

MARITIME HERITAGE EAST

NEWSLETTER

RENAISSANCE
EAST OF ENGLAND
museums for
changing lives

na
NORFOLK Museums
& Archaeology Service



November 2007

Maritime Heritage East website

People from 17 museums from Norfolk and Suffolk attended an enjoyable website training day at Great Yarmouth. In November, squeezing in a look round Time and Tide and lunch in the café as well.

At the end of the session those attending were able to edit their own museum pages, upload images and begin to create online exhibitions, with an enthusiasm to develop the website content

The days were also an opportunity for people to talk to each other about their collections, museums and common issues.



The sessions were also useful in generating constructive feedback for Simon the website designer.

Remember, don't hesitate to contact Katy Swift on 01493 743931 with any queries or concerns

Harwich Maritime Heritage

Old Harwich is blessed with an abundance of maritime heritage! The Maritime Museum is located in the 3 storey former 1818 Low Lighthouse overlooking Harwich harbour and is crammed with nautical memorabilia with displays on the Royal Navy and commercial shipping.

At the Lifeboat Museum visitors can go aboard the last offshore lifeboat from Clacton which is housed in the original Victorian lifeboathouse.

The circular Redoubt Fort was built in 1808 to protect the harbour from a Napoleonic invasion. The casemates (rooms for soldiers, stores and ammunition) now accommodate various maritime, military and bygone collections.

The Maritime Heritage Trail passes the unique 17th century Treadwheel crane, originally used in the Navy Yard.

Old Harwich also boasts several picturesque merchants houses, inns and hotels dating from the 16th century and which indicate Georgian prosperity.

The companion leading light to the Low Lighthouse is the 9 sided High Lighthouse although both are now redundant due to shifting sands.

A 90ft long mural displays local buildings and ships, whilst the Harwich Light Vessel is anchored out in the channel. Harwich's continuing maritime connections are in evidence at the Trinity House Buoy maintenance yard..



Harwich Maritime Mural

Tidal Surge at RNLI Henry Blogg Museum by Jacqui Palmer

The tidal surge of Friday 9 November pushed in the enormous blue boat doors, letting the sea into the building. The doors were buckled and bent by the unusual weather and were re-hung, straightened and re-enforced before the next high tide.

The storm tossed and spilt the protective sandbags and toppled displays and information panels. Very few items were on floor level and vulnerable items are set up on plinths due to the danger of flood. There was however damage to the building, displays, interactives and electrics.

Volunteers rushed down to help with clearing up as soon as it was safe.



Conservator George Monger assessed any damage to the collection and the prognosis is good. The shop re-opened within two weeks and we will replace, repair and take the opportunity to improve the displays before we reopen in February.

Sailmakers palms and needles

by Des Pawson MBE, Museum of Knots & Sailors' Ropework, 501 Wherstead Road, Ipswich, IP2 8LL, tel : 01473 690090, des@despawson.com

Palms fall into 2 basic categories: firstly the seaming palm for sewing the seams, whose iron has small indentations; secondly the roping palm, which has larger indentations on the iron to take larger needles and the leather coming up round the thumb where a turn of the twine is often taken to get an extra pull to tighten the stitches.

Seaming palm

Roping palm



The roping palm is used for sewing on the boltrope that went round the edge of a sail. There are also the lighter and cheaper palms usually sold as "sailor's palms".

Within these categories, many variations were being offered, up to 30 from some makers, and this does not take into account left and right handed palms.

Redditch, near Birmingham, was the centre for the making of needles and there were many specialist sailmakers needle manufactures, whose name often appears on both their needles and the palms they often supplied. Such names include W Smith & Son, Shrimpton & Sons, John James & Son and, rarer, Wooley & Sons. During the Second World War there was a big demand for palms from the military and a number of makers in nearby Walsall appear. These are Patterson & Stone and Homerton & Son although there may be others.

There is much to be found out about the tools of the sailmakers, I would be pleased to hear of makers' names on any tools that other museums may have in their collections. Who knows what will be discovered after a closer look at these important tools. Equally, I am happy to try and identify any tool that you may

Ship-shape new flagpole at Southwold Sailors' Reading Room by Douglas Pope



The new flagpole, in memory of Captain David Simpson MN, MBE was dedicated on the anniversary of his death, when his vessel SS Empire Merlin was torpedoed on 25th August 1940, killing a further 25 crew.

The new flag was also dedicated and was hoisted up the flagpole to join the house flag of the Ropner Line as Capt. Simpson was their Commodore.

The work on the flagpole was carried out in Southwold and followed the design of a ship's mast taken from a design of square rigged sailing boat from the 1830s. The pole has had several coats of preservative and a final coat of weatherproof marine paint, and the tops of both sections are protected by lead caps.



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HLF grant for Plumb's Cottage, Leigh-on-Sea by Carole Mulroney

Plumb's Cottage is a mid Victorian fisherman's cottage in the heart of Old Leigh which had lain derelict for many years.

The Leigh Society, who have run the Heritage Centre in Leigh for over 30 years, raised funds, and with the help of a Lottery and other grants, have rebuilt the Cottage and fitted it out in period, it now forms part of their Museum.

The Cottage was opened in May when many contributors as well descendants of the last family to live in the Cottage attended. It is open to the public free of charge when the Heritage Centre is open, but it is wise to call first on 01702 470834.



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