



Friends of Newport Ship

News Sheet – July 2020

Update from the Chairman

Thanks to our enthusiastic editor, Liz Aiken, we are delighted to be able to offer you another newsletter to let you know what we are doing during lockdown. We intend to issue a fuller, printed version in September ready for the AGM.

In the last edition I optimistically referred to reopening the Ship Centre in June. We are already in July and the prospects do not look good. I have regular contact with Newport Council and the Welsh Government and although museums will be allowed to open from 27th July, neither body expects this to happen quickly. We should not expect to reopen the Ship Centre before mid-August and probably not even then. We can only do so if we have appropriate arrangements in place; the hygiene and safety requirements for reopening are daunting for a small operation like the Ship. They will also detract considerably from the experience we can offer.

In the meantime, there is lots happening with the Ship and many of the latest activities are set out elsewhere in the Newsletter. We are gradually building up our on-line offerings. For this year at least, these are likely to become the focus of our activities. There is plenty to do, so if you are interested in getting involved please let us know. You do not need to be an IT expert, just offer your enthusiasm for the Ship and her story.

Bob Evans

chair@newportship.org



Editor

Thank you for your warm welcome and supportive comments about my first editorial stewardship of the newssheet. This edition has a wide range of information from Romans and aerial photographs through to Torpedoes in Newport during WW1. Thank you everyone for the interesting articles for this edition. While the centre is in lockdown I will send out regular newssheets hoping this will retain a community feel. If you have ideas for newssheet or the Newsletter please do not hesitate to email me with your thoughts – liz.aiken1@gmail.com

Liz Aiken

liz.aiken1@gmail.com



Members Subscriptions

Annual member subscriptions will be due on 24th August 2020 (as per our Constitution). My thanks to those members who have responded to my previous appeals for annual subs to be paid on 24th August or as soon as possible thereafter and preferably by standing order to our HSBC bank account. A significant majority of FoNS members are now paying by standing order and it makes my job as

Secretary/Member Secretary and that of our Treasurer much easier. Thanks also to those who have registered for Gift Aid which increases the value of their contribution by 25%.

Unfortunately, at the time of writing, some 35 members have yet to pay their subs for 2019/20 which were due 24th August 2019. FoNS needs as many active current members as possible. It was "People Power" that saved our Ship back in 2002 and it will be "People Power" that will eventually result in our Ship being reassembled and on display to its **international** public. Therefore I would ask all those potential lapsed members to pay their outstanding subs as soon as possible. If you are unsure whether you are "up to date" please contact me.

My contact details are as follows: secretary@newportship.org or robert.kenny1947@outlook.com
Mobile: 07718 751391 Home: 01291 430002
Post to: PO Box 109, Caldicot, NP26 9AR

Robert Kenny
Secretary



FONS Project Report July 2020

Dr. Toby Jones, Curator, Newport Medieval Ship Project

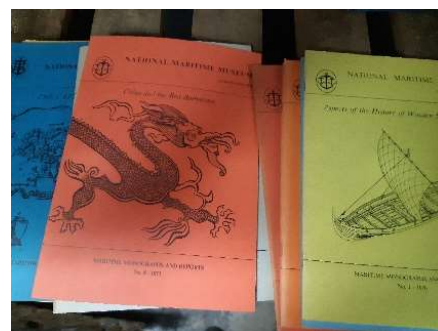
Dear FONS Members,



We have spent the last several months continuing to develop the displays at the ship centre, in anticipation of reopening (Date still to be decided). With the support of FONS, we were recently able to purchase a state of the art (and nearly-new) FaroArm from the Norwegian Maritime Museum, which will improve our ability to record the conserved timbers and collect necessary data for the ship support structure design.

A big thank you to Mr & Mrs Parfitt who generously donated the money required to cover the Friends' contribution to the cost of the new arm.

We have just received a donation of eight boxes of maritime archaeology books from a supporter in Spain, David McLean. They will be an excellent addition to our growing library, which is continuing to be catalogued by volunteer Sian King.



There are also some exciting developments on the visual/art front, with David Jordan nearing the completion of his second painting of the Newport Ship and the Living Levels Project creating some amazing 3D digital animations of the ship coming into Newport. Both bits of work will prove to be valuable assets for disseminating information about the project and engaging with visitors.

Thank you all for your continued support of the project!

Cheers,

Toby



Roman Finds In Wales

Major new study reveals aerial discoveries from Roman Wales, from the drought of 2018

A new study of Royal Commission aerial discoveries from the widespread drought of 2018 in Wales has just been published in the journal *Britannia*. (<https://bit.ly/3e7NLvm>) Written by Royal Commission Senior Aerial Investigator Dr Toby Driver, together with Roman experts Professor Barry Burnham and Dr Jeffrey L. Davies, the study sheds new light on what we understand about the military conquest of Wales by Roman troops in the first century AD, and its subsequent Roman settlement.

Discoveries include **two Roman marching camps**, **three auxiliary forts** and a remarkable series of **stone buildings** outside the fort at Pen y Gaer in the Brecon Beacons National Park.

The aerial photographs also clarified the plan of several known **villas** as well as identifying some **potential villa sites and farmsteads** of probable Romano-British date in south-east, south-west and north-west Wales. The recognition of a new **Roman road** alignment south of Carmarthen suggests a previously unsuspected coastal fort at or near Kidwelly, possibly now hidden by the medieval castle.

Dr Driver said; *'Aerial reconnaissance in the drought summer of 2018 was exhilarating and intense, with new archaeological sites appearing below the aircraft right across Wales. Over the last year we have done more intensive research on the many spectacular Roman discoveries and it is great to now share this new knowledge with a wider audience'.*

'In particular, the Roman discoveries of a new fort and marching camp in the Vale of Gwent, south-east Wales, show the movement of the Roman army through hostile territory when there was still strong local resistance. Some 1900 years after these Roman fortifications were built, their plough-levelled foundations have re-emerged for a few brief weeks in drought-ridden grassland and crops.'

Marching camps: evidence of the Roman conquest



The 2018 drought in Wales revealed two new Roman marching camps, one near Three Cocks in the Black Mountains and one near the Roman town of Caerwent in south-east Wales.

Marching camps were built by Roman troops on manoeuvres in Wales early in their military campaigns. In the 30-year struggle to conquer Wales, the Romans frequently clashed with the stubborn and warlike Silures tribe in south-east Wales. Marching camps were temporary overnight stops for troops who would 'dig in' to create a large

rectangular defended enclosure filled with tents. They are still incredibly rare in south-east Wales – only 3 are currently known from the old county of Gwent – so the discovery of a new example near Caerwent in 2018 was very exciting. It is also the first camp in Wales to feature 'outturned' Roman defended gates, another rare feature for Roman Britain.

The new marching camp emerged in a field already recorded from the air for over 50 years; it's incredible how much archaeology is hiding 'in plain sight'. It was built to protect troops when this part of south-east Wales was still hostile territory; but it lies just west of the Roman town of Caerwent, Venta Silurum 'Market town of the Silures', where the pacified tribe was later settled.

Here is the link to the full article <https://bit.ly/3e7NLvm> an interesting article on Roman finds in Wales during the dry summer of 2018. It is well worth making a cuppa, grabbing a biscuit and reading, even though it may not be directly relevant to the Ship.

As well as sections above there is mention of Stoop Hill Villa, Caldicot, Monmouthshire, set on a low rise overlooking the Caldicot Levels, next to the M4 and the Severn Bridge.

There is also one nautical reference: “The road seems to have taken a much more southerly course than was formerly believed, thus linking the Flavian fort at Carmarthen and that at Loughor to the south-east (cf. FIG . 20). The implications of this discovery are clear: an estuarine fort must exist at or near the town of Kidwelly. Could it underlie the medieval castle, as is the case at Loughor? **This illustrates the importance that the Flavian army placed upon seaborne supply in the maintenance of its garrison bases** along the coasts of south Wales (viz. Cardiff, Neath and Loughor) and raises the strong possibility of another to the west in Milford Haven”

Our Barland’s Farm boat is much later (3/4thC) than these finds, but it reinforces the importance of these vessels in Roman period communications.



Constructing a wooden mast in the 21st Century

This is an account by Robin Hicks, who owns the traditional schooner “Willie” on the West coast of Australia, about how he went about constructing a new wooden mast for the vessel. It offers some interesting insights into the challenges of mast-making which our own shipwrights must have faced, even if they did not have access to epoxy glue!



The mast that I had at the Perth Working With Wood Show last year was one of two masts that were built for the schooner "Willie" in my work-shop between July and September of 2019.

Built in 1984 for Tony Larrard, Willie was of round bilge steel construction and was the last sailing vessel to be built for the Broome Pearl Fishery. Her design was based on a 1900 pearling master’s vessel, schooner rigged, 50 tonnes and 68'0" long on deck.

I did work on all of Tony's vessels from the early '70's, until he passed away several years ago. Willie was the only one that I did not work on, my father and I were both heavily tied up on the STS Leeuwin's rigging at the time and that followed on with Eye Of The Wind and Endeavour over the next few years. I've had to wait for 35 years to pass to be able to get a second chance at her.

Willie was found by her current owner, Jim Stevenson, of Stevenson Logistics, slowly dying in a bay in Langkawi, Malaysia, in November of 2018, electronics, mechanical, hydraulics, plumbing and rigging all shot to pieces. She spent the next six months at the Northern Shipyard, Langkawi being re worked and repaired before sailing down to Broome in July / August of last year. The old rig had to be re fitted as found, with a plan to renew it all over the next few months.

The new masts were built in my workshop, largely by Christina Klomp and Jett Stevenson. My own contribution was restricted to helping out with the bigger glue jobs and the heavier machining. Chris is actually a very highly qualified Mechatronics Engineer and has been with me on and off for the last several years. Jett is Jim's son and it made sense to get him involved with the job. Aged 19, he was on a gap year between school and Uni, kicking his heels and had no fixed commitments.

The two masts were 12.0 and 14.0 metres long, x 240 and 265 mm in diameter and were of laminated construction. Due to the restriction on the size of the Oregon Pine boards available today, the main mast was made up from 150 mm x 50 mm dry sawn Oregon, longest boards were 5.6 metres long. Chris and Jett machined the boards to a "best recovery " of about 140 mm x 45 mm,

scarf jointed both ends of pretty much all of the boards needed with a 600 mm long bevel scarf and kept jointing, board after board, gluing up daily, and cutting to the required lengths the next day. Once we had got enough lengths, we then edge jointed to make up the finished widths, and then started to laminate up these wide boards to start building the mast. The two masts were 12.0 and 14.0 metres long, x 240 and 265 mm in diameter and were of laminated construction. This was due to the restriction on the size of the Oregon Pine boards.

We used International Epiglu, epoxy. As this work was carried out through the winter months, we were careful to make sure that we glued up first thing in the mornings, the glue has a short working time even in winter. All this glue work was done on trestles set at waist height running through the middle of the workshop, this allowed easy access for the clamps, and once they were all screwed home, we covered the boards with two layers of heavy clear plastic down to the floor, and then set a small fan heater at each end. This bought the temperature up inside the tunnel and helped cure off the glue by the end of the day. It was not uncommon to have 200-250 clamps out on these joints, we did what we could under the constraints of glue time and available workshop floor space. While Chris and Jett were doing this job, I still needed space myself to deal with the run of the mill offshore that was still coming in.



Once the timber was glued up we effectively had two square structural beams. These were then tapered from the bottom to the top, the heels being left square for the first 1.0 metre, and the top 1.8 metres was also left square. The 9-11 metres in between was marked out for 8 equally spaced sides. It must be remembered that these masts are tapered, and it is not a straight taper either, it's rather like a Greek column, so the 8 sides is a moving target when you mark it out, it's changing as you go along the mast. Once the 8 sides

have been shaved off, and also faired into the square ends, the whole process starts again, this time marking out for 16 sides, and then 32 sides, all equally spaced, neat and even. It is very important to keep to these marks and not lose the geometry of the job. At this stage, we were working with facets of 10-15 mm wide, from here, we took it down to 64 side, just by eye, and then finished it up to the round with the hollow bottomed wooden planes set to a fine cut. Quite surprisingly, if you've done things right, this last bit will only take an hour or so on a mast of this size, at 64 sides, it is very nearly round anyway.

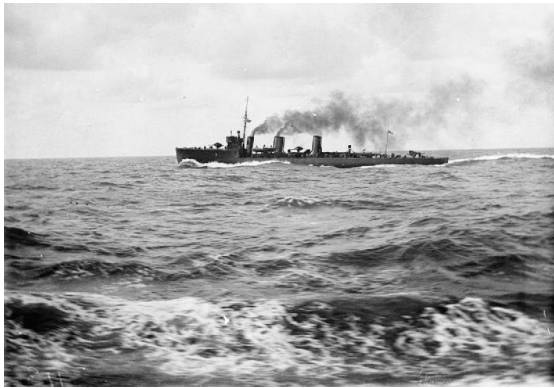
Jett and I did spend the better part of the day sanding each mast from here, our sanding blocks, better known as Torture Boards, 600 mm long, 140 mm wide and hollow bottomed to approximately fit the mast radius, and fairing into the square ends. This represented the finished mast, it was varnished from here and would be visible for all to see.

My request for the Wood Show was to be able to take in one of the masts and work on it. I wanted the general public to be able to see how a mast is made, to be able to get alongside of it, to be able to ask questions, and most importantly to be able to touch it as well. So much work these days is done behind barriers, or in closed work-shops. From my own point of view, I hit those targets, we spoke to a lot of people, and just about everyone that came by to touch the mast, or ask a question, however, not much work was done in three days. I hope that the club was happy with it.

Robin Hicks



Discharge of Torpedo – Alexandra Docks, Newport



This incident in Alexandra Docks in April 1915 nearly led to war with Italy. A torpedo accidentally discharged by a Royal Navy destroyer narrowly missed a neutral Italian steamer loading coal in the dock. In the best tradition of wartime secrecy and deception, the guilty ship was deliberately misnamed in the subsequent House of Commons statement. The secret of who almost irreparably altered the course of the First World War remains undisclosed to this day.

The briefest of references in the edition of *Hansard* for 6 May 1915 reveals an incident at the docks that might have changed the course of the First World War. Sir Richard Cooper asked

“if, on the evening of 21st April, a party of ladies was taken over the torpedo destroyer Lawton whilst lying in Alexandra Dock, Newport (Mon), and a torpedo was fired by one of the party across the dock, narrowly missing an Italian steamer and burying itself in the dock side; if so, what is the value of the damage done, including the value of the torpedo; and if it is within the regulations for parties of strangers to be shown over naval vessels during war time?”

Dr McNamara responding for the First Lord of the Admiralty said

“The facts are practically as stated, except that the accident was not caused by one of the party but that the firing of the torpedo was due to gross carelessness on the part of one of the crew, disciplinary measures for which are now being considered. The party consisted of four friends of a chief petty officer, two of whom, I understand, being employees in the docks. The estimated damage has not been ascertained, and I do not think it would be in the public interest to give the value of the torpedo. The regulations admit of friends of the crew being shown around ships during war, at the discretion of the commanding officer.”

The Newport correspondent of the *Central News* wires showed commendable initiative in filing a fuller story that is quoted below:

“The accidental discharge of a torpedo in the Alexandra Docks at Newport to which the question addressed to the First Lord of the Admiralty in the House of Commons has reference, caused considerable excitement in the vicinity of the docks. The circumstances, it appears, were very simple but the consequences might have been serious. For some time past the Alexandra Docks have been used by the Admiralty as a base for torpedo-boat destroyers, and the officers have become exceedingly popular with the inhabitants of Newport. Many of the latter have from time to time been allowed to inspect the craft, the mechanism of which was explained.

Visitors Aboard – On the occasion referred to, a gentleman, his niece and another young lady were on board, and one of the gunners was explaining the working of the torpedo tubes and the discharging of the torpedoes. The charge itself had been removed and placed to one side. Meanwhile another gunner came along and, thinking that the explanation had been concluded replaced the charge and went away. On his return, the first gunner, unaware that the charge had been replaced proceeded with his demonstration, and with the remark 'This is how the torpedo is discharged' pulled the lever. Immediately there was a report, and to the utter consternation of those on board the torpedo left the tube and travelled at the usual depth under water, leaving a trail by which its course could be marked, right across the dock, and making straight for a large Italian steamer lying at one of the coal hoists.



Italian Vessel's Escape – Everyone thought that the Italian steamer was doomed, but for some reason the course of the torpedo seemed to have been deflected, and instead of striking the steamer it crashed into the sloping wall of the dock, some twenty feet astern of the vessel. The explosion, however, threw the water a hundred feet into the air, drenching the men working on one of the hoists and many of those on the steamer, and considerably damaging the bank. The feeling of relief of those on board the destroyer when they saw that so little damage had been done, and no personal injuries had been sustained, may be imagined.”

The incident obviously had the potential to cause great embarrassment to the British government. More seriously, the Allies were in secret negotiations at this time with the Italian government, seeking to persuade the country to join the war against Germany and Austria Hungary (the Central Powers). The sinking of a neutral Italian ship with subsequent loss of life in a British port might have tipped the scales against the UK and French governments and induced Italy to side with Britain's enemies.

One of the undiscovered secrets is the name of the Royal Navy Ship involved. There is no evidence of HMS *LAWTON* in the First World War. My supposition is that *Lawton* is used a collective reference to an 'L' or *Laforey* -class torpedo boat destroyer to avoid giving too much information to an enemy. On 1 May 1915 L- class destroyers from Harwich took part in the Battle of Noordhinder Bank off the Dutch Coast.

Andrew Hemmings
Author SECRET NEWPORT

Historical Adviser – Films ' Newport and the Sea 1914-1918

NOTE: Photographs credit: David Swidenbank



A Voyage of Discovery

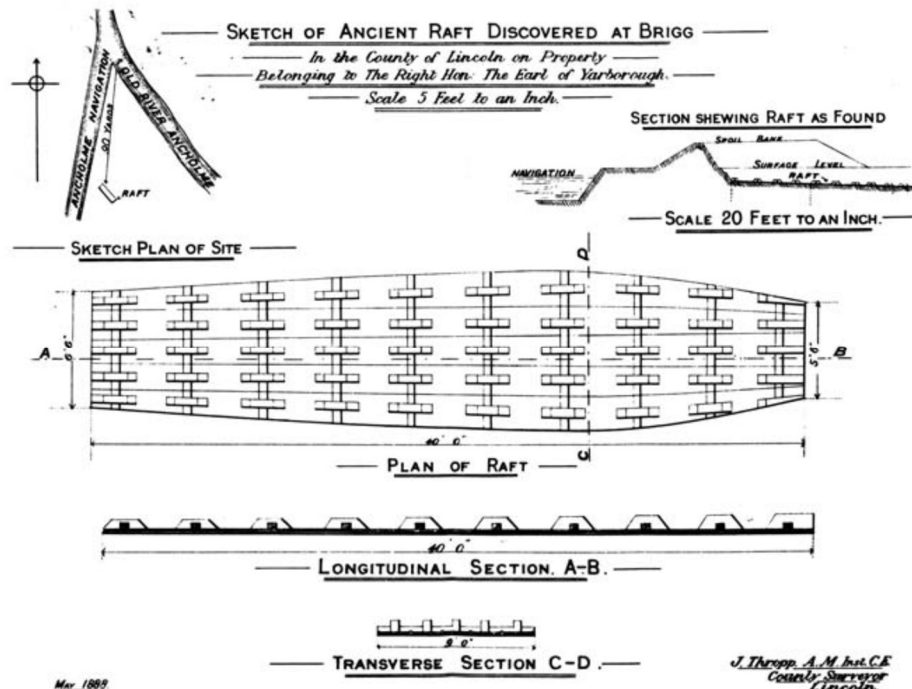
As a new FoNS Trustee, I was eager to be of use to the project, so I was delighted when our Chair Bob Evans asked if I would look into the possibility of having replicas made of the fragmentary Goldcliff boat timbers. Discovered in 1992 near the mouth of the Usk, they had been dated by dendrochronology to after 1017 BC and so were reckoned to be a late Bronze Age survival of a rarely found sewn plank boat. The plan is to use them as part of an enhanced display with other finds from the Levels not far from Newport in order to set our medieval ship within the wider context.



This was the beginning of a fascinating quest which even now continues. Firstly I had to establish where the timber fragments are now. It turned out that one is at Newport Museum, the other is in store at the National Museum Cardiff. Two days before lockdown I paid a visit to the Museum where I was shown not just one original oak timber, but also two replicas of each. These had been made for the Museum by computer numerical control (CNC) based on laser plotting scans which had been created by Toby Jones several years previously, shortly after the timber fragments had been conserved. The second pair of replicas had been made because the first set had been carved from creosote-impregnated reclaimed timber, a danger to health. It had been agreed by the FoNS trustees that we needed our own replicas for display at the ship centre. Toby Jones put me in touch with the replica-maker Graham Chapelhow of CNC Manufacturing and at the time of writing he has almost completed the job.

We want to display the replicas in such a way that the part they had played in an original boat would be clear to visitors. It turned out that the closest parallel to our fragments had been excavated in Lincolnshire many years ago, comprising a Bronze Age vessel, conserved at the National Maritime Museum and now on display at a local museum in Brigg. There, alongside the conserved boat, is displayed a 1:10 model of the supposed original vessel. Our interest lay in the possibility of having a similar model made to display at the Ship Centre alongside our replicas to illustrate the kind of boat our Goldcliff timbers might have come from. Using professional conservation contacts, I discovered that the original model-maker was no more and I was put in touch with another model maker, Kelvin Thatcher, who is now interested in making us a new model and who, it turns out, made the model of the Barlands Farm Romano-Celtic boat which is now on display at the Newport Ship Centre. (We discovered that I had met Kelvin some 40 years ago when he was working in conservation.)

The original Brigg model had been made to a design by renowned maritime archaeologist, Sean McGrail. Since then, another boat scholar, Owain Roberts, has come up with the theory that the original Brigg boat was not flat-bottomed, but was round-bilged, a shape which would have made it more sea-worthy. So we now have to decide on the shape for our new model; our timbers fail to answer the question. We also have to think about how to display or illustrate these and the other local boat finds, including those from Caldicot, Magor Pill and Tredunnoc. To quote Sean McGrail "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 4000 years." It is our Ship Centre challenge now, in collaboration with Newport Museum, to display and generate interest in this exceptional collection, using replicas and models, thereby setting the Newport Ship in its wider context and making a significant contribution to understanding the development of boats and ships not just around Newport but in the UK and beyond.



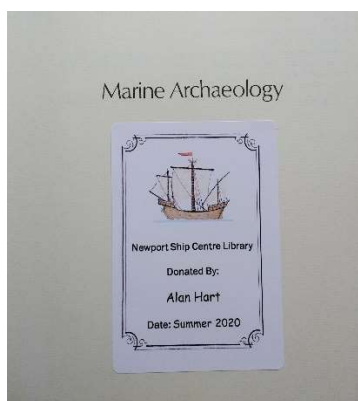
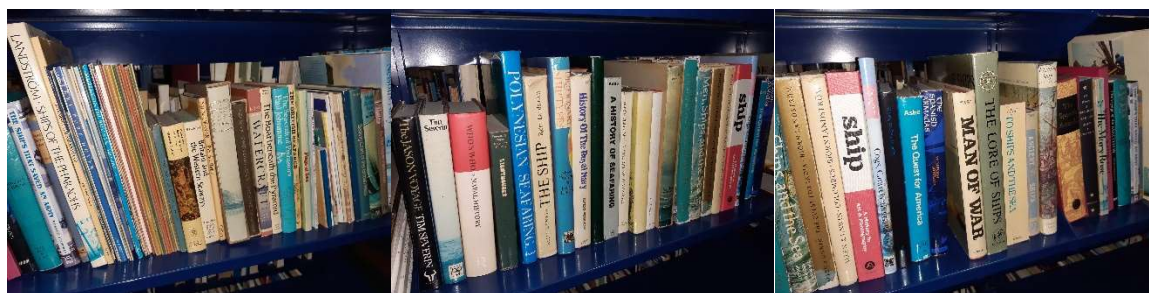
Further Reading See:

S McGrail, 'Ancient boats and ships in the Newport region', SOS Newsletter, 11, Summer 2007
 'Caldicot and Goldcliff', Nigel Nayling in *Wales and the Sea*, 10,000 of Welsh Maritime History, Ed. Mark Rednap, Sian Rees and Alan Aberg, RCAHMW, 2019

David Leigh



The Ship Centre Library News



David McLean has donated eight boxes of maritime archaeology books to The Newport Ship Centre, a welcome addition to the valuable library resource we are building. Together with the books David has also made a significant donation to the Friends to cover storage and shelving costs.

Sian is delighted with these exciting additions to the library which will keep her very busy cataloguing these new acquisitions.

We send our congratulations to Sian on submitting her Ph.D thesis, and wish her all the best with her forthcoming viva.

The library is currently located on mobile shelving in the timber store at the Ship Centre. Although not available for browsing, the books can be virtually browsed by subject, title or author via the website. You can borrow books from our library – please contact Toby Jones or Bob Evans.



Social Media

The Newport Ship Centre may be shut due to COVID-19 but the ship is still in the news and being noticed.

The power of Social Media will ensure that the Newport Medieval Ship stays in the minds of the public and added to the list of places to visit once lockdown eases.

Social Media can be used to drive traffic to specific areas of the website including the link to the guidebook, and more importantly The World of the Newport Medieval Ship.



Facebook

Newport Medieval Ship Project – facebook.com/newportship
Friends of Newport Ship – facebook.com/fonsnewportship



Twitter - @NewportShip

(Please note twitter is not as active as facebook) Does anybody love the twitter-sphere and fancy making this full of vibrant tweets?



Instagram - newport_ship

As well as our posts The Ship has a wide reach. With interest and sharing within Pinterest includes Medieval Archive, local papers; medieavalists.net, and people's collective wales. This is true across all social media platforms.

It is likely to be several weeks before we can reopen but there is still plenty we can do to advance the Ship project. There are two initiatives in particular for which we need volunteers.

- Emma Newrick is leading an initiative to create up to date schools material for the Newport heritage projects. Before we went into lockdown we were being overwhelmed by requests for visits and talks by local schools and we have a huge body of material which they can use for teaching purposes. It needs to be organised and written up in appropriate form but Emma can guide us on the right form and content and several local teachers have also offered their assistance. If you would like to help with this project, please let Chairman Bob know (chair@newportship.org), copying your reply to emma.newrick@newport.gov.uk
- We are participating in the **Digital Skills for Heritage** initiative. It is a free programme for small and medium heritage organisations seeking to develop their digital capabilities and capacity, supported by HLF. There is a website and a splendid series of webinars and guides to help us develop our capability. Liz Gulliver has offered to head this up and provide a lead for the Friends. If you are interested in taking this on, please get in touch with chair @newportship.org copying your reply to liz.gulliver@btinternet.com

I look forward to hearing from you



Fundraising News

Raise free funds Every time you shop online! Amazon Smile – support Friends of Newport Ship every time you buy something through Amazon. In order to take advantage of this opportunity go to smile.amazon.co.uk and select Friends of Newport Ship as your chosen charity. You can use your existing Amazon account but to qualify for the donation you must shop through the AmazonSmile website rather than the Amazon.co.uk website. Don't worry though, both the look of the screen and the shopping experience are the same. This is a good money raising scheme which can provide a useful income for the Friends so please support it.

Easyfundraising - don't forget that if you shop online you can sign up to [easyfundraising.org.uk](https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk) to support Friends of the Newport Ship. All you need to do is go to: www.easyfundraising.org.uk World of the Newport Medieval Ship Last year you may remember the Ship Centre hosted the launch of 'The World of the Newport Medieval Ship' which brings together all the current research and knowledge relating to both the Ship and the maritime history of that period. The book is a must read for anyone interested in medieval or maritime history or for those who want to better understand the ship and the world in which it sailed. Make sure you get your copy.

Purchase via website - <https://www.newportship.org/discover-the-ship/guidebook> or you can purchase a copy from Amazon.

