

S.O.S.



News from the Friends of the Newport Ship

No. 29 • October 2021 Free to FoNS Members **£3.00**

Preserved Timbers Coming Home to Newport September 2021



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INTRODUCTION TO FONS NEWSLETTER

It has been a good year for the Newport Ship and the Friends. After the uncertainties and trials of 2020, we reopened the Ship Centre to visitors in July and have been pleasantly surprised by how many people have visited. We are overwhelmed by requests for talks and private group visits. We have a new set of displays, a new cabin layout, more and better audio-visual screens. We are back up and running. Financially we remain sound. We are grateful for some large donations, which have allowed us to support the Ship project with new equipment and to underwrite the timber drying costs.

In this we are doing so much better than many of our counterparts with other heritage attractions, several of which may struggle to survive post COVID. Thank you to everyone who has given their support, whether financial or in time and effort. *It has made a difference!*

The Ship project itself is gathering pace, as you will see from Toby Jones's article below. The new arrangements with Mary Rose to dry our timbers are working well. We have now recovered all our timbers from YAT and transferred them to the Mary Rose Museum for freeze drying. Significant credit must be given to Toby who achieved a major logistical success with regard to the transfer of timbers despite the obstacles earlier this year caused by lockdowns, restricted travel regulations and seasonal inclement weather in Yorkshire. We recently received the first lorry load of dried timbers from Mary Rose and the accelerated process means that we hope to have all our timbers back by this time next year. Our project to produce a ten-minute film of a typical voyage is well under way and should be available shortly.

Next year is the 20th anniversary of the Ship's discovery. That seems an age ago now and none of us expected the conservation of the timbers to take this long. But in archaeological terms it has been very quick; our colleagues at Mary Rose remind us that it took them almost twice as long to get their museum! This is an appropriate time therefore for us to look forward to the next phase of the Ship's life which will see it reassembled and on display somewhere in Newport. We are reviving the discussions on reassembly and cradle design, and I hope that this will be a strong theme in our celebrations of the anniversary.

The future will not be easy, as the trials of our sister project on the Transporter Bridge have shown. Technical challenges remain, and we have yet to find suitable premises for the reconstruction project. Finances are much tighter than two years ago and will get tighter still. We will need to build strong relationships with funders and heritage groups and build a compelling case for them to support our project among so many. I am confident that this can be done, and I shall be stepping down as Chair at this AGM to devote my time to the Ship reassembly project.

As I look back over my time as Chair, I am astonished by how much we have achieved since I took over from Phil Cox in 2018. And this is despite COVID and lockdowns and much more. I am proud that the Friends have shown themselves to be a durable and fitting support for our Ship and I look forward to seeing what you achieve in the next three years.

Bob Evans
Chairman, FoNS

SECRETARY

Membership & Volunteers

As we would have expected, during the lockdown periods of the pandemic, we did not receive any applications for membership of FoNS other than two as a result of Zoom talks that I did to groups. However, since we re-opened to the public and groups in July this year, we have had four applications from visitors to the Ship Centre. Sadly, we have lost some members through death during the past year, including one of our expert panel, Sean McGrail and one of our popular volunteers, Lynne Crabbe. Nevertheless, we maintain a relatively satisfying membership of over 400 members of FoNS.

As usual, I would remind members that **annual member subscriptions were due on 24th August 2021** and I am pleased to report that over 75% of FoNS members now pay their subs by standing order which makes the work of our Treasurer and myself a lot easier. If you haven't yet paid your sub then please do so as soon as possible either by post

to me at PO Box 109, Caldicot, NP26 9AR or by direct payment to FoNS' bank account the details of which are as follows: sort code 40-34-27 account number 91841149. Please include your name and/or member number as a reference if paying direct to the bank so that I can identify the payer. If you are unsure whether or not you have paid your sub, please do not hesitate to contact me. There are several members who have sent me cheques although they have forgotten that they have set up standing orders and their subs are up to date. Without exception they tell me to regard the overpayment as a donation. *So I am not complaining!!*

Gift Aid is another major factor which I would appeal to members to consider, in particular those who joined FoNS via the website and pay their annual subs via PayPal. If you are a taxpayer and am unsure whether or not you have yet registered for Gift Aid with FoNS, please contact me. Registering for Gift Aid increases your contribution to FoNS by 25%, so £100 becomes £125 and FoNS needs every penny and pound it can get in order to support the Newport Ship Project.

Now to volunteers – You will be accustomed to myself and our current Chair, Bob Evans, appealing for individuals to come forward as volunteers. Bob's appeal in early 2020 had some encouraging success but the Covid lockdown in March/April of that year soon put paid to any progress. The re-opening of the Ship Centre to the general public and group visits since July has seen some recovery of the volunteer situation but there is a lot of lost ground to be made up.

At the AGM in November I will be taking over from Bob as Chair of FoNS and I intend to build on the foundation he has laid regarding volunteers. Whilst we still need more volunteers to assist in the Cabin (our on-site shop) and to act as visitors' guides at the Ship Centre, there are several more focused roles where we desperately need support such as the following:-

Marketing/PR – our committee members/Trustees, Liz Aiken and Liz Gulliver, already do a marvellous job with regard to social media, website etc. However, the existence of the Newport Ship and its international significance are not widely known, and we urgently need somebody with experience of dealing with the press. We need to be submitting regular articles of interest about the Ship to local, national and international news media.

Schools Education – in early 2020 we received numerous requests from junior schools for a speaker to tell their pupils about the Newport Ship. Unfortunately, the pandemic brought a halt to such visits, but this is an area we are very keen to develop. We need individuals who are used to dealing with young children, how to maintain their attention and interest and who have innovative ideas regarding the structure and content of such talks suitable to their age group.

Retail Management – following the sudden death of loyal volunteer Lynne Crabbe earlier this year and the recent retirement of Jean Gray, one of the founders of FoNS, our retail activities have lost two stalwarts. Our Vice Chair, Sian King, has agreed to act as an interim manager but Sian is very busy organising the library FoNS has developed over the past four years, and which now contains over 2400 books as well as a large number of journals. We need volunteer(s) to replace Sian and do the work which Jean and Lynne used to do, i.e. ordering suitable merchandise and organising the Cabin.

Fund raising – FoNS is quite successful in fund raising via merchandise sales and fees from speaking to outside groups as well as membership subs and donations. However, we are missing many opportunities to take advantage of other sources of funding, in particular grants available from numerous charitable trusts and funds. We need somebody who has both the skill and time to compile applications for such grants. The funds raised would enable FoNS to make further significant improvements to the displays at the Ship Centre, in particular interactive displays and virtual reality headsets, all of which require substantial funds.

The above are just four of the areas where FoNS would benefit from more volunteer assistance. Such individuals would not be required to become committee members or attend committee meetings so the time commitment would be very limited. If you believe that you could assist in any of these areas, please contact me so that we can have an initial discussion.

Robert Kenny ~ Secretary

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EDITOR

Time flies this is my second Annual newsletter. I look forward to continuing to deliver news throughout our 20th Anniversary year which is very exciting and feels like an important junction in the Ship's journey as we look forward beyond the process of drying out the timbers to preserve them.

A selection of photographs of the recently returned preserved timbers from the Mary Rose Centre to the Newport Ship.



The preserved timbers have a tale to tell and more will be revealed in the Christmas Newssheet.

The Living Levels Lottery funding is coming to an end in Spring 2022, and part of the legacy is the establishment of "Living Levels Ambassadors", to help your businesses, communities, and organisations prosper post-lockdown and Covid. More about how the ship fits into the legacy in future newssheets.

This is the 'Friends' newsletter and if you would like a particular topic explored that is relevant to the ship please do not hesitate to contact me to ensure our communications are relevant as we move the project forward beyond the 20th Anniversary.

Liz Aiken

*If you have ideas for newssheet or the Newsletter please do not hesitate to email me with your thoughts
liz.aiken1@gmail.com*

NEWPORT MEDIEVAL SHIP PROJECT

Dear FONS members,

Over the last year we have been focussing on conserving the remaining waterlogged ship timbers and preparing the ship centre for reopening after lockdown. Around 80% of the hull remains are now dry and safely stored in the big silver rooms at the ship centre. The environmental controls on these two chambers are quietly working in the background to maintain the ideal temperature and humidity regardless of seasonal changes. We recently collected another load of dried material from Mary Rose Archaeological Services in Portsmouth and are planning to collect the next batch in January 2022. We are hoping to complete the freeze drying of the entire hull assemblage by the Summer 2022!

A big thank you to members of FONS who assisted with the unloading and cataloguing of the most recent batch in September 2021. We are working with various partners to explore new and innovative solutions for supporting the (future) reassembled hull of the Newport ship. After a series of meetings at the International Symposium on Boat and Ship Archaeology in Croatia a few weeks ago, I am off

again to Sicily in Mid-October to advise on the structural problems facing the Marsala Punic Wreck which is reassembled and on display.



We are shortly going to be taking delivery of a new display touch screen provided by the Living Levels Landscape Project. It shows loads of videos and interactive programmes relating to various time periods in the history of the local area. On a related note, work is progressing on the extended digital animation showing a detailed view of what life was like onboard the Newport Ship in the 15th Century!

We are also in the planning stages of the 20th Anniversary of the ship's discovery. A whole series of events are planned for 2022 to commemorate the remarkable discovery and to chart the next steps on the path to getting the ship reassembled and on display! Thanks again for all your help and support over the last year!

Dr Toby Jones ~ Curator, Newport Medieval Ship Project

THE NEWPORT SHIP CENTRE LIBRARY NEWS

The Newport Ship Centre Library continues to grow. The cataloguing project is now complete, and the collection comprises around 2,400 books on a wide variety of subjects including archaeology, all aspects of maritime history, general medieval history and local history. We have many small semi-published items not readily available elsewhere which are likely to be of value to future researchers.

We are also fortunate in receiving some substantial donations this year, and would like to express our formal thanks to:

>> Timothy Bowly: 42 books about trade in the Bristol Channel

>> John Law & Sid Kidwell: 25 titles about Nelson's navy and related subjects

>> Alan Aberg: 5 titles on maritime history and back issues of *Mariners' Mirror* journal

>> Tony Hopkins: 3 titles on the medieval period

>> Jerry Cross: 5 titles on maritime subjects

>> John & Margaret Poulter: 4 titles on various medieval maritime subjects.

>> Amy Woolacott: 11 titles on the history of ships

For the 2020/21 financial year, the FONS trustees again allocated a small budget (£500) to buy new material, and the following books have been purchased:

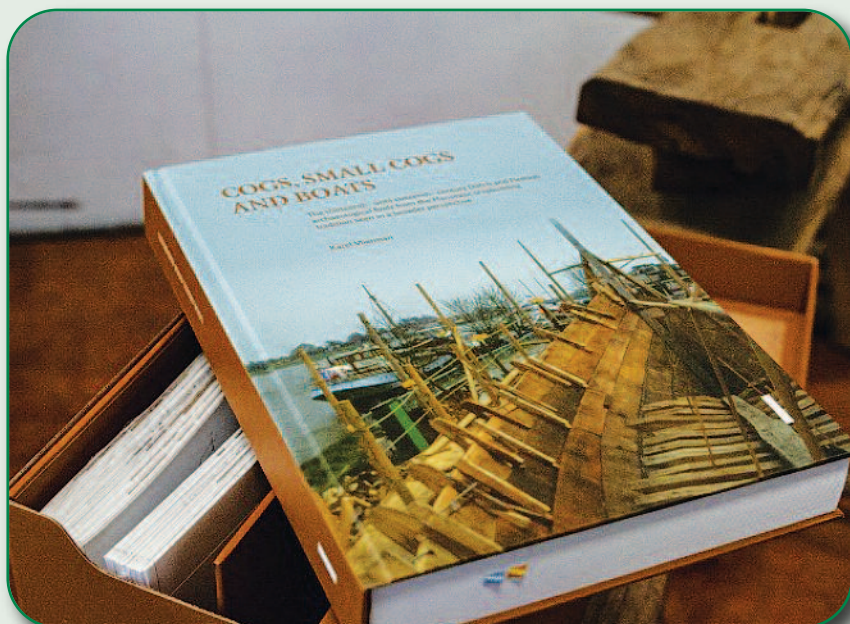
Author	Title	Publisher	Date	Price
Vlierman, Karel et al.	<i>Cogs, small cogs and boats</i>	Spa uitgevers	2020	£248.00
Schokkenbroek, Joost	<i>Ships and maritime landscapes</i>	Barkhuis	2017	£145.41
	<i>Gwent county history. 4 vols</i>	U. of Wales Press	2004-13	£195.60

In addition, we have purchased 14 second-hand books from John Bluglass at a total discounted price of £160.00.

The title edited by Vlierman is an exceptionally important two-volume work on the archaeology of medieval Dutch and Flemish cog boats. To quote from the publisher's lengthy promotional summary:

"Karel Vlierman explains the shipbuilding tradition of the Hanseatic period in detail and clarifies the differences between the cog and, for example, the 'nef' of the southern North Sea, which belongs to the Nordic or Scandinavian tradition. Based on the finds excavated at Kampen, he considers it very likely that a shipyard was located there in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century. The largest piece of woollen sail ever excavated was discovered at Kampen. Hundreds of typical iron clamps too were found, some of them unused, suggesting a blacksmith's workshop specifically dedicated to producing them. Ships could be hauled out from the water and, after repairs, sail to the Zuiderzee via the IJssel. This is the first cog shipyard ever to be discovered in the Netherlands ..."

This voluminous and impressive book will set the standard for publications on maritime archaeology for decades to come, as it is the landmark handbook for the way in which shipwrecks should be documented, described, and reconstructed.



The detailed manner in which the technical drawings have been created makes it possible to construct virtual 3D models. The vectorised drawings are of a very high quality and are available digitally."

As a reminder, the books are housed in the Ship Centre timber store, and can be virtually browsed by subject, title or author via the website at <https://www.newportship.org/archaeology-conservation/our-library>. If you are a member of FONS, you can borrow books from our library – please contact Toby Jones or Bob Evans.

Sian King ~ Librarian

MARINE ART HISTORY, “THE NEWPORT SHIP” AND ME.

In the run-up to the 20th Anniversary of the discovery of the Newport Ship in the River Usk, it may be the time to look in a little more detail at how the depiction of ships and the sea has evolved in general, and how the images of our ship, with which we are now familiar, may have changed our perception of marine history over the years. As a marine artist myself, and one who has become directly involved in this unique project, I have given some thought to this observation. I am grateful to the Friends and Toby for suggesting that I share my thoughts and knowledge with the members, many of whom have given a great deal of their time and effort to provide the general public with an appreciation of the importance of the ongoing work of preservation and research.

When looking at why marine history has played such an important role in the story of the world in general and of our island in particular, we probably need to

go back thousands of years, when much of Europe was densely forested, and most of the viable settlements were founded on the coast. Transport as we know it was unheard of in ancient times, as overland travel was difficult to say the least. Throughout pre-history, pack animals and small, open boats were therefore used almost exclusively for trade and territorial expansion. As time went on, larger and more sophisticated vessels were constructed for fishing, exploration and trading purposes, using technology which can still be seen today in Norway. In Norwegian coastal shipyards, clinker-built hulls are still shaped by hand (following Viking designs), using the same traditional tools that were used to build our ship nearly 600 years ago, including axes, adzes, awls, chisels, mallets, hammers and splitters.

Why has Britain always been considered to be among the greatest maritime nations?

Simple answer. We're an island with a very extensive coastline. Thousands upon thousands of our citizens have sailed the seven seas for hundreds of years. The oceans of the world and in particular our own shores (e.g. South Cornwall), are littered with the remains of the vessels which never returned to their home ports. What do the "promenaders" sing on the Last Night? Sea shanties (I grew up with them as we regularly sang these at school). When thinking of how important maritime history has always been in our culture, my wife Ruth (who was born in Newport) and I came up with these sentences. Contained within are no less than 16 nautical expressions with which we were familiar as children;

"Jack Tar was often on the wrong tack and always sailed close to the wind. In fact, he was a loose cannon. When told to clear the decks and to toe the line, he was usually at loggerheads with the mate, to whom he usually gave a wide berth, as he often accused Jack of swinging the lead and being at a loose end. After a square meal, he felt a bit listless, in the doldrums, groggy and seriously under the weather, so he keeled over."

It is no surprise then that the sea and ships have been portrayed by many European artisans and artists. One of my earliest memories of ship pictures was when my class was shown reproductions of the "Bayeux Tapestry" at primary school. As a visual story these are remarkable in themselves, as they show the ships which were used to invade this country in different contexts, from their construction to their uses (transporting horses for example). Not surprisingly, William the Conqueror's ships were all of an ancient Viking design (clinker built with curved high prows and sterns, as well as a shallow keel and a fairly flat bottom). The era of Viking supremacy in England was well past by that time, but the Normans (who were descended from Norsemen) continued to shape their vessels in a traditional way. Changes in shipbuilding techniques evolve slowly, as can be seen from this well-known example. However, as the centuries passed, ships became much larger and more complex. Masts and sails supplemented and eventually replaced banks of oars (large Roman "Triremes" had three!), navigational aids lengthened voyages, until mariners were able to sail to other parts of the world by Elizabethan times. It is known, for example, that ocean-going longships travelled to Greenland and Newfoundland in the North, and to the Eastern Mediterranean, not only for territorial expansion, but also to pillage and plunder richer nations within sailing distance. Bearing in mind that these ships were open to the elements, these voyages were a remarkable testament to the way in which ships were constructed for hundreds of years, and the toughness of the men who crewed them.

The Newport Ship was a development of these highly successful vessels, which were streamlined, adaptable and extremely seaworthy. Ruth and I were privileged to be able to help row a replica of the Oslo ship some years ago with other tourists in the Lofoten Islands. We were amazed at how easily the ship moved with a minimum of applied power from inexperienced rowers. Visually, the developments in ship technology were portrayed by embroiderers, weavers, potters, woodcarvers, engravers and artists, who also became progressively more sophisticated. We have a good idea of the configuration of Tudor Ships like "The Mary Rose", as not only do we have most of its hull, but also paintings executed at the time. However, as someone who has studied marine history and practised art for most of my life, I have become more and more aware of the pitfalls involved in recreating ships and the sea from looking at past examples.

When studying a wide range of different styles and subjects in early marine artwork, I have come to realise that much of it was executed for a specific reason. In many but not all cases, the paintings and etchings we have were commissioned by Royal or noble patrons, and often celebrated victories in naval battles, some being created on walls and ceilings on a huge scale in palaces and large houses. Although there are many paintings of merchant vessels and coastal craft, a large number of warships appear at various times. Examples of this are graphic depictions of the epic Battle of Lepanto in 1571 between a Catholic Alliance and the Ottoman Empire, and a number of sea battles between the Venetians and the Ottomans over two centuries. There are also celebratory depictions of the English fleet sent out to oppose the Spanish Armada in 1588, although there are few of the Spanish side (no surprises there!). In later years, the large number of works describing the death of Nelson at Trafalgar in the early 1800s reflect the interest the general public has often shown in heroic events and in the ships and sailors that defended nations from the aggression of foreign powers.

Sometimes artists are more interested in the ships themselves to bother with much background. This was not the case in Holland during the 16-1700s, however. As a powerful maritime nation itself, Dutch artists were concerned with vivid reality in all its forms, whether the artist was painting a simple barge or a battle involving huge men-of-war. In my opinion, many of these works of art are among the finest marine paintings ever made. They are realistic, vibrant, beautifully painted and often highly atmospheric. As the years progressed, the 19th century, being largely devoid of major conflicts, produced a wide range of "seascapes" and more

reflective work. Then came JMW Turner. He often portrayed the sea and ships as a naturalistic battleground between man and the awesome power of the elements, and, as a result, his marine paintings are often a maelstrom of colour, with the ships as small objects being attacked on all sides by the unforgiving water. However, one of his more gentle and most famous paintings, "The Fighting Temeraire" has to be the most reproduced piece of marine art in history. You can understand why, as it is sad but glorious and depicts an old Nelsonian man o'war being towed to the breakers at the end of its long life into a vibrant sunset.

Since JWM Turner, the fashion changed dramatically. During the late 1700s, trade with Japan and China became the focus of public interest in Europe. As a result, portrayals of the Far East became highly fashionable, and in particular paintings of the ships which formed the backbone of trade in that area. There are many depictions of the fast merchant ships of the East India Company still extant in both The Netherlands and England. These were superseded by portraits of China "Tea Clippers", both in the United States and in Great Britain. These ships were the ultimate greyhounds of the seas, and competed to bring the first teas home (for which the owners were handsomely rewarded). Between the 1830s and the 1860s, large numbers of these handsome vessels were built (it took 2 years on average to build them). Well known marine painters were fully employed creating accurate, if somewhat derivative pictures and etchings for the owners of these famous ships ("Cutty Sark" for example). Most are shown from the bow quarter, and have very little background, so as to emphasise the design of the ships themselves. In my mind, they are a perfect example of the "commercial" art that has continued to the present day.

What of the 20th Century? Two World Wars and The "Titanic" would seem to sum up the output of most marine artists. By the end of the Second World War, paintings of ships (except Spritsail Barges perhaps) were not fashionable among the general public. During the last century there was less interest in the "glorification" of war, and more awareness of the impact of tragedy and conflict in people's lives. Either way, the images produced to record these events would be unlikely to be hung in either galleries or people's homes, so, as a result, many of them are quite unknown.

Where do I personally fit in with these traditions? I have been considering that question for some time now, as I have taken it upon myself to attempt to create images of the Newport ship which are both as accurate as I can make them, but which are hopefully interesting for anyone who passes through



the doors of the Ship Centre hoping to find out more about the ship itself and its life in an era long past. Since finding out more about the design of the ship and the world in which it operated from drawings, models and articles on the subject, as well as from consulting and talking to experts on marine archaeology (especially Toby), the task of providing the Friends and the general public with pictures which are both informative and creative has been an interesting journey. Obviously, as the only part of the ship to survive was the lower part of the hull, it was a challenge to "rebuild" it with the rest of the hull, the masts and spars, rigging, armament and deck fittings. The first picture, "Final Resting Place", tried to put the ship in context and, using Ann Leaver's excellent recreation of Medieval Newport as a backdrop, showed a "light" ship devoid of spars and ballast being pulled into the pill by heavy horses. The second image, "Approaching Newport" is a reflection of the life of the ship when it traded between Portugal and England in the 1450s-60s, and attempts to present a realistic view of a fully crewed vessel of its time picking up a pilot in the Severn Estuary. I am flattered to have been asked to create a third picture to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the discovery of the ship in 2002. This will portray the vessel from a different perspective on one of its passages to England. I dedicate all three pictures to you all.

David Jordan



20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

Next year it will be twenty years since the first exciting discovery of the remains of our medieval ship in what were to become the foundations of the Riverfront Theatre and Arts Centre. There was a huge wave of support both at local level and nationally as word spread rapidly. The Welsh Government and Newport Council both offered significant financial support for the project to rescue the thousands of timbers and many other finds, and to conserve the timbers for eventual reconstruction. By the end of 2022 we confidently expect all the timbers to have been treated and be stable and ready for the re-assembly stage.

To celebrate this anniversary FoNS Trustees are planning a number of events, some of which will feature the people who were there at the time of discovery and those who have been involved since.

TALK ON HISTORY OF THE SHIP PROJECT, TUESDAY 12TH MAY

Toby will give a formal talk about the history of the ship project, this will be an official museum event and tickets will cost £5

FLAGSHIP OPEN DAY SATURDAY 30TH JULY @ NEWPORT SHIP CENTRE

Creating a Medieval atmosphere by a Fayre with reenactors and stalls and events/activities for all ages with food/drinks and more. It is hoped that there will be an Arts based competition running alongside the open day with prizes. Encouraging people to visit the centre and see how the ship is

now dried out and free of mud ready for the next stage – re-construction. The theme of the conference later in the year.

CONFERENCE THURSDAY 20TH OCTOBER @ RIVERFRONT, NEWPORT

This will provide not just a review of what we have done and where we are going by Curator, Dr Toby Jones, but reflections from speakers far and wide on the challenges and rewards of conserving and presenting early ships to the public. The conference will draw on the experiences from major museum/cultural regeneration projects including the Mary Rose, Swansea Waterfront Museum, SS Great Britain, Titanic Belfast, Cutty Sark, Albaola etc. The conference plans to create a sense of excitement, motivation and momentum as we ‘Look Forward’ – starting with the current position of the project and what comes next guiding FoNS and Newport Ship Project through the next phase in creating a major visitor attraction.

PUT THE DATE IN YOUR DIARY NOW: 20TH OCTOBER 2022!

Details of these events will be shared across our social media network and as part of future newsletter. They offer a chance for everyone to get involved and connect with the ship as people of Newport did when the ship was first found in 2002.

Other plans for the 20th Anniversary Year include an oral history/documentary project where we interview on film people's memories and stories relating to the discovery/excavation. There is a potential to turn this into a proper documentary, but at the very least it will create a valuable oral history record.

REMINISCENCES AND MUSINGS ON DIFFERENT SHIPS ON DISTANT SHORES – *with a fair bit of Name dropping!*

I always promote the importance of our ship by saying “It’s Britain’s only, and Europe’s most complete medieval ship”. But am I telling the truth? Firstly, we have another medieval ship in the form of the *Grace Dieu*. Admittedly, it’s lying on the bed of the river Hamble, with no plans to raise what is left of it. There are nice Victorian pen and ink sketches of rowing boats inside a “corral”, made by its frames protruding above the water, captioned as being “Inside the Viking ship”.

Oddly enough, we had our own “Viking ship”, here in Newport, discovered at the excavation of Timber Pond for the new Alexandria Dock in 1877. Sadly, more scientific dendro-chronological investigation has shown that, like the *Grace Dieu*, our Viking ship is of a later medieval, post-Viking age.

The *Grace Dieu* was a massive vessel, said to be 185 feet long with a beam of 50 feet and a mast 200 feet tall. It was launched some 30 years before the Newport ship and was built to defend the Solent and Southampton water from enemy assault.

Her size made her unstable and her crew nearly mutinied on her only sortie into the Solent. After this, she was moored in the Hamble, still with her crew and company of archers. You can get a glimpse of this stretch of water on your left-hand side if you travel eastbound on the M27 just after junction 8.

After 20 years of being “on station”, the *Grace Dieu* was struck by lightning and burned down to the waterline. For conspiracy theorists, there is the idea that she may have been the victim of arson by a disgruntled crew.

There are aerial photographs that show her outline in the mud but the curator of Southampton Museum has told me that he has been there at several very low tides and hasn't seen a thing. Nonetheless, Time Team put Tony Robinson into diving kit and managed to get some film of him examining her strakes.

So much for "Britain's only". What about "Europe's most complete"? Personally, I'd say the Bremen Cog is virtually complete. She was under construction when, in 1380, a flash flood swept her away into the River Weser.

This cog is a relatively small example, having a length of 77 feet and a beam of 23 feet with a cargo carrying capacity of 80 tons - well under half that of the Newport ship. Toby, our curator, says that you could fit the Cog inside the hull of the Newport ship, which I daresay you could then fit inside the hull of the *Grace Dieu*, like a Russian Matryoshka doll.

The Cog was re-discovered in 1962, thanks to the dredging operations in the Weser. Like the *Mary Rose* she spent many years being sprayed with preservatives and was not clearly visible to the public. Eventually, the process was completed and she went on show as one of the principal items of the Deutsches Schiffahrtsmuseum.

I'd long wanted to visit it, not least because its curator, Per Hoffman, had been one of the specialist experts who guided the progress of our ship. At the time, I was involved in taking aid to orphanages in Belarus, my co-driver and I said goodbye to our convoy at Berlin and headed up to Bremen and some miles on to Bremerhaven. It was encouraging to see signs for *Die Bremer Kogge* and the museum, some 40 miles out on the Autobahn. I wondered if we'd ever get that sort of signage on the M4. We arrived in Bremerhaven under a cloudburst. My co-driver, a South Wales police detective, and I dashed into a little guest house but found we had misunderstood the function of the premises... Like the men from the Sunday papers, we made our excuses and left!

We found appropriate lodgings and, in the morning, visited the cog. Regrettably, we didn't get to meet Per Hoffman, as he didn't work weekends. The cog was supported by steel cables, hanging from a gantry, which reminded me of the strings on a puppet. I'm told that this hasn't proved that effective and the cog is now propped up with scaffolding. As our curator notes, ships weren't designed to be out of water and many historic vessels are literally collapsing under their own weight. Hence, the development of an internal cradle for our ship is of crucial importance.

Considering the rakish angle of the bows and stern of the cog, its overall silhouette and the time it made its appearance, I wondered if its design had been influenced by Arab dhows, possibly seen by German

knights and mariners on the Crusades. After all, put a lateen sail on the cog and you would say that it was a dhow.

Europe learned so much from this contact with Islam, an endless list, windmills, the use of chemical dyes, spices and food preservation, fabrics - muslin, derived from "Muslim" - the use of Arabic numerals, algebra and astronomy, medicine. So many fields of influence, so why not in ship design?

Unfortunately, Owain Roberts, one of the principal experts to support our ship was unimpressed with my dhow/cog theory, thinking I was barking up the wrong (palm) tree, as the construction methods are different. In fairness, the distinctive hull shape of the cog can be traced from the small coastal and river craft used around the Frisian Islands in the 8th and 9th century, well before the Crusades. Never mind if you're going to have your theories quashed, have them quashed by the best!

On a more positive note, I've collected "bits and pieces which I thought might be useful one day". Two items were construction kits of cogs, made by the Russian company ZVEZDA. We are very lucky in having the services of a master modeller, Luke de Caux, who has assembled, rigged and painted the kit. It looks superb and is in the case at the centre. On the next shelf are replica medieval town seals that show cogs and similar vessels.

The second kit, which Luke is currently assembling, is of The Thomas, Edward III's flagship at the Battle of Sluys. This is a waterline model and Luke is experimenting with moulding the sea. The kit didn't have crewman included, but in the stack of "things which might be useful one day" was a packet of 1/72nd OO scale figures of the Sheriff of Nottingham's men-at-arms and a packet of Robin Hood's Merrie Men! I'm sure you'll be glad to read that both parties have put aside their former differences and have agreed to sign up to crew the King's cog!

At Sluys, in 1340, Edward won a sweeping victory, destroying the French fleet. According to Jeroen Vermeersch, a Belgian archaeologist, who spent several months working on our ship, the battle site is now four miles inland and the name is pronounced *s/oice*, like slice with a Birmingham accent!

Edward commemorated his victory by issuing a new coin, the Gold Noble, showing the King in armour aboard ship and carrying an inscription referring to Jesus walking through the midst of his enemies - taken from Luke 4 v30. This quotation became synonymous with this battle, a bit like "Never before in the field of human conflict..." will always be associated with the Battle of Britain.

It's also the same inscription that appears on the decorative brass strip on the helmet that we found

aboard our ship. Toby says that the helmet was already an antique when it was taken on board our ship. So could it have been from the time of the battle? Oh dear! I feel another theory coming on...

Subsequent kings continued to issue the Noble and I have five replica half Nobles of Henry V. These are high quality replicas, hand struck in pewter by master moneyer, Dave Greenhaugh, and plated in nine carat gold. They come with cards that tell you all about them and can be yours for just £3 a piece.

Charles Ferris



COFFIN AND SHIPS

September this year saw the press release of a rare Bronze Age find, unearthed during maintenance work on a Golf Club Pond in Tetney, Lincolnshire, UK, an oak coffin complete with lid (and occupant). Although predating our vessel by three and half thousand years and being a vessel for the deceased rather than of the living and their cargo, it was nevertheless of interest to see how, twenty years on from our own Ship's discovery, the archaeologists would approach the process of conserving the waterlogged oak.

Both our Ship and the coffin were very well preserved in wet silt which provides a deoxygenated environment well suited to arresting the decomposition of organic material. It's an environment...in former and present underwater worlds... that provides our best opportunities of finding the everyday things of the everyday folk... clothing, tools, food, the essentials of everyday living. That both were discovered during work, one maintenance of a pond and the other building into a reclaimed riverbank.... makes it sobering to think our vessel could have lain undisturbed for another three or four or more thousand years with very little change to her structure had work been conducted elsewhere.

The down side to this extraordinary preservation of anything organic is that as soon as it is exposed to the elements above ground it will once more return to the dining tables of the local microorganism community upon which they will feast heartily...the water that has seeped into every void in every cell of the once magnificent tree departs to re-join the water cycle after their geologically brief interlude...and without these precious molecules the cellulose walls disintegrate to dust....well, eventually but a lot sooner than several centuries. Both finds faced these same perils once removed from their silt cocoons. Therefore, time is of the essence and not just for economic reasons, unlike the Ship with two and half thousand timbers, seventeen hundred of which had to be painstakingly dismantled and recorded,

there are only about a dozen associated coffin pieces making extraction, dismantling and transportation a breeze in comparison.

But wet oak is heavy, very heavy, and the main coffin piece, a hollowed-out trunk being around half a tonne or 500kg (think half the weight of a family car), compares well with the 400kg of ship knee, a type of bracket or support found lying in the hull which would likewise demand careful lifting and handling.

Even a small find like the coffin, composed of a handful of timbers, requires careful labelling, though "cow tags" have now been replaced by more apt looking labels than the must have ear accessories for the Herefords about today's farms. No doubt recording and tracking the coffin timbers has posed less of an issue and taken up less file space on a server than for our Ship! Which brings me to wonder if it too has had its timbers laser scanned so digital miniatures can be printed and reconstructed....and if so, I'm guessing it'll take them considerably less time than the two years Dr Toby Jones et al took for the Ship 1/10th scale model.



The coffin containing the remains of a man and a perfectly preserved axe, were found by chance during works at Tetney golf course.
Photograph: Charlotte Graham as used by the Guardian in their article 10th September.

The conservation process, being carried out at the York Archaeological Trust facility is exactly the same two decades on, clean the surface of silt and other deposits, chemically treat to remove iron salts, and finally, the tried and trusted method of displacing water with polyethylene glycol, or PEG, by submerging in tanks, to give strength without decay. It's a passive process so cannot be rushed, taking years and even then, some water remains behind to threaten the structural integrity which must be forever banished by the final step of freeze drying... slow but you can measure this final step with a calendar. Considerably fewer tanks are needed for the coffin...and of considerably smaller size together with fewer pieces to handle meant the whole process takes around one tenth of the time our timbers needed...although other factors may be at play here such as degree of water content.

One other interesting similarity was the use of packing material within the coffin to cushion the deceased...yew or juniper.... evidence of Iberian juniper packaging, or dunnage as the nautical term would have it, was found in the bilges of our Ship too...suggests a long tradition of using juniper this way... the go to bubble wrap of its day... environmental and sustainable alternative!

The Ship shares the final ambition of the coffin, once returned to its location of discovery, for it to be reassembled and put on public display. One day, Newport Ship will again, like the coffin, come to know what it is like to be gazed upon in wonder.

Liz Gulliver

A tight squeeze finding a home
at the Ship centre



Every piece is tagged and safely stored
until the ship is restored.



SOCIAL MEDIA

The Newport Ship Centre may have been shut due to COVID-19 but the ship was still in the news and being noticed. The **power of Social Media** ensured that the Newport Medieval Ship stayed in the minds of the public and added to the list of places to visit once lockdown eased. It can also 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. Liz Gulliver has raised the profile of the Ship via FaceBook and Instagram. Twitter followers are the next target group. Friends of the Ship have a vital role in raising the profile by following then liking, commenting, and sharing the posts. This works as an invisible magic behind the scene as the post becomes important.



Newport Medieval Ship Project - facebook.com/newportship
or **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](https://www.instagram.com/newport_ship)

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NOTICE OF AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the friends of Newport ship will take place on Saturday 13th November at 2pm.

PLEASE NOTE:

The AGM will be a hybrid event, in-person at the Ship Centre and via **zoom**  for our many members not local to Newport, including those abroad.

