



Friends of Newport Ship

News Sheet – December 2020



Update from the Chairman

I would like to wish you a Merry Christmas and an equally safe and joyful New Year. It has been a difficult year for all of us and it will still be some time before we return to normality, whether for us as individuals or for the Newport Ship and its friends. But there is the prospect of better times on the horizon, so please take care until we can all get together again.



Recently, I was delighted to receive contact from Christian Douchement, who is writing a history for Cremieu in France and who had heard of our link with the town and wanted to know more about our “little white” coin as he so charmingly put it. It is heartening that, even during lockdown, we continue to develop our links with other people, both here and abroad and that news of the Ship continues to spread ever more widely.

As I set out in our previous newsletter, the Newport Ship project has weathered the storm rather better than most of the heritage sector and has taken the opportunity to update our facilities, improvements long overdue. Even since the last newsletter we have added significantly to our offerings with a series of three short, professionally made films featuring our curator Toby Jones, setting out the discovery and excavation of our Ship; the documentation and analysis of the findings; and our plans for reassembly and display. These films were launched at the virtual Ludlow Mediaeval Christmas Fayre in November and will be uploaded to our website shortly, so look out for them.

We go into 2021 on a stable financial footing, new displays and publicity and a group of new, enthusiastic volunteers. We will begin volunteer training in the New Year, hopefully in person, as well as online. We do not yet know when we will be allowed to reopen but we aim to be ready to do so any time after Easter.

In the meantime, enjoy our Christmas Newsletter and keep an eye on our website and Facebook page for further developments.

Bob Evans
chair@newportship.org



Secretary's Report

Thanks once again to all those members who have arranged standing orders to pay membership fees on or about 24 August each year. It makes my work and that of our Treasurer so much easier. Unfortunately we have nine "members" who, despite numerous reminders from me to pay member fees outstanding for at least two years, have failed to do so to date and, therefore, may be removed from the list of members at the end of this month.

In the last Newsletter I reported how, since March, we had to cancel numerous outside talks to interest groups and cancel group visits to the Ship Centre. Also all of the outside events such as Medieval Festivals where we would usually take our large exhibition gazebo were cancelled. I am pleased to report that we are trying to recover the situation in 2021 although we are not yet sure of when we will be able to reopen the Ship Centre to visitors. I have re-arranged fifteen talks postponed from this year, our Chairman has re-arranged one and our Curator Toby is trying to "roll over" his talks from this year into next year. Once we are able to reopen the Ship Centre we will arrange group visits postponed from this year.

We are also aiming to travel further afield to promote knowledge of our Ship and the following is the provisional schedule of outside events for 2021 which we are planning to attend:-

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 12/14 March (indoors) | TORM (The Original Re-enactors Market), Coventry |
| 5/7 June (gazebos) | Barnet Medieval Festival |
| 25/27 June (gazebos) | Chalke Valley History Festival |
| 9/11 July (in marquee) | Tewkesbury Medieval Festival |
| 14/15 August (gazebos) | M5 Show Spetchley Park Festival, Worcester |
| 20/22 August (gazebos) | Bosworth Medieval Festival |
| 27/31 August (gazebos) | England's Medieval Festival, Herstmonceux Castle, East Sussex |
| 25/26 September (indoors) | Local & Family History Fair, National Waterfront Museum, Swansea |
| 19/21 November (indoors) | NAS (Nautical Archaeology Society) Conference, Dublin |
| 12/14 November (indoors) | TORM Coventry |
| 26/28 November (gazebos) | Ludlow Medieval Christmas Fayre |

Inevitably, there will be other events to attend and support during the year, in particular in conjunction with organisations such as Living Levels, Newport Chartists etc.

With several covid vaccines now, or soon to be, available, let's hope that 2021 will be a happier year for us all.

Rob Kenny

secretary@newportship.org



Financial Statement December 2020

So far this financial year i.e. the period since 23/8/20 the bullet points are:-

Overall performance a small surplus of £455

Project support total £3367

Major items in the support total:-

Grant towards the purchase of a new faro arm £1000

Purchase of a replica of the Goldcliff plank for display in the centre £1800.

Included in the income which contributes to the small surplus are amounts of £4256 to support an animated film of the life of the ship and £1000 to help fund racking in the centre library. These amounts have yet to be requested. Obviously as these amounts will be eventually expended a more meaningful way of looking at the situation is:-

An overall deficit of £4801

Project financial support £8623

Obviously the lock down has meant that our activities have been suspended for all of calendar 2020. This bridges two financial years so the total effect will not be obvious when looking at the results of the financial years. If one compares calendar 2020 with calendar 2019 the following becomes clear. The figures are of course best estimates and rounded.

Gross margin (cash profit) from merchandise sales down £4200

Donations both via visitors to the centre and at outside events down £4350

Speaker's fees at outside events down £900

Grand Total £9450

There have been some generous donations from members which mitigates the above by about £2500.

So my best estimate of the effect of the lock down is a down turn of £7000

Peter Horleston, Treasurer FONS
Petergeo.horleston@bitinternet.com

Editor



Thank you for your warm welcome as I joined the team as Editor of your Newsheets and annual Newsletter. I have been taken aback by the genuine praise from so many of the readers who have contacted me. I have enjoyed putting the information together it seems as much as you have enjoyed reading it.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a Merry Christmas & Prosperous and Healthy 2021.

The plan is to continue with regular newsheets throughout the year. Here is the planned calendar.

Newsheets – January 2021 – March 2021 – May 2021 – July 2021 – October 2021 – December 2021

Annual Newsletter – September 2021

The newsheet is one of FoNS communication tools. We want the contents to be relevant to you. I would welcome any ideas you would like the Editorial team to consider along with any articles you may have on subjects relevant to the Newport Ship Project. Please do not hesitate to email me with your thoughts.

Liz Aiken, Editor
liz.aiken1@gmail.com



FONS Project Report 92nd Dec 2020

Dr. Toby Jones, Curator, Newport Medieval Ship Project

Dear FONS Members,

It has been a fairly quiet autumn here at the ship centre. The majority of my time has been spent working on projects for the Museum and Transporter Bridge, but there is still some ship project progress to report. Dr. Eric Nordgren and Laura Carmona continue to work on the active and passive conservation and audit of the many artefacts that were recovered alongside the hull timbers. Sian King is cataloguing the library books at an astonishing rate with many very interesting titles being 'discovered'. We have been testing the new multimedia drivers that will allow us to put loops of new images and videos on some of the display screens around the ship centre. For a variety of reasons beyond our control, we were unable to move a load of timbers from York to Portsmouth, but hope to pick this up again early in the New Year. On the academic front, I have been awarded an Honorary Research Fellowship at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, which will enable me to work closely with Prof Nigel Nayling over the next five years.

Thank you all for your continued support of the project!

Cheers

Toby



The Living Levels Project and Anglo-Oregon Brewing Company



As some of you know, for the last six years or so, I have run a small craft brewery in my spare time. Many of the beers we have made celebrate aspects of Newport's heritage, including the Newport Ship! We have just started to sell a brand new Extra Pale Ale called Putter for the Living Levels Project (to go with the Brinker imperial stout and the Stank Hen IPA that have already been released). If anyone wants more info, please visit the website: www.aobc.co.uk.

The Living Levels Project will shortly be releasing a film showing the brewing process and accompanied by a live Q&A/tasting session.



A Bone Tells A Story?

Today Laura Carmona rediscovered an interesting animal bone during an inspection and audit of the faunal remains assemblage. This particular bone, identified as coming from a large mammal, was part of a concretion which also included a small oyster shell, some Micaceous redware (ceramic) fragments, and some fragments of mica. This conglomeration of material was found right down in the bilges in the central part of the vessel, just forward of amidships. This area is called Context 152 and it relates to the use-life of the vessel, as opposed to subsequent 'higher' contexts that formed as the ship filled with alluvial sediment. This single concretion contains information relating to ceramic production and utilisation, diet/food processing (both mammals and shellfish), and several clues about the site formation process which caused the disparate items to be bound together. This shows that every single artefact/item tells a story!



Ludlow Medieval Fayre



For 21 years we've been kicking off the festive season in Ludlow with Ludlow Medieval Christmas Fayre and, though 2020 has been a strange, challenging year for everyone, we're making sure that in our 22nd year we can still bring some of that medieval magic to people in their homes. Through lockdown, first and second waves and then a second lockdown, we realised that it wasn't going to be possible to bring the Medieval Fayre to Ludlow in its usual form. We're a small family business and we knew as well that we absolutely wanted to make sure we were still celebrating, bringing people together, even if it's remotely, and rewarding our loyal audience with some enjoyable festive fare.

So we've been beaver away, bringing our wonderful exhibitors online, lining up our knights to fight live, filming our talented performers and demonstrators and lining up competitions and workshops for people to get involved with from wherever they are. You can find the programme and how you can get involved at [our website](https://www.ludlowmedievalchristmas.co.uk). The exhibitor listings go live on 28th November and stay live right up to Christmas Day, so you will have plenty of time to browse for the perfect gift or indulgent treat. This is the link to The Newport Ship Contribution - <https://www.ludlowmedievalchristmas.co.uk/friends-of-the-newport-medieval-ship>



Volunteers Keep in Touch with WhatsApp



Volunteers – without them FoNS could not operate and we thank everyone one of you from the bottom of our hearts. You the volunteers are the very fabric of our charity and help keep this project moving forward. It is therefore vital, especially in these times of rapid change that we keep in touch with all of our wonderful volunteers, and with this in mind, we have created a Volunteer group on the mobile phone chat platform WhatsApp.

If you are interested in volunteering with us (we have a range of tasks, small and large in the pipeline!), or you are already a volunteer and want to keep in touch, share your news and chat with other volunteers this is what you need to do:-

1. Send us a message via our Facebook page 'Friends of Newport Ship' or Send us an email to volunteer@newportship.org
2. If you are on WhatsApp joining details will be sent to you. Not a WhatsApp user, that can be simply resolved:
Download the app from your App Store e.g. Play Store, App Store etc. Onto your mobile phone. (Unfortunately WhatsApp is not yet available for tablets).

If you need any help, support or you have any questions please don't hesitate to email. There will be a solution!

Liz Gulliver
Committee Member (Social Media)



What Did A Medieval Lathe Look Like?

As part of the updating of the tools display, Toby and the team have recently restored the pole lathe to working order. Sourcing an 18ft ash sapling and getting it across Newport during lockdown was not the worst of it.....

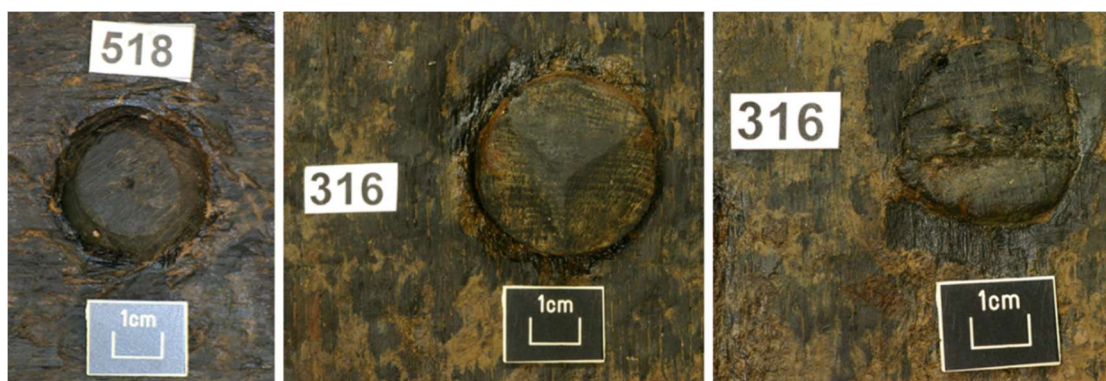


The lathe is an important part of the story of the Ship and like so much, it raises more questions than answers.

Treenails

We now know that our Ship was built in the Basque country around the year 1449, made of high-quality oak and constructed to exacting quality standards which impress even in the 21st Century. She had a clinker hull fixed by some 13,000 iron nails and, where the strakes crossed a framing timber, oak treenails.

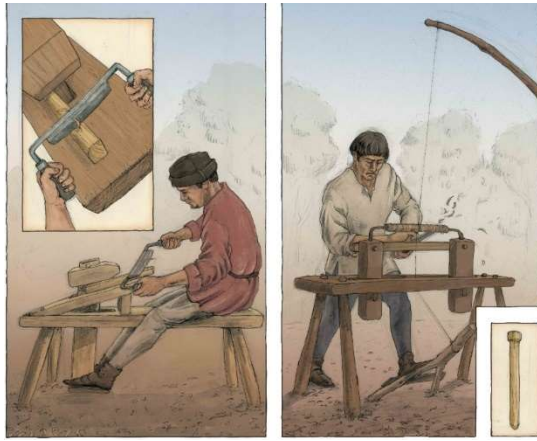
Our treenails were carefully made to exacting standards. As the photos below illustrate, some treenails have shaped heads (316) a few are wedged (316 right) but most show a dimple cut by the centre of the lathe (518)



These treenails are around 300mm long and a consistent 30mm in diameter, and there were about 8,000 of them used in our Ship. Treenails were commonly used in timber framing both for ships and houses but ours are unique in one respect: rather than being roughly carved on a shaving horse, many of them have been turned on a lathe, at least for their upper length, so that they fit exactly into the augur holes in the frames.



We know of no other example in Europe of treenails being prepared in this way and we do not know why anyone would go to such trouble. The most plausible explanation I have heard is from our friends on the SS Great Britain, which is that because the hull was built first and the frames fitted later it may be the turning was to ensure that treenails would fit first time and lock the frames in place quickly. Even so, the precision is in keeping with the astonishingly high standards of workmanship on the rest of the hull.



We have recently commissioned a series of illustrations showing the ship under construction and we need to decide what sort of lathe would be in use in the 15th Century Basque shipyard. The version in the illustration is based on the example in the Ship Centre. It is a very simple design, easy to move, and is based on the pole lathes used by bodgers - those over romanticised itinerant wood turners in the Buckinghamshire beech woods who turned out thousands of Windsor chair legs for the local furniture industry. But is it right for a 15th Century shipyard?

Our shipyard would have been a big industrial undertaking. Each vessel would need up to 10,000 treenails, apart from other turned pieces and we think that up to three vessels would be in construction at any one time, each taking 8-9 months. This is a large volume of turning, using green oak billets rather than softwood, each of which is produced to within a millimetre of accuracy. This makes it unlikely that the work was farmed out to local workers elsewhere and bought in, like the Windsor chair legs in the bodger tradition. Rather we are looking for industrial scale wood turning located in the shipyard itself. Treenails are not large in themselves and would not require a heavy lathe bed, but the volumes speak for themselves.

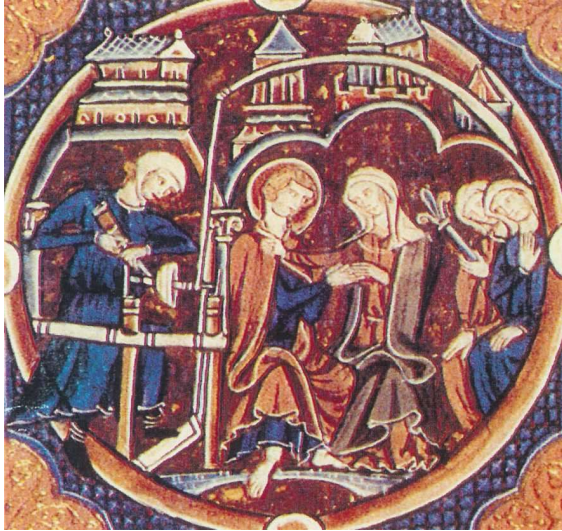
Producing illustrations is a salutary exercise which reminds us that we know very little about the appearance of early tools. We have very few original examples surviving and before books begin to become available, few illustrations of craft trades. Before 1500, we rely on archaeological finds, images in manuscripts, paintings, and carvings, and even these are scarce. Many of our conclusions rely on conjecture and the risky assumption that modern techniques resemble those in antiquity.

There is evidence for early lathes. There is a carved image of Egyptian craftsmen using a hand turned lathe. Remains of a lathe type device were found at the Meare Lakes Iron Age village at Glastonbury. Roman legionaries carried turned wooden bowls as part of their equipment and by Anglo Saxon times wooden bowls and other implements were common. We have the remains of a rest support for a wooden tool dating to 975AD from Coppergate in York. There is also a socketed hook end chisel and another example from Dorchester. Not all early lathes were pole lathes: bow lathes were also used for smaller objects and there is conjecture but no actual evidence of possible waterwheel driven tools. Da Vinci apparently drew designs for a rotary lathe using belts and flywheels. These were well known by the mid-16th Century for fine working. For the type of wood turning required by a shipyard, we can surmise that the simpler reciprocating design was used. But clearly by the 15th Century the lathe was a sophisticated machine with a long heritage.

The written record does not help us much. Ian Friel, in his work on Henry Vth's Navy turned up the tool list for the Southampton shipyard which built the Grace Dieu in 1416. The shipwrights' tools included a large number of augers, great clench-hammers, beetles, nine steel-reinforced hammers, at least one saw and a "lathe for planing boards (*ordinat-probord-inter planand*)." It is possible to hypothesise ways to use a lathe to assist in forming planks, but it is not obvious and the reference to a lathe may actually refer to a shaving horse or similar.

What did these shipyard lathes look like?

The earliest image I have found for a traditional lathe is an image in the "Bible of St Louis", dated to 1236.



This shows a design which is very like the lathe we have in the Ship Centre: simple, reliable and fit for purpose. But was this what our shipbuilders used? It does not seem quite right. A strong pole lathe takes a lot of space and the pole needs replacing regularly to keep its spring. The image of our Basque turners wandering out into the forest every Monday morning to cut a new pole has a certain picturesque ring, but it is not in keeping with an industrial operation which delivered large quantities to very fine standards.

We think that the lathes would have been used in the open – the only building in a shipyard would have been the forge. They would not need to be portable, although no doubt they were moved around from time to time. I see no reason to assume any sophisticated mechanisms such as screw adjustment would be required: speed would have been preferable to sophistication and our first reliable image of a screw mechanism used by woodworkers dates to 1568.



Given the amount of power required to turn a treenail we can assume that a sprung branch or pole was the motive source. There is some evidence that by the 13th Century lathe designs had developed which made use of a vertical post and a shorter springier branch attached to it, sometimes described as a “springpole” lathe (although this term is also used for traditional “pole” lathes as well). This allowed use of a lathe inside in a workshop setting.

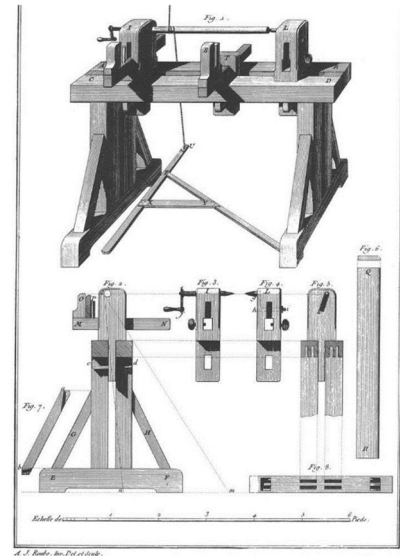
My faithful guide to late medieval crafts - the Nuremberg Housebook - has a good illustration of such an installation, dated to around 1425.

We know that in later years lathe design was developed to allow multiple lathes in a single room and in the 18th Century we have the collapsible “Hulot” lathe and subsequently treadle and mechanised versions.



John Horsley, in his book on Maritime Tools, has a sketch of a traditional workshop lathe with a heavy bed of wooden beams powered by a pole suspended horizontally across the ceiling of a workshop.

In present times, the resurgent interest in green woodworking has thrown up many more ingenious designs, including those powered by a bow suspended above the lathe bed and the “Westonbirt” version which has the branch fixed alongside the bed with the power transferred to a moving arm on a vertical post.



Here in Wales there is a traditional design which uses two vertical posts at either end of the lathe bed supporting a horizontal Rowan branch. This is powerful and compact. Our medieval predecessors were just as clever and inventive as us, but do we have any evidence for such designs being in use back then?

My conclusion is that we should be looking for a hybrid design – a solid framed lathe with a permanent bed, powered by a “pole” but with the pole not necessarily in the traditional position. But that is just conjecture. So my challenge to FoNS members is this. If you were working in a shipyard in 1449 charged with producing large quantities of turned oak treenails to a high degree of accuracy, what type of lathe would you use? Suggestions, references to images and examples from current woodworking practice will all be appreciated!

Bob Evans

Chair, Friends of the Newport Ship
October 2020

References:

- The Glastonbury Lake Village Bullard & Grey, Glastonbury Antiquarian Society 1911
- Anglo Saxon tools, Dennis Riley Anglo Saxon Books 2014
- Das Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwolfbruderstiftung zu Nurnberg,
- A History of Woodworking Tools WL Goodman (and unpublished archives) Bell&Son 1964
- Henry Vth's Navy Ian Friel The History Press 2015
- Tools and the Maritime Trades JE Horsley David & Charles 1978



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 mind 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 area 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



Fundraising News

Raise free funds Every time you shop online! Amazon Smile – support Friends of Newport Ship every time you buy something through Amazon. Look out for the ‘Eligible for AmazonSmile donation’ on the product page. Millions of products are eligible for donations and every time you buy one Amazon will make a donation to us at no cost to you. 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! Bookmark the page on your computer or laptop to make sure you always shop on AmazonSmile. If you use Amazon on a smart phone you may want to delete your existing Amazon.co.uk app. There is currently no app for AmazonSmile but you can share the website to your phone by tapping the share button at the bottom of the website and then tapping the ‘Add to home screen’ icon. You will now have an AmazonSmile icon on your home screen which you can use in exactly the same way as the Amazon app with the added benefit that Amazon will donate a percentage of the purchase price to FoNS!

Easyfundraising - If you shop online you can sign up to easyfundraising.org.uk to support Friends of the Newport Ship. All you need to do is go to: www.easyfundraising.org.uk

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.

