

Carmarthen Coracle Stories

Julie Rees

Carmarthen Coracle Netsmen's Association have been working with local story-teller Andy Edwards to record and capture their 'Stories from the River'.

Andy has been visiting various local primary schools in Carmarthen with his traditional coracle dressed in character as a 19th century coracle man. The children have listened to how the coracle men struggled to earn money for their families, how they were regarded as the town's poor folk and relied on the coracles for survival.



After Andy's visit, the children were then encouraged to make their own coracles from recycled material.

Vietnamese Coracle In South Wales

Martin Fowler



When Major David Goddard retired from the British Army, he travelled to many parts of the world collecting water craft and founded the Exeter Maritime Museum which opened in 1969 and ran until 1997.

In 1991 he arrived at the National Coracle Centre here in Cenarth on our official opening day and donated the guffa from Iraq, and this coracle from Vietnam - which he had brought back from Hong Kong.

Recently, I received correspondence from a former Hong Kong Maritime Police officer with some interesting information on this coracle's history.

Dear Mr Fowler,

My name is Les Bird, and for many years I was a Marine Police officer in Hong Kong. Recently a former colleague drew my attention to the Vietnamese coracle that is part of your collection at the National Coracle Centre.

For much of my service in Hong Kong I was involved with patrolling the South China Sea, in search of refugees from Vietnam trying to make land. In the early 1980s I recall finding the coracle that you have in your museum when we intercepted a Vietnamese fishing vessel in the waters to the south of Hong Kong. On board were between 30 and 40 refugees and also on board was the coracle now on display in your museum.

They may have been carrying it on board as a tender or last-ditch safety boat.

It was the normal procedure in Hong Kong at that time to destroy all such craft after the case of such people had been settled. These vessels had been arriving in their hundreds since the end of the war in Vietnam.

When we saw the coracle we realised there was an opportunity to save at least one Vietnamese craft. Provided we didn't officially report finding it, it would not be taken away and destroyed.

We kept the coracle at Marine Headquarters for about a year.

One of my colleagues had a connection with the Exeter Maritime Museum in Britain and we arranged safe passage for the coracle on board a merchant ship bound for the U.K.

Best wishes and good luck with the museum

Les Bird

Bernard Thomas and I tried the Vietnamese coracle out on the river in Cenarth many years ago... and nearly sank!

The picture of myself with the coracle in the museum was sent to the Vietnam Heritage Museum in California, where it is now part of the exhibition.



Photo: Martin Fowler

Myself and Bernard Thomas

www.coraclesociety.org.uk

Your Society Needs You!

Dylan Jones, our Secretary, will step down this year after over a decade of service to the Society. We are therefore looking for a new Secretary to join the committee.

Tasks are mostly handing email/phone correspondance, plus attending 3 meetings a year. Requires about an hour of input per month, Only requirements are membership of the Society and able to use internet/email. Contact Euan Raffel for more info.

2023 events calendar

If you know of any other events taking place this year, please let us know!
If only an email address is provided below as the contact information and you do not use email, you can ask the Secretary to contact the organisers on your behalf

Coracle making workshop - 13/14 May 2023

Caersws, SY17 5JP. Contact Pippa Scott - phone 01686 420423 or email pippa.gorfanc@gmail.com

Neath Steam & Vintage Show - 10/11 June 2023

Neath, SA10 8SP. Contact Neath Steam & Vintage Show - phone 07971 167651

Coracle Races @ Carmarthen River Festival - 15 July 2023

Carmarthen, SA31 3LN. Contact Carmarthen River Festival - email carmarthenriverfestival@gmail.com

Trent Coracle Drift - 15 July 2023

Swarkestone, Derby, DE73 7JA. Contact the Secretary

Royal Welsh Show - 24-27 July 2023

Builth Wells, LD2 3SY. Contact RWAS - phone 01982 553683

Cilgerran Coracle Regatta - 19 August 2023

Cilgerran, SA43 2SS. Contact the Secretary

Ironbridge Coracle Regatta - 28 August 2023

Ironbridge, TF8 7BJ. Contact Ironbridge Coracle Trust - email admin@ironbridgecoracles.org

Welsh Game Fair - 9/10 September 2023

Bangor, LL57 4BP. Contact the Secretary

Details of the 2023 AGM will be released in due course and communicated in the usual ways

The Coracle Society Officers 2022/23

President	Peter Faulkner
Vice Presidents	Rod Bowen John Davies Martin Fowler Terry Kenny
Honorary Chairperson	Mark Dellar
Honorary Vice Chairperson	Malcolm Rees
Secretary	Dylan Jones
Treasurer	Euan Raffel
Committee	Gary Fruland June Lewis Jude Pilgrim Dave Purvis Julie Rees Peter Stanyon Bruce Watson
Teifi netsmen's representative	Mark Dellar
Tywi netsmen's representative	Malcolm Rees
Ironbridge representative	Terry Kenny

Contact us

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