead, there are several other meetings and events coming up that are related to the ship project. These include speaking about the ship project at a conference in the Basque Country in September and attending the 15th International Symposium on Boat and Ship Archaeology, and the 2nd Deformation Monitoring Meeting in France in October. Closer to home, there is the Severn Estuary Forum meeting at the Riverfront Theatre on 9th October 2018.

Finally, in breaking news, the ship project has been involved in a successful application to the British Academy for a grant to facilitate the training of Turkish nautical archaeologists in the digital documentation of ship timbers (one of our specialities)! We will be involved in providing training in the use of the FaroArm, Laser Scanner and Rhinoceros CAD software as well as sharing our digital modelling methods and 3D printing procedures.

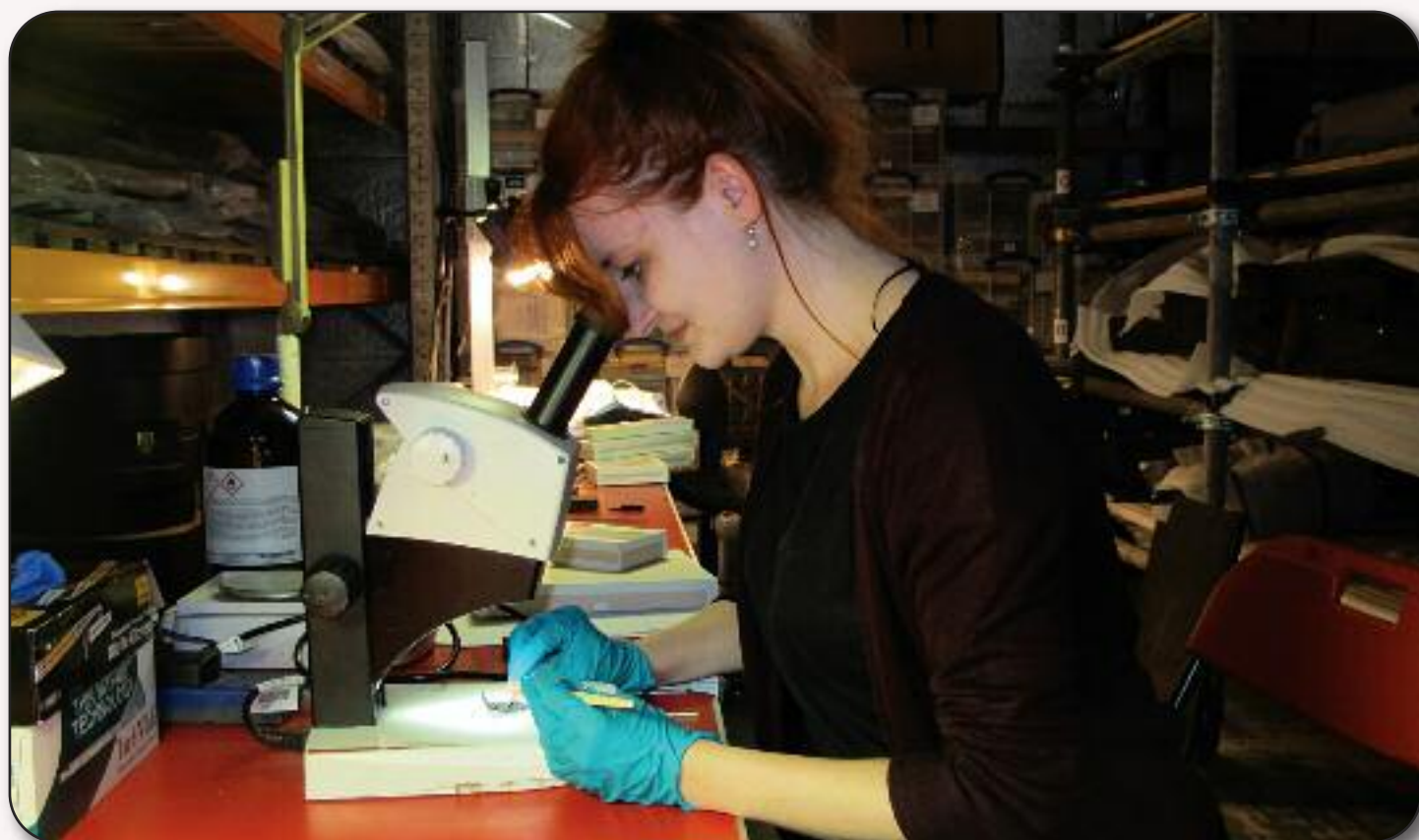
Thank you to all FoNS members for your continued support for the ship project!

*Dr. Toby Jones, Curator
Newport Medieval Ship Project*

As Toby mentions above, this summer we are pleased to have had some extra assistance from Morgan Creed, a student from Cardiff University, putting her studies in Conservation to good use at the Ship Centre.

Working as a conservation intern at the Newport Medieval Ship Project this summer has been a genuinely fantastic experience, mainly because it offers such a diverse range of artefacts and materials to work with. While a brief description of each object is reviewed before starting, this doesn't always prepare you for what you might discover when you open the box; from the delicate glass hourglass, whose shape is still discernible, to part of an engraved helmet strap with the script as clear as if it was done yesterday.

The first step is a condition assessment. Each object is carefully taken out of storage and observed for signs of decay. Photography and records from previous assessments provide a reference point, so that any new cracks or corrosion can be identified and logged in the collection database, along with updated photographs. After this, remedial treatment is carried out: this could be adding adhesive to an iron bolt to consolidate flaking surface layers; or gently removing concretion from brass aiglets under microscopy, so the surface can be revealed. Finally, the object is delicately packaged so it can be placed back in the store. The packaging is custom made for each artefact, to give it the best possible support during storage.



NEW STUDY OF THE HISTORY OF THE NEWPORT MEDIEVAL SHIP PROJECT

Over the past year I have been undertaking my MPhil in Modern British History at Cambridge. Having been involved with the Friends since 2016, I decided to take the Newport Medieval Ship as the subject of my 20,000 word dissertation. That might seem like a strange topic on which to do a ‘modern’ dissertation, but the focus was on the ship’s recent past. The title borrowed a phrase used by Charles Ferris during the height of the Save our Ship campaign in 2002 **“This boat can be our symbol”: The discovery and twenty-first-century life of the Newport Medieval Ship**’.

The purpose of the research was to ascertain why, in this small city, a fifteenth-century ship has captured so many people’s imaginations. What factors militated to ensure its excavation, and what does the ship mean for Newport’s future prospects? The research material drawn on to answer these questions included oral history interviews with members of the Friends, records from the group’s sizeable archives, the ship’s considerable news-media footprint, and the records of the City Council.

Something that emerges prominently from all these sources is that the location and timing of the ship’s discovery was exceedingly lucky.

Firstly, Newport is a city with a chronic self-image problem; a city with plenty to offer but which has had considerable trouble ‘marketing’ itself. Once the principal coal port in the UK, Newport is going through a prolonged period of economic restructuring. The search for new sources of income has led to an increase in stature for Newport’s heritage and tourism sectors. Post-industrial areas like South Wales, the North of England, and the German Ruhr have been world-leaders in turning vestiges of the past—the ‘glory days’—into marketable heritage resources.

But this image problem also encompasses a sense of Newport having failed in its responsibility to care for its own heritage. Interviewees who partook in the Save our Ship campaign all lament that the Council’s efforts in this area have been inadequate and haphazard. As one of the interviewees put it, the Council has taken heritage ‘and replaced it with plastic and statues’. When a large medieval ship was accidentally uncovered, suddenly it appeared that there was a chance to halt the slide—or, as Charles put it at the time, a chance to ‘think big for once’. The local circumstances made excavation of the vessel seem especially virtuous, due both to a sense of duty of the city’s heritage and an anticipation of the economic benefits of housing such a significant vessel in Newport.

Equally significant was the national (Welsh) situation. The young Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) was eager to prove that it could make a tangible difference to people’s lives but it lacked primary legislative or fundraising powers. The Welsh cultural sector had suffered from decades of financial starvation, making it a logical area for the limited WAG to focus on since it could be transformed with relatively small financial outlays.

Sure enough, when the Newport Ship required emergency funding to be fully excavated and conserved, it was the WAG which came forward with £3.5m, whereas it is often forgotten that the Mary Rose was raised with no statutory funding whatsoever. This would seem to support the argument that devolved institutions tend to be more responsive to heritage demands. Had the Newport Ship been discovered before the WAG’s creation in 1999, or had it been located outside of Wales, it would have struggled to find a benefactor of sufficient size.

Another aspect of my research concerns the contributions that volunteer enthusiasts make to the heritage sector. Unfortunately, there remains a hefty amount of academic snobbery about them. Historians and Heritage Studies writers have frequently referred to them as ‘amateurs’ with an ‘unpredictable agenda,’ and as promoting the ‘fraudulence of a nostalgia divorced from history’. The prime movers in heritage are thought to be governments and institutions like English Heritage and UNESCO, whilst ordinary enthusiasts tend to be cast as uncritical dupes or, at worst, parasites who ‘love the past to death’.

Yet it is often the labour and donations of these enthusiasts that make many heritage projects possible in the first place. The Newport Ship is a case in point—the campaign to save it in 2002 was orchestrated largely by local citizens rather than celebrities and academics, whilst the Friends have provided invaluable practical and financial support for the Project in the years that followed.

My dissertation therefore examines the activity of the Friends as historically significant in its own right. Enthusiasts and volunteers play a crucial role in shaping what we conserve, how it is interpreted, and the way it is managed. The Friends have made financial contributions at key junctures in the ship’s conservation, whilst their work spreading the word has given the vessel a far greater reach than it could have managed otherwise. And now, as the reconstruction phase approaches fast, the Friends have a vital role to play in ensuring the ship’s ultimate display arrangements live up to its historical and archaeological significance.

Enthusiasts are agents in the heritage process, not passive or inconsequential bystanders. It is depressing, in a way, that this argument still needs to be made at all, but I hope my research will make a small contribution towards dispelling the unflattering myths that still surround popular heritage involvement.

In the meantime, I am very thankful to the members of the Friends who agreed to be interviewed, and who put up with my pestering! I would be very happy to chat if you have any questions, or would like to see the paper in full. My email address is simon.m.hickman@gmail.com

Simon Hickman

Simon is a relative newcomer to the ranks of FoNS and has worked with us for 2 years now as a Ship Centre guide and as a co-opted committee member as our archivist. His dissertation is a fascinating read and we anticipate that he will have the opportunity to present a paper at the forthcoming Nautical Archaeology Society Annual Conference 17th - 18th November 2018.

THE LIVING LEVELS LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP - HAS SET SAIL!

The Living Levels Partnership is thrilled to announce that a grant of £2.5 million from the National Lottery has been secured to help recapture, enhance and celebrate the unique heritage of the historic Gwent Levels landscape, with a chance for the Friends of Newport Medieval Ship to play an important role in its delivery and the future of this unique landscape!

The partnership, led by RSBP Cymru, consists of 12 organisations who have come together to provide a sustainable future for the Gwent Levels and includes the three local authorities of Cardiff, Newport and Monmouthshire plus Natural Resources Wales, Gwent Wildlife Trust, Gwent Archives, Buglife Cymru, Bumblebee Conservation Trust, the National Trust, Cardiff Story Museum and Sustrans. The announcement comes following years of planning and groundwork by the partners working alongside local communities to design a scheme to celebrate the Gwent Levels and make the wonderful nature and history of this area more accessible to everyone to enjoy and explore.



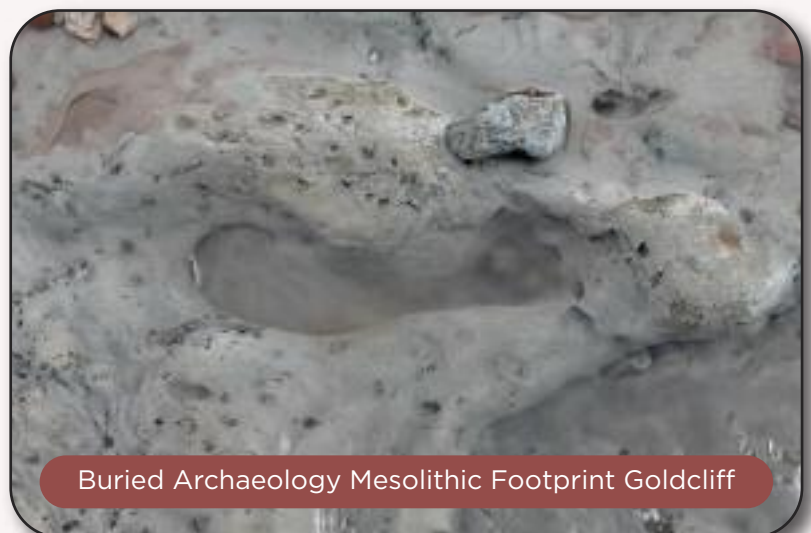
Historical settlement pattern

What are the Levels?

Reclaimed from the sea in Roman times, the Gwent Levels stretch from the edge of Chepstow to East Cardiff via Newport for nearly 30 miles and play host to a criss-crossed network of fertile fields and historic watercourses, known locally as reens. This unassuming, yet appealing, landscape of high skies and low horizons lends its status as one of the finest examples of a 'natural' landscape really crafted by people in Europe. It is one of the largest tracts of bio-diverse wet grassland left in the UK and includes seven Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The mosaic of ditches supports aquatic plants and insects unique to Wales and boasts populations of lapwing, otter, water vole, the great diving beetle and one of the UK's rarest bumblebees, the shrill carder bee. The area also hosts many specialist plants, including frogbit, arrowhead and *Wolffia arrhiza* – the smallest flowering plant in the world.

What will we be doing?

Over the next three and a half years, the Gwent Levels will benefit from a series of projects designed to restore and enhance the natural heritage of the area, to improve the visitor experience and to inspire people to learn about and participate in the heritage of the Levels. A key aim of the Living Levels project is to help restore key heritage features



Buried Archaeology Mesolithic Footprint Goldcliff

across the Levels, including its ancient orchards and habitats for rare species. The partners have also developed an ambitious programme to enforce illegal incidents of fly-tipping and encourage changes in behaviour to bring about a sustained reduction in fly-tipping incidents in future. Investment in new visitor infrastructure, new walking and cycling routes, as well as sculptures and artwork will make it easier than ever before to discover the history and heritage of this popular and fascinating area.



Severn Estuary Geese Fly Past

How can the Friends of Newport Ship get involved?

There will be lots of opportunities for the Friends of Newport Medieval Ship to get involved in this exciting programme. From getting down and dirty with conservation activities or bringing together valuable research from the comfort of your own home, there will be many chances to get involved through volunteering, training and a programme of exciting events celebrating the unique local heritage of the Levels. Check in and sign-up via our website www.livinglevels.org.uk to keep up to date as the projects evolve! The Newport Medieval Ship centre itself will hopefully be playing a vital role too as a Levels 'community information' hub - building on what it is achieving now in terms of promoting local information, posters, leaflets, walking/cycling routes and community facilities - complete with a 'pop-up' display and cementing its status as an engaging venue which could be used for training volunteers and Levels 'Welcome Ambassadors'.

An exciting journey ahead...

Did you know the Levels has its very own 'Levels Lingo', consisting of a watery lexicon of terms that describe special features of the historic landscape? There are so many fascinating gems to discover about the Gwent Levels' heritage and the partners can't wait to start exploring these, together with groups like the Friends of Newport Medieval Ship, through the many projects which are going to be starting in the next weeks and months. The partners are confident that the many projects in the Living Levels programme will bring the stories from this fascinating landscape to life, many of which are yet untold and promise to engage and captivate both old and new visitors to the Gwent Levels.

The partnership is looking forward to welcoming the Friends of Newport Ship to Newport Wetlands Education and Environment Centre on Saturday September 29th to celebrate the history and archaeology of the Gwent Levels, as part of the 'Unlocking the History and Archaeology of the Gwent Levels' event. We will in turn be directing visitors to make their way to the Newport Medieval Ship centre to discover the incredible story of the ship's discovery and ongoing conservation work.

**Follow us on Twitter: @ourlivinglevels
Facebook.com/OurLivingLevels**

The Newport Medieval Ship is considered to have been found on the Gwent Levels, as was the Barlands Farm Boat that still resides in the conservation store at the Ship Centre.



Legacy and sustainability

NAURA RUNS FOR THE SHIP (AGAIN)

We are pleased to announce that the Chairman's wife, Naura, will be running the Cardiff Half Marathon and once again is seeking sponsorship in aid of the Friends of Newport Ship. That's 13.1 miles or 20km which is more than most of us would contemplate for a healthy jog or walk!

If you can encourage her to keep going through the streets of Cardiff on Sunday 7th October, then please either email gphilipcox@lineone.net or sign the sheets that will be available to fill in at the Ship Centre on any of our open days or events and at the AGM.

Friends of the Newport Ship

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Newportship

www.newportship.org
Charity Number: 1105449



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Our ports connect British businesses to global markets and support **84,000 jobs**.

Together, our ports generate **£5.6 billion** for the UK economy.

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Ipswich	Swansea	Tralee

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Keep in touch    

NOTICE OF AGM

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Newport Ship will take place at 3.30pm, Saturday 29 September 2018 at the Ship Centre in Newport. Directions will be included with the agenda and associated papers.



SPONSORSHIP

We are again grateful to Associated British Ports who have donated funds to help cover the cost of design, print production and distribution of this Annual Newsletter.