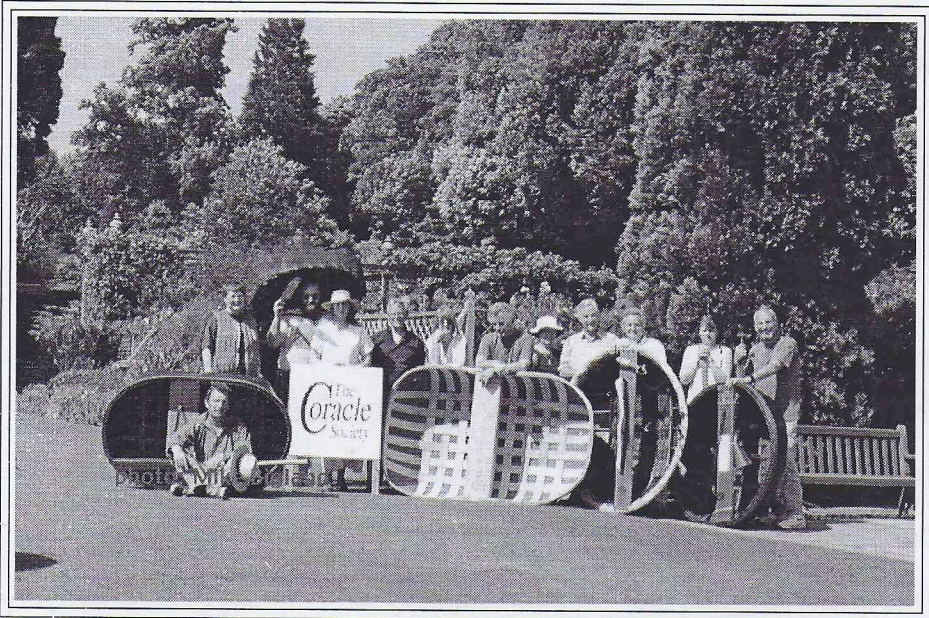




The Coracle Society



Gathering of Committee, members and friends at Bodnant-AGM 2000

November 2000

Coracle Society – Information

Coracle Society WEBSITE

www.coracle-society.org

Website developed by

christophersauvarin@bigfoot.com

The National Coracle Centre

01 239 710980

www.coraclecentre.co.uk

Millennium Dome

**See our President's TEIFI Coracle
on show in the: Journey Zone**

INSURANCE

**The Coracle Society now has Corporate Membership, class P, of the
I.W.A. (Inland Waterways Association)
Our Membership Number is 3003787.**

**This Insurance provides Public Liability cover for all Coracle Society
members whilst participating in 'official' events. If anyone intends to
organise a coracling event for and on behalf of the Coracle
Society, and wishes to take advantage of our Insurance, please
contact the Secretary for a schedule of limitations, exclusions etc. and
written authority confirming approval for the event.**

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Editor's Notes:-

I must confess to having as much interest in coracles as the gardens at Bodnant, they really are worth the visit as you see below.

Apologies to contributors for reductions in your text due to limited space, however do not let this deter any of you from submitting pictures and narrative on any coracle related subject. This magazine is your opportunity to further interest and promote coracling wherever you are.



Chairman's Report

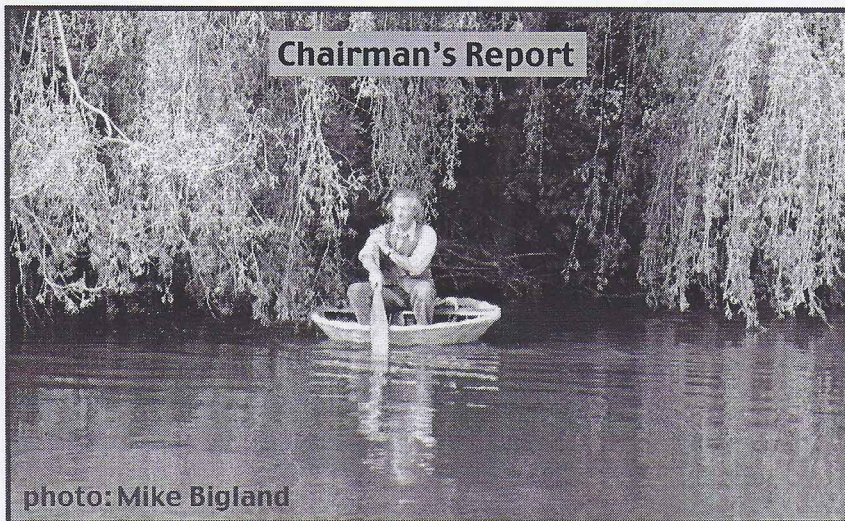


photo: Mike Bigland

Over the past year the Media have, generally, served us well in promoting and recording coracling activities. Conwy Richards in East Anglia and Graham Fisher in the Midlands have 'flown the flag' admirably bringing our activities into the public eye. Chris Sauvarin, our Education Officer, has set up our WEBSITE. Most enquiries it seems are coming from overseas.

The Regattas continued to draw the crowds and inspire new membership and enthusiasts. Last summer at Cilgerran the Society was well represented. Terry Kenny organised an exciting event at Ironbridge with an excellent attendance boosted by a variety of stalls and demonstrations organised by the local Lions Club.

At last we had sunshine at Leintwardine and a large crowd relaxed and enjoyed the fun. Simon and Alan Cooper displayed their Severn Long Net salmon punt, circa. 1920.

Mike Bigland, our Treasurer's husband, has taken over the Newsletter from Martin Fowler. Martin has had many problems with the newsletter over the last few years, none of his own doing, and we extend our warmest thanks for all his hard work in maintaining the high standard we have come to expect. His famous Coracle Centre at Cenarth puts great demands on him but he will continue to belong to our small Society with family values, friendship, trust and a sense of humour inexorably linked to a passion for the coracle in all its various forms. Finally my gratitude to all the dedicated Society officers who do so much good work.

Peter Faulkner
Chairman

Darlington & Stockton Times 30/06/2000

Touch of history for city regatta

THERE were anxious moments as a series of homemade coracles were launched in the still waters of England's most northerly point on the canal network.

But youngsters who had spent hours making the little boats had no need to worry.

The circular boats without a keel are made from green hush, woven basket style and covered in calico and sealed with three coats of bitumastic.

Fears of leaks were totally dispelled as the proud owners paddled their way down Ripon canal.

Ten vessels have now been launched on the canal as a prelude to a coracle regatta and family fun day at Ripon marina and racecourse on Saturday, August 26.

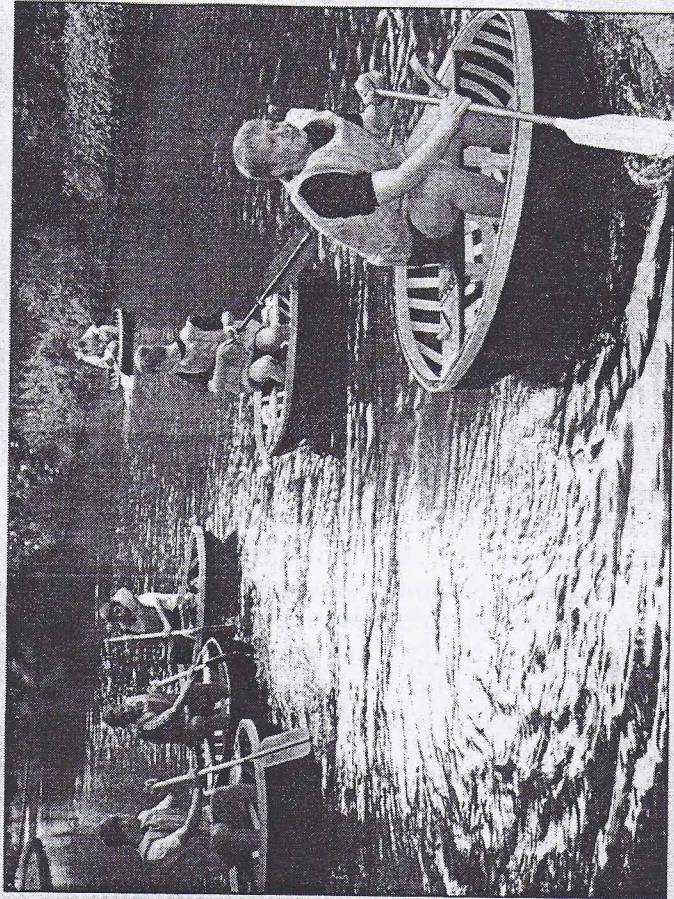
The rare art of coracle building has been brought to the city by Mr Dave Purvis, co-ordinator of Ripon youth arts, a group formed this year to encourage youngsters to take up the arts.

The group built the coracles in workshops provided by Ripon city college in Catherholme Road. One weekend adults built five coracles, and then passed on their skills to as many youngsters the following week.

"Coracles have a remarkably long history and were even written about by Julius Caesar," said Mr Purvis.

"Teenagers who built them did so as part of their skills section in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme.

Coracle society member Mr Purvis, who had backing for his courses from Ripon college craft teacher, Mr Simon Carrigan, said it was part of a wider plan to popularise the ancient craft again. The coracle society has enthusiasts in the North, although Mr Purvis knows of one in Thirsk and another in Darlington.



The coracles take to the water. - BR/DST

Mr Purvis, development director of Plumb Center in Ripon, said his interest in coracles was sparked by canoeing while living in the Scottish borders. "And apart from that, I'm a bit of

an eccentric," he said.

The coracles cost £40 each to build, and each took two days to make. Mr Purvis praised the invaluable help given by Melmerby-based timber mer-

chants Duffield's. Ahead of the water carnival, the coracles will be shown off in Ripon market place on August 9, using huge army water tanks.

Brest 2000

The rain pelted against the smoked glass window of my London office. In a week I'd be crossing the Channel with my father and David Smelt to build a skin currach at "Brest 2000".

The days seemed to drag but at last Plymouth was behind us as we steamed for Roskoff, it would then be only a 40 km. drive to the port of Brest. Our faithful van 'Jumbo' held all our requirements to make the 13' x 4' currach on site.

It was raining gently as we started work. Firstly holes had to be made in the Bretagne soil to take the hazel uprights. Slowly our structure grew and so did the crowd of curious onlookers. I wore the P.R. hat and had some difficulty to explain (in French) what we were doing. "Noisettier osier est trois peau de vâche" responded with 'Peau de vâche?' and my cool reply " Oui, oui trois peau de vâche!"

In the afternoon of the third day our framework was uprooted but not before the three of us had clomped on its back to prove its strength. Time for the hides to be lashed on! The rain clouds were swept away and suddenly the sun blazed down. The three sewn hides were rolled out like a pre-historic carpet with an appropriate odour! Once draped over the inverted frame lashing holes had to be punched around the perimeter. The hides were drying out very quickly in the blazing heat and pails of water had to be sloshed about, not very accurately at times, to the amusement of the onlookers. A large crowd surrounded the currach as at last it was turned over to reveal its true self. A few seconds of silence were followed by cheers and applause; it looked magnificent. Camera shutters clicked and everyone chattered excitedly. It was a proud moment indeed as the three of us got inside and sat on the ash thwarts.

L'hirondelle was christened with Bretagne cider. The hides were drying out so quickly now that Peter gave the go-ahead for the launch. A team of eager volunteers helped load the currach onto a trailer and with myself and Cathy, a new friend, aboard we processed majestically along isles of tents forging a course through the heaving crowds. Bewildered dogs cowered from this giant "chew".

After a few sticky moments negotiating the slipway we were suddenly afloat. The thrill of those first few minutes will never leave me. We sat poised like the British Olympic crew and then did a trip round the harbour, meeting cheers and applause all the way.

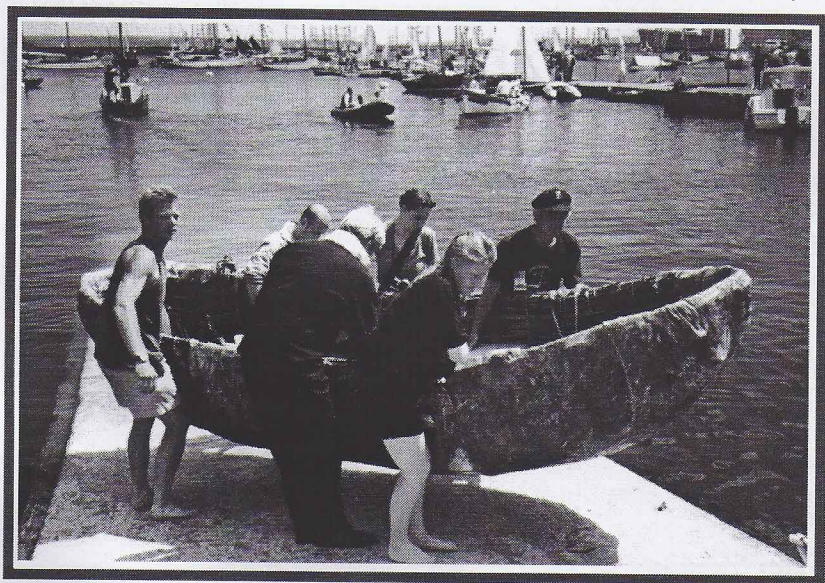
Louise Faulkner
Leintwardine.

Brest Report cont.....

The highlight of the festival for us was a three hour voyage the following afternoon when we explored the merchant harbour and then paddled up the Penfold River as far as the second bridge, the cut-off point for all craft. Camera shutters blinked, heads turned as our skin boat glided on the sun-soaked waters thronged with strange and wonderful exotic craft; an Iraqi 'guffa' was spotted on the deck of a Chinese Junk and a long 'dug-out' canoe came alongside to get a better look at us. Perhaps the most bizarre combination occurred as we paddled within a few feet along the black hull of a submarine. Those three magical hours will rank as one of life's highlights for the eight strong crew. Phil and Victor Smith from San Francisco will never be the same again, Francis and Catherine from Brest produced a magnificent photographic record of the whole event, Murray McPhail dreams on in Suffolk. Of the three builders David, a seasoned tall-ship sailor returned to Cornwall deeply impressed and enriched; Louise so profoundly moved by the whole Brest Experience, has left London and returned to the sticks and Peter envisages a 38ft. skin currach capable of crossing the atlantic in one voyage! There is firstly however, the business of the English Channel crossing to be disposed of. Bon voyage!

Peter Faulkner
Leintwardine.

The three builders, Peter, Louise & Murray
plus 2 Brest friends:- Francois & Cathy.



A.G.M. 2000 Bodnant Gardens

Where were you on Saturday 17th June ? Any member not at Bodnant missed not only a rare treat but an historical one too. You may perceive from the photograph on the front cover and those opposite that we had perfect weather in quite a glorious setting.

Bodnant is tucked away in North Wales but members from Suffolk, South Devon and West Wales braved the journey to attend.

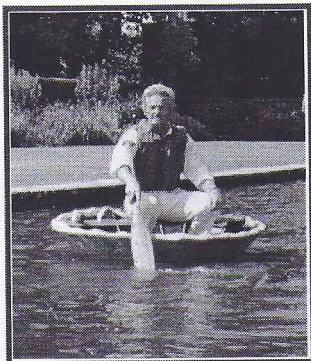
Last year we met at Cenarth, on the Teifi, so why North Wales ?

On the plain below Bodnant the mighty River Conway flows where Conway coracle men used to fish for salmon, as do their modern counterparts in South Wales today. James Hornell failed in the 1930's to 'discover' the Conway coracle and I quote "of old references to coracles on the River Conway none are to be found". The researches of Geraint Jenkins, our Founder President, were however more fruitful as can be seen in his book 'Nets and Coracles'. Having made a Conway coracle for Michael McLaren, Lord Aberconway's son, it seemed an ideal opportunity to re-establish the historical and traditional links in North Wales. After a short correspondence a preliminary visit was arranged for 22nd Feb. to plan the A.G.M. Vivienne (Hon Sec) and I accompanied by Deanna Jones travelled to Bodnant to meet Martin Puddle, General Manager and Head Gardener. After a very successful meeting Martin gave us a guided tour of the gardens where the camellias were in bloom, lending colour and delight to a rather dull winter's day.

Returning in June was something of a revelation. After the business meeting our happy band repaired to the Canal Terrace where a very ordered and successful demonstration was given (in sunshine) to the general public. An official address was given in Welsh, by our Chairman, and members took it in turns to demonstrate the five different coracle types on show. The perfect weather meant that we could relax and enjoy the afternoon thoroughly as did the general public some of whom needed little persuasion to 'have a go'. Fortunately there were no mishaps. It was however disappointing that the media were not interested in either publicity or reporting the event despite being circulated in plenty of time and given the historical significance of our presence.

May I on behalf of the Society, thank all those attending for contributing to the success of the event; to Lord Aberconway for his permission to use Bodnant and to Martin Puddle whose charm and cooperation made it trouble free.

Peter Faulkner
Chairman



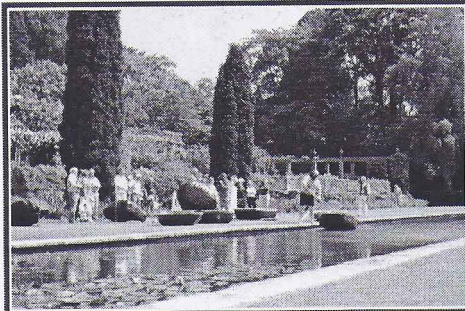
Demonstration time.



The canal stops here.



Your President proving that:- behind (and in front of) every great man is a long suffering lady.



A "chorus" of coracles.



Relaxing in the sun.

Ironbridge experience - 1994

We were welcomed, and introduced to our course tutor, Terry Kenny, who gave us a short outline of what the course entailed, and then we set to work. Terry gave clear, step-by-step instructions, as well as demonstrating what had to be done. We started with the seat, onto which we built a hoop-rim, and then the body framework. All materials were supplied as part of the course. The frame of green ash laths, were kept wet in a canvas trough of water. Working in the open air, a comradely spirit grew up as we shared tools and discussed our own and others progress.

On the second day the coracle really started to take shape, being built upside-down. The covering of calico was stitched into place and repeatedly coated with black bitumen.

Whilst this was drying we were given instruction on a local pond in already finished craft. The importance of balance, and the method of one paddle propulsion were demonstrated and learnt whilst drifting about on clear sparkling water, a calm and idyllic experience.

The latter stages of the course involved making paddles from broom handles and plywood, reviewing our progress and appreciating the significance of the location, the birthplace of the Industrial revolution. We all departed for home proudly showing our handiwork on the roofs of our cars for all to see.

Robert G. Galbraith



photo: Robert Galbraith (btm left)

Vietnam adventure pt: 1

A holiday-adventure to Vietnam and Cambodia in February 2000 started the Millennium with a very exciting tour.

We routed via Bangkok to Hanoi in the north of Vietnam to emerge in a delightful but jaded Indo-Chinese city with very strong French architectural influences. The new Capital City housing the mausoleum of Ho Chi Minh, is being slowly renovated after the ravages of the past 1000 years of conflict.

We enjoyed exploring the "old Chinese quarter" which gave the city centre its real character, with produce of every description falling out onto the pavements and streets from traders of all ethnic backgrounds.

Halong Bay with its megalithic eruptions from the sea-bed generating majestic pinnacles of rock for miles and miles was immersed in a sea fog of epic proportions. The seascape failed to emerge and we left only with memories of weird shapes and underground caverns filtered through the mist.

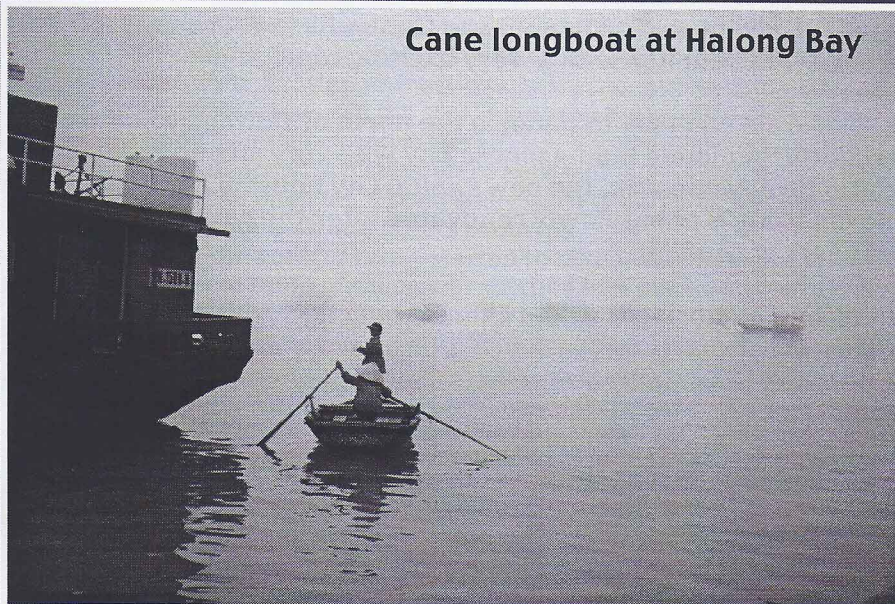
Danang in the central region is a very busy port and as we drove to Hoi An we could smell 'coracle country' We fell over our first cane boat in the harbour at Ho An and a short trip along the river Thu Bon revealed amazing suspended nets across the estuary used for fishing as the tide ebbed and flowed. Coracles of various shapes and sizes were scattered along the riverbank and at a boatyard (the last on this river) each fishing boat had a coracle tender. Lots of photos and research (for Peter Badge) and a very informative guide named Dang Lan who looked after us particularly well.

On to Hue and a longboat ride up the Perfume river. No coracles here as the flow is quite fast. Fascinating wooden longboats with wooden scoops and winches were dredging gravel from the riverbed and then transported to the city for building purposes. All equipment was hand powered, a desperate existence with all family chattels and the dog on board.

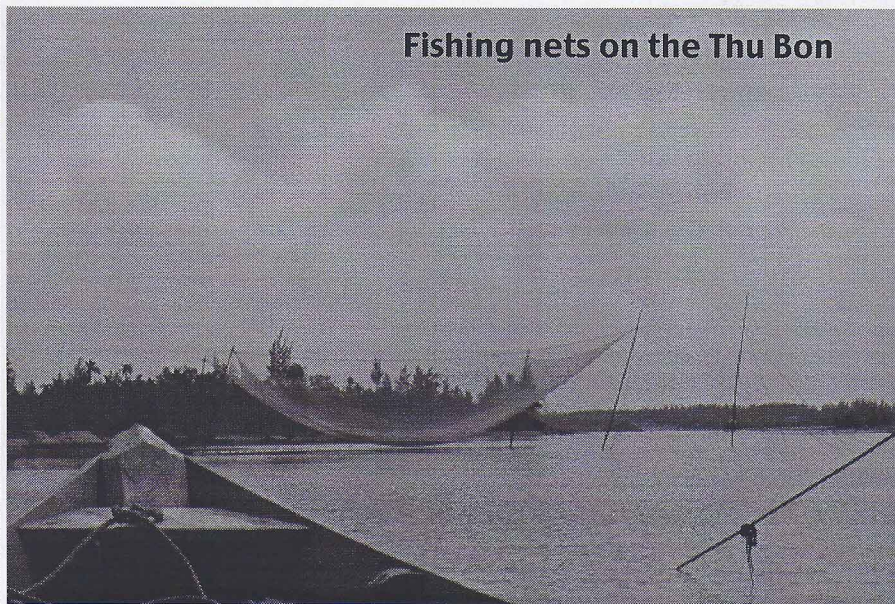
Residents of the riverbanks are used to being flooded out at least once per year - every year. What a formidable people.

Vietnam snaps

Cane longboat at Halong Bay



Fishing nets on the Thu Bon



Norwegian Wood

There are not too many coracles in Norway. Hardly a collection, collocation, colligation, convention, conventicle, just maybe a conclave of coracles? Perhaps we should stick with (a shoal, a rush, a cluster, or a covey) a flood of coracles.

On a beautiful August day in 1993 at "The Wooden Boat Festival" in the little port of Risør I met Peter Faulkner or was it Ben Gunn himself?

A year on we met again and admired the coracle amongst the magnificent shiny wooden ships costing a million times more.

Peter and Viv visited our home, and the decision was made to make a coracle there and then. An expedition into the local forests and lakeside produced enough hazel and willow to start the project.

Viewed by interested neighbours we toiled till dark and finished the frame and retired to celebrate the first coracle in southern Norway.

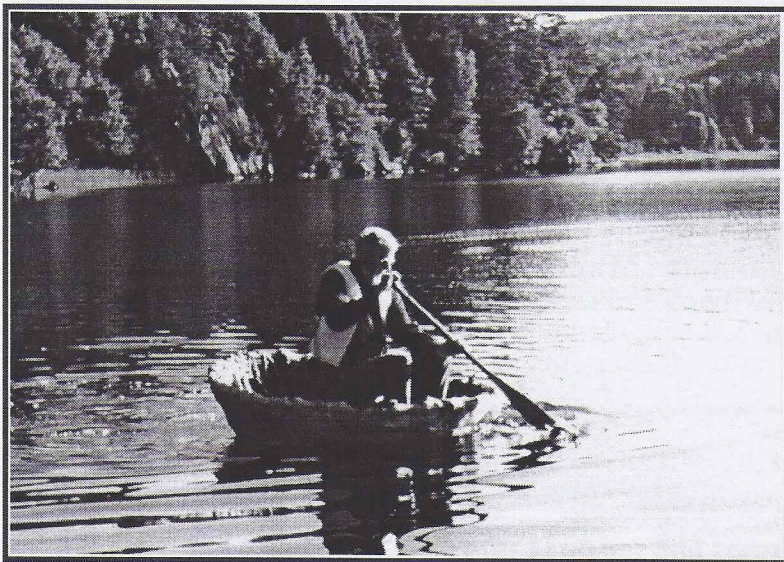
Peter and Viv departed for England leaving instructions as to covering the boat, which had to wait until the following summer. Assisted by a friend we cleaned the hide amidst a plague of flies and finally covered the craft two weeks later.

I have had many hours of pleasure on Ubergsvann lake as the picture below proves. My neighbours also enjoy coracling, a rare sight in Norway.

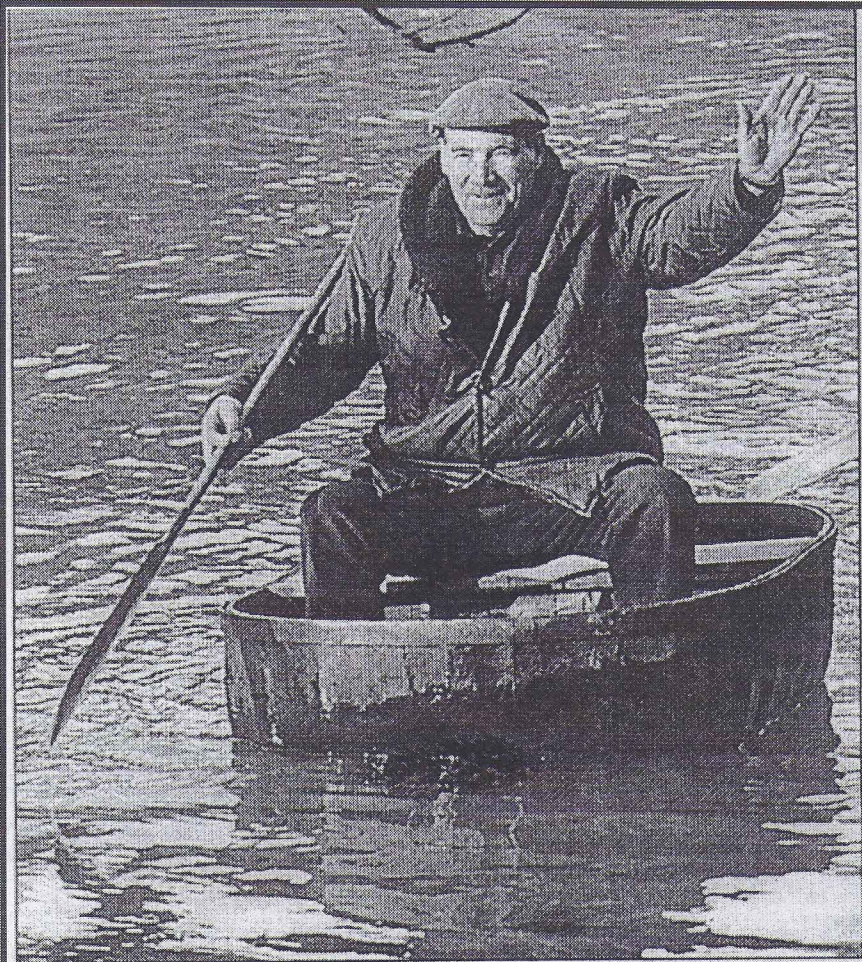
Andrew Dawson

Vegårshei, Norway.

My brother Michael tries his hand.



Football Crazy



Fond memories – Fred Davies, the famous ‘Coracle Man’ who died in 1994. The Town stalwart was renowned throughout the country for his prolific feats in retrieving balls from the River Sever alongside the ground.

Re-print from the Shropshire Star 24/10/2000 which had a major feature article on Shrewsbury Town Football Club.

List of Events 2001

**Morbihan Gulf Sea Festival
(Breton – France)**

22nd–27th May

Leintwardine Regatta

Sat. 9th June

Cilgerran Regatta

Sat. 18th August

Ironbridge Regatta

Mon. 27th August

Portsmouth Festival of the Sea

24th–27th August

Editors note: An up–dated flyer will be issued in the spring to clarify all the above and add any new entries.

Keeping a Brest of maritime history or.....

photo: Catherine Davy le bolloch

BREST 2000



Making the Brest of a bad job.

Peter Faulkner and “crew”

Officers of the Coracle Society

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