

Fore & Aft

The Purton Ships Graveyard

Winner of the Nautical Archaeological Societies converted national award: *Adopt A Wreck 2008, Certificate of Merit 2008 & The Scott Garret Award 2008*



I originally came across the Purton Ships Graveyard as a boy in 1976 and spent many a summer afternoon exploring the then almost intact vessels, whilst engaged in childhood fantasies of cutlass wielding pirates and a life of adventure on the high seas.

It was not until many years later in 1999 and upon returning from a life at sea for real, that my passion for the site (now sadly much eroded/destroyed) re-ignited and I embarked on a privately funded course of study to locate, chart and identify as many of the hulks a possible. To this end it has been established that the site, which stretches 1.5km to the north of Sharpness New Dock entrance, is the final resting place of 81 vessels and encapsulate steel, timber and concrete constructions.

Amazingly, ongoing research has established that the site is now deemed to be the largest of its kind in the U.K. and is formed in distinct layers including mighty ocean going *schooners*, reliable *Severn Trows*, sturdy *Wich Barges*, revolutionary concrete lighters and extremely rare *Stroudwater* and *Kennet* barges.

I would therefore be honoured to address your society and share the wonders of these once fine vessels whilst providing a historical narrative through the use of a unique slide presentation and an extensive photographic archive. This in turn will include information relating to original shipwright dimensions, cargo trade routes, former crewmember anecdotes and a description of the heroic beaching process onto the wind swept foreshore of this sleepy Gloucestershire hamlet.

The commentary is further complimented and vividly enhanced by the use of a mobile photographic exhibition, which aids to chronicle the life and sad demise of each vessel and in doing so, it gives a rare insight into the working live of each vessel, again during early days of abandonment and finally post decomposition/vandalism/arson/trophy hunters. Further and by the use modern surveying techniques, I have produced and will present as an aid to your membership, a schematic diagram, which locates each vessel by scale and heading.

In light of this, I am delighted to offer an individually tailored slide show ranging between a 30 minute site overview to a fully comprehensive two hour historical study of a long since extinct way of life. This can either be achieved by the use of an informal presentation or by conducting organised tours of the site where your members can obtain a true sense of nautical, vessel diversity and scale. Further for those wishing to attend site, I am able to offer a tailored package which includes the exclusive use of the *Lammastide* a family owned country pub offering a fully licensed restaurant and bar renowned for its excellent food, real ales and the warmest of Gloucestershire welcomes.

With fondest regards

Paul Barnett

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