

Bringing boat back to former glory

21st March 2016

The saving of the Lifeboat Henry Frederick Swan

WOODEN vessels, from collier brigs to pilot cobs, used to be the work horses of the Tyne. But over the years they have dwindled to almost nothing on the river.

But now a new South Tyneside-based group has committed itself to restoring what it believes is the neglected maritime heritage of this region, beginning with an historic lifeboat. JANIS BLOWER has been looking at the hopes and vision of the North East Maritime Trust. THESE days the Henry Frederick Swan looks as battered a survivor as the Tyne's maritime traditions.

It could even be said to have fared better.

The new North East Maritime Trust (NEMT) makes no bones of its belief that preservation and promotion of this area's marine heritage needs a serious boost.

Boat-building skills have almost disappeared, rare vessels are being scrapped, and there is insufficient educational support for passing on the record of our seafaring greatness to generations now coming along.

Even tourism doesn't tap the wealth of our seagoing legacy effectively enough, they say.

Plus there is a shortage of vessels, local and traditional to the area, on the water, with no guarantee that those that are will still be there for future generations.

What kind of vessels

Well, think of cobs, fishing boats, lifeboats, the double-ended fishing coble known as a mule, to mention just a few: all those largely wooden-built workaday craft that used to fill rivers like the Tyne in profusion but which, somehow, we let slide away unnoticed.

Which is where the Henry Frederick Swan, recorded by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) as being the longest-serving lifeboat in the UK, comes in.

Nearly 90 years after she first came to the river, she has returned to the Tyne to be restored here at South Shields by the newly-formed trust, which hopes she will be only the first of many projects that will redress years of neglect of a great nautical tradition.

With the support of South Tyneside Council and the Barbour Trust, the NEMT has taken premises in Wapping Street on the riverside where the lifeboat will be restored to her former glory.

"I think that the basing of a restoration of a lifeboat in South Shields is particularly apt, given the history of William Wouldhave and Henry Greathead, and the fact that she was a Tynemouth lifeboat originally" said retired naval architect Robert Hunter.

Directors include such influential figures as Peter Weightman, chairman of the Tyne-Tweed Coble and Keelboat Society, and Alec Renwick, founder, chairman and director of Sunderland Maritime Heritage.

Individually, some of the trustees have already themselves acquired and renewed traditional fishing craft for display on the water.

But the trust's work isn't just about the end result: that is, a fully-restored vessel.

They also want to offer training opportunities to young people with an interest in wooden boat construction, care and restoration.

"We want to hear from people who are keen to get involved, and to participate as helpers,"

It won over other locations on the north-east coast because of its established maritime roots, say the trust, who were looking for a location where vessels could be maintained by people with traditional

skills, and where those skills could be passed on to the next generation.

The trust also wants to build on the success, during the Mouth of the Tyne festival last year, of a Small Ships' Regatta which was organised by the NEMT's honorary secretary Alec Renwick and which brought more than 20 traditional sailing boats into the Tyne.

The NEMT is also interested in establishing a maritime centre on the river at South Shields, perhaps even with the construction of a replica collier brigantine.

Plus, a link has been established with the Roman fort of Arbeia which, one day, could lead to the construction of a replica Roman ship of the kind that served the fort when it was an important supply base for Hadrian's Wall.

n If you are interested in becoming a Friend of the North East Maritime Trust, registration for annual membership costs 10, payable to NEMT Friends. Write to Robert Hunter, 2 Westoe Hall, Westoe Village, South Shields NE33 3EG.

* THE Henry Frederick Swan was built during the First World War at the Cowes yard of S E Saunders on the Isle of Wight.

She cost 6,901 to construct, and was a gift from the widow of Henry Frederick Swan who had been prominent in Tyne shipbuilding circles and was also chairman of the Tynemouth branch of the RNLI for many years.

She replaced the previous Tynemouth lifeboat Henry Vernon, which had been transferred to Sunderland where it remained in service until 1935.

The Henry Frederick Swan's first recorded rescue was in the winter of 1920 when she went to the assistance of a steam trawler, the Current, that had run aground on the Black Middens.

In subsequent years the lifeboat, housed at Clifford's Fort at North Shields, was called out many times, but it was her last call-out of that era on the Tyne station that was also the most tragic.

Capsized

This was shortly before the Second World War when the Cullercoats lifeboat Richard Silver Oliver capsized while on exercise. Six of the 10 lifeboatmen aboard were lost.

The Henry Frederick Swan eventually passed into the reserve fleet in 1939, being replaced by the John Pyemont.

In 1941, however, an air raid destroyed both the RNLI and Tyne Lifeboat Society boathouses at North Shields, together with the boats John Pyemont and James Young that were inside them.

The Henry Frederick Swan consequently returned to service and during the war assisted several vessels, including the submarine Tuna when she ran aground south of St Mary's Island in 1943.

Eventually the old lifeboat was replaced with a new one, the Tynesider, and was subsequently acquired by local Sea Scouts, passing into private ownership.

Maritime group wins vital cash

[21st March 2016](#) [Admin](#) [Leave a comment](#)

A PROJECT to conserve historic north east maritime vessels has received a "kick start" after winning vital grant aid.

The North East Maritime Trust, based in Wapping Street, South Shields, is among 116 schemes in the region sharing grants worth £684,591 in the latest round of the Lottery's Awards for All programme. Awards for All is the small grants scheme administered

Peggy is back in the Water

[21st March 2016](#)



Sculling out of Stays

A Coble Restored

Old Northumbrian sailing coble “Peggy” has just been re-launched after extensive restoration work by Fred Crowell, Tyneside’s last wooden boatbuilder. Fred has been rebuilding the vessel over the last three months in his workshop next door to the North East Maritime Trust in Wapping Street, South Shields.

The 80 year old boat was saved by Mick Dawson (one of NEMT’s volunteers) and Fred Crowell, who has done much work on historic craft associated with the Trust, has replaced nearly half of the planking, much of the framing together with other difficult work on what was a very tired old boat. Peggy was built in Amble in 1925 and worked as a fishing boat out of Seahouses, Beadnell and Amble before migrating to Hartlepool where Mick found her.

She joins the growing collection of regional historical working craft, being built up under the umbrella of the North East Maritime Trust.

Sovereign Saved

[21st March 2016 Admin](#)



Sovereign in Royal Quays

Members of NEMT have purchased Sovereign, which until February was the UK's oldest working fishing boat. She was built in 1936 by Nobles of Fraserburgh and has been little altered since. Latterly she has been in the care of Keith Alexander who fished with her out of North Shields. Sovereign is a classic motor fishing boat of the middle of the twentieth century, a forty three footer with the beautiful hull shape developed for giving the manoeuvrability needed to work the ring net. The National Maritime Museum has placed her on the National Register of Historic Ships, certificate no.164.

At present Sovereign is berthed in St Peters alongside the restored fishing boats Rachel Douglas and Favourite but it is hoped that funds will soon be raised to get her onto the slipway for commencement of an authentic restoration.

Royal Diadem II back to Glory Days

21st March 2016 [Admin](#) [Leave a comment](#)



Gazette 2010

Celebrations down at the river front as the Royal Diadem II is unveiled! A very proud day for all.

Click on picture to enlarge:.....

Dividing the Site

[15th March 2016 Admin](#)

The number of boats that we have, or have an interest in, has outgrown the original site so they have been put in a site (technically a sub-folder) of their own.

- <http://nemaritimetrust.co.uk/boats/> /boats/ deleted by AR 17-Mar-24

Tall Ships 2010

[21st March 2016 Admin](#) [Leave a comment](#)

Rachel Douglas BK 231 in the lead followed by the recently restored coble “Royal DiademII” and “Favourite BK II”. All three berthed in Hartlepool Marina, centre of the hub of celebrations for 2010 Tall Ships. The reception was tremendous with over whelming interest and enthusiasm throughout our stay of four nights.

Sincere thanks goes to all our visitors for their interest and generosity and to Adam and Allen Henderson at Hartlepool Marina for being so accommodating and helpful.

Thanks also to the South Tyneside Community Area Forum for providing funds to cover the costs of taking the boats along so we could demonstrate and talk to so many of the public.

Click on following images to enlarge.

Boats Register

[21st March 2016](#)

There are now too many boats for the front page menu to handle so the boats that we love are now in their own sub-folder. They can be accessed in what may be considered their own site

Dates for 2016

[28th March 2016 Admin](#) [2 Comments](#)



Photo – SSVLB

April 2: Re-enactment of a rescue by breeches buoy at the south pier near the South Shields Voluntary Life Brigade. This will involve one of our fishing vessels acting as a wrecked ship from which the rescue will be carried-out. Visit [SSVLB](#) website.

May – July Talks by Tony Barrow and Kelso Yuill.

August Bank Holiday Newcastle Old Boats gathering at the NE1 pontoon.

September Boatyard Bistro

September Heritage Open Days **8 – 11th**

Fred's Shed

[5th April 2016](#)



Has anyone has a picture of the shed without a boat in it?

Pleased to be able to confirm that NEMT has signed the lease for the boatyard next door (that used to be the premises of Fred Crowell, who has retired).

Once we get essential repairs done, it promises to be great asset, allowing us to bring boats up the slipway into the yard and increasing our capacity for workspace and restoration projects.

NEMT & NFHT Boat Details

[19th April 2016](#)

Name	Built	Reg Number	Register
Favourite	1947	1050	National Historic Ships
Henry Frederick Swan	1917	2047	National Historic Ships
Rachel Douglas	1947	2296	National Historic Ships
Peggy	1924	2976	National Maritime Museum
Irene Patricia	1974	3006	National Maritime Museum
Golden Gleam	1948	2977	National Maritime Museum
Joan	c.1920	2899	National Maritime Museum

Royal Diadem II	1948 2327	National Maritime Museum
Spring Tide	1966 3004	National Maritime Museum
Orcadian	1908 3075	National Maritime Museum
Tyne	1833 1485	National Maritime Museum

Orcadian is a recent entry and is on our 'associated with' list

Detailed information on boats on the National Historic Ships Register at Greenwich can be accessed on nationalhistoricships.org.uk

Similarly – detailed information on all boats on the National Museum Small Boat Register can be accessed on nmmc.co.uk

NEMT – News Articles

[27th April 2016 Admin](#) [Leave a comment](#)

The site tidy was apparently to drastic for some and I think they have a point. Nearly all of it was archived and just needs bringing back.

It takes time and will be a fairly random process. TBE Aug 16

Bridlington Sailing Coble Festival, 13-14 August

[1st May 2016 Admin](#)

Organised by the Bridlington Sailing Coble Preservation Society and The Coble and Keelboat Society, in co-operation with the Bridlington Harbour Commissioners and proudly sponsored by the Independent Shellfishermen's Co-operative (Bridlington) Limited. [Complete flyer](#)

the Festival will bring together the largest gathering of sailing cobs anywhere in the British Isles in recent years.

Obviously, there is still time for any sailing coble owner who would like to be part of this spectacular event to make it known to the organisers and come along to Bridlington. It has the makings of a fantastic weekend.

Contact Paul L Arro

Email: plandsarro@plandsarro.karoo.co.uk

HFS Leaflet: Front and Back

[4th May 2016](#)

The Henry Frederick Swan was purchased by the North East Maritime Trust in 2005, as a long term restoration project, with the objective of bringing her back to her original Royal National Lifeboat Institution operational condition.

Following a condition survey, the 89 year old boat was found to be structurally sound, but with a number of problems of rotting timbers and rusted metal work. All fittings and engine were removed and she was stripped down to the bare wood.

A restoration plan was compiled and work began on the restoration in 2006. Rotten hull planking has been replaced, the fore and aft end boxes have been restored and new stem and stern posts and rudder made.

All original metal fittings, including the steering gear have been refurbished and where this was not possible, new fittings manufactured in the workshops, such as the drop keel and housing. The diesel engine has been completely stripped down, reconditioned and rebuilt. New sails have been manufactured by a specialist sail maker. The aim is to complete the restoration and get the Henry Frederick Swan back into the water in 2017, a 100 years after she was first launched.

HFS Leaflet: Centrefold

[4th May 2016](#)

The Henry Frederick Swan was purchased by the North East Maritime Trust in 2005, as a long term restoration project, with the objective of bringing her back to her original Royal National Lifeboat Institution operational condition. She has a length of 40ft, a width of 10ft 6ins, and weighs 10 tons 18cwt.

As a lifeboat, she was originally powered by a single 40hp 4-cylinder Tylor model C2 petrol engine that gave her a speed of 7.5 knots and a radius of action of 52 nautical miles at full speed. In addition to her crew of nine, she could carry more than sixty survivors. As a back-up to the single engine, auxiliary sails and 10 oars were carried.

Built by S.E. Saunders of Cowes, on the Isle of Wight, between 1915 and 1917, at a cost of £6901, she was funded by a legacy from Mrs. Lowe of Bath, in memory of her late husband, Henry Frederick Swan, Chairman of the Tynemouth Branch of the RNLI.

The lifeboat spent her entire operational career at Tynemouth, serving on two occasions, first between February 1918 and October 1939, then, following the destruction of the new 41ft Watson class motor lifeboat John Pyemont and boathouse during an air raid in April 1941, she returned serving till November 1947. During the 25 years as Tynemouth's lifeboat, she launched on service on 32 occasions and saved 8 lives.

In 1948, she was sold to the 3rd Tyne Sea Scouts, and in August 1950, she sailed to Gothenburg., with a crew of nineteen onboard. The boat left the Tyne and crossed the North Sea in two days reaching speeds of 7 knots under sail and power.

In June 1956, she was purchased by the 1st Alnmouth and Lesbury Sea Scouts, and in 1963, she was bought by the Hylton Red House Nautical School, and based at Sunderland and renamed Wearsider.

In 1972, she was sold into private ownership, renamed Survival, and based at Lemington. During the 1980's and 1990's she became semiderelict, stuck in the tidal mud under the New Scotswood Bridge, before being refloated and stored at Lemington Gut, until she she was purchased by the Trust and taken to the workshop in South Shields.

Shemaron Blog

[5th May 2016 Admin](#)

[Good article about the Sovereign](#) and the Shemaron is interesting as well.

Extracts from News Letter – June 16

[20th June 2016 Admin](#) [Leave a comment](#)



It is quite fitting to have the Royal Diadem II (the first boat we restored) to be the first boat in our new facility, which was previously Fred Crowell's boat yard.



The new rudder has had a trial fit to check the alignment of the pintle (rudder stock)



Restoration of the foy boat is nearing completion. After having knees, thwarts and seating made and fitted she is now getting a full paint job.

Fred's Shed

[22nd June 2016 Admin](#)



We now have a covered slipway and can repair boats up to 12 tonnes.

The shed needs some attention and we need to raise £28,000 to re-roof it.

[Please help.](#)

Talk – 27 July

[11th July 2016](#)



[“Maritime Heritage of NE England ”](#)

A talk by local historian Tony Barrow

Raffle

Light Refreshments

[1900 Hours – Wednesday 27th July](#)

at the North East Maritime Trust Workshops

2/3 Wapping Street, South Shields NE33 1LQ

[Tickets £5 each \(limited numbers\)](#)

Contact

The Maritime Trust 0191 4478814

Registered Charity Number 1117855 Company Number 5562737

Boat Curves at the Customs House

[6th August 2016](#) [Admin](#)

Not private – until 21st Sept 2016.



Heritage Open Days – 2016

[30th August 2016](#)



Informal guided tours of Fishermen's Workshops and the restoration of wooden historic vessels. A great opportunity to see maritime heritage items on display.

Opening Times

- Thursday 8 September: 1000-1530
- Friday 9 September: 1000-1530
- Saturday 10 September: 1000-1530
- Sunday 11 September: 1000-1530

Booking Details

No booking required

Directions

By Ferry from North Shields, Turn left at the main road after leaving the ferry landing. Pass the Alum House pub on your left. Take a left at the next roundabout and cut through the housing, keeping the river on your left. In a couple of minutes you will reach "Comical Corner" (by the Sea Cadet Headquarters) and we are 50yards on the left.

Little Sister

[18th September 2016](#) [Admin](#)

A blog steam for the new build 'Cygnet' has been created. This is the tender for the Henry Frederick Swan and is being built on the mezzanine in Fred's shed.

<http://nemaritimetrust.co.uk/cygnet/>

It would be best if anyone who who wishes to be become a regular contributor to apply for a user login ID which you can do through the [contact](#) on this site or clicking on the comments/reply fields in [cygnet](#).

Better still come along on a Monday or Thursday evening and ask for Mark.

Boat Yard Bistro

[18th September 2016 Admin](#)



The Counter

[18th October 2016 Admin](#)

The site counter stood at 747401 when it was transferred from the old counter on 18th October 2016. It had been running for 7 years.

Update March 2017

Jan 1st 2017 – Site: 750886; Cygnet 231;

Mar 15th 2017 – Site: 755,161; Cygnet 464; Newsletters 291;

Where we're at – Winter 2016

[30th November 2016 Admin](#)

Dear NEMT member,

A key part of the trust being able to take our boats onto the water for trips on the river and further afield lies, of course, with the renovation and maintenance of our existing 'fleet'. As you will no doubt be aware, we have three major projects underway at the trust at present – each with a variety of demands on volunteer time and expertise.

1. The lifeboat Henry Frederick Swan under the direction of Tim West has been our main project for several years now, and is beginning the final stages of what will be a fantastic and important piece of heritage restoration. Several of you continue to work on her on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Saturdays and we are very hopeful of a launch date in 2017.

2. Our boat-building classes are held on Monday and Thursday evenings and you may have seen progress recorded on our Facebook and Blogs. The boarding boat 'Cygnet' is our first new-build and we have laid the keel and major stern pieces ready for a recently purchased Stuart Tuner engine to be fitted.



3. Finally we have taken the sailing coble 'Peggy' up the slipway into our boatyard for assessment and repair under the direction of Dave Parker. She is one of the oldest cobs still afloat and is in need of some timbers to be replaced before a complete repaint. When finished she will again be a key asset and favourite among the public. We intend to restore her to her previous glory, but as you can see she is in need of some urgent work.

If you are interested in working on any (or all) of these projects then please come down to the yard on Tuesday, Wednesday or Saturday for Henry Frederick Swan, Monday or Thursday evenings for 'Cygnet' and get in touch with myself or Dave Parker if you would like to help with the work on 'Peggy'.

For each of these projects it would be brilliant if you are a heritage boat building specialist, but if – like most of us – you have few or no skills but an interest in learning and getting hands-on experience of a dying art, please get in touch or come down. You'd be most welcome!

Best Regards
Jerry Dudman
Secretary NEMT

