

MAINSHEET



The WWMHS Newsletter Issue 13 **September 2008**



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You can help to Preserve the future by helping to preserve the past.

Editors Notes

I have received a few contributions from members enabling me to assemble a Newsletter and offer my grateful thanks to them for their prompt response to my request.

It has been on my conscience for some time that our wider membership has been a little neglected, for which I offer my apologies. Hitherto I have been involved in most of the local activities and events but due to family circumstances this has not been the case during the last 15 months. It has been difficult to keep tabs on the progress of our local events and activities. A suggestion was made to ask if there might be other members willing to take on the jobs of newsletter editor and webmaster. If anyone would like to take either job on please get in touch. In the meantime I am very happy to continue doing whatever I can in these capacities. Remember – your contributions are my raw materials. The quality and quantity of the output starts with them. –Ed.

Lighthouses -

Race to Illuminate the World

by Toby Chance and Peter Williams

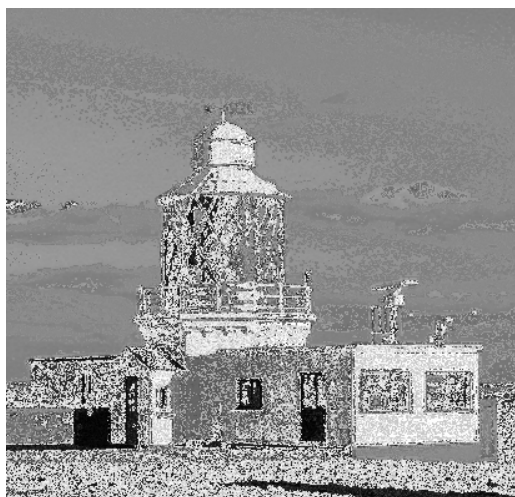
James Chance, who was born five years before Fresnel published his dioptric designs, spent his formative years contemplating a life in robes – either in the law courts or the church. But while at Cambridge his intellectual curiosity had been ignited by the radical changes occurring in mathematics and physics, and within a year of joining the family firm he had applied these talents to the invention and patenting of a process that massively increased the production of plate glass at Chance Brothers.

He personified the hope of Albion, not because of his abilities in pure science but rather because of his aptitude in optical engineering – at the time an undervalued branch of knowledge, though events were soon to change that. This was to propel the family firm to a position of world leadership in glass manufacture and

lighthouse production and enable a British firm to compete effectively with the French for the first time.

Rivalries between the great powers was manifested in their industrial and commercial achievements. How could the fruits of science be applied to the design and building of machines? The British inferiority complex in the field of science was not paralleled in manufacturing! There seemed to be a disconnect between the world of academe and the factory floor and draftsman's office. English society scorned business and manufacture yet some great inventions emerged that led England in the industrial revolution. France and Germany excelled at pure science but England excelled at manufacture – do the facts support this contention?

So the "Race to Illuminate the World" was on written from the perspective of Toby Chance, the grandson of the last Chairman of Chance Brothers Ltd of Smethwick, near Birmingham, and Peter Williams, editor, writer and lighthouse attendant (St. Ann's Head Lighthouse).



Reviewed in the Times newspaper for Saturday 20th September see the review on line at http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/books/non-fiction/article4786669.ece.

Toby will be in the UK during November when Peter and he will be signing copies. Your personal copy can be reserved at a cost of GB£16.00 posted to any address by surface mail (this is a discounted price for lighthouse enthusiasts, it will be on sale for £17.99 in major book shops). Send payment either by £GBP cheque made payable to Peter Williams, or cash (equivalent GBP, US\$30, or 22 Euro accepted) with the address for despatch and any message that you would like us to put with our signatures. The book will make a great Christmas present!

Address for orders:

Peter Williams, Book Orders, 1, Marine Gardens, Milford Haven, SA73 3JH UK

West Wales Maritime Heritage on the Road! – Rev. R.D. Reed



Our exhibit at the Pembrokeshire County Show

During recent years, the Society has been mounting photographic exhibitions at various events, one of the first in the recent series being at the Atlantic Challenge Gig Festival at Goodwick, Fishguard in 2004. This was followed by a very successful appearance at the Tall Ships Festival at Waterford, and enjoyable visits to Aberaeron to help the maritime community there to celebrate the port's bicentenary, and New Ross, in County Wexford, Ireland to commemorate the town's 800th anniversary in association with the Dunbrody replica emigrant ship.

In its original form, the theme dwelled on trading vessels that sailed the Irish Sea, and lighthouses that guided them, with reproduction of archive black and white photographs in A4 size, the content being amended as time went on, but this year, it was decided to take a fresh look at the style of presentation, resulting in the production of a series of coloured photographs in A3 size depicting the Society in action – with scenes from the workshop, afloat in Society vessels, and on other ships, together with images showing the trading ketch *Garlandstone*, the three

mast schooner *Kathleen and May* and the former Lowestoft trawler, *Keywaden*, all having associations with the Haven

This year, as well as arranging Open Days at the Front Street Workshop, once again the Society has had a presence at the Wales and the South Wales Boat Shows, the Pembroke Farmers Show at Lamphey, and at the Pembrokeshire County Show. At the latter, for the first time, the Society took advantage of a new facility for the provision of short presentations on matters maritime, and invited the Sunderland Trust, the National Coastwatch Institute, Coastlands Local History Group and the Dyfed family History Society also to take part.

The purpose of taking to the Road [or seas!], is to enhance our profile and to win more members, as well as reminding the world at large that West Wales has a rich and diverse maritime past, with our role to preserve as much of it as can be done before it is lost for ever.

As you can imagine, manning these exhibitions is 'labour intensive', but one does meet interesting people, and visit some fascinating places and interesting events. We would like to see more of our members taking an active part in the activities of the Society. Perhaps this may appeal to you, and to help us 'on the road' in this way – If so, don't hesitate, but give David James, the Secretary a ring, and he will tell you more. Our programme is virtually finished for this year, but next season isn't far away. We have not crossed the Irish Sea this year, but we will have to try to make up for it in 2009!

Scribes Scribbles - David James

2008, A year in the West Wales Maritime Heritage Society calendar

The year opened with high hopes for the season. A seconded Sea Fair Haven was planned and building on the lessons learned in 2006 both the society and the other partners who had undertaken to organise the event. Numerous meetings, not quite burning the midnight oil, but a lot of effort went on out of sight and out of mind of all those except those at the sharp end of the business. Gradually it all came together and those outside the committees were involved and so the enthusiasm grew.

This year, in an effort to involve Pembroke Dock in the Sea Fair Haven event as well as Pembroke, the society organised an open day in the Front Street Yard. This would serve two purposes, one to show off to Pembroke Dock what we have and our achievements to date. Second we invited local organisations with whom we have an affiliation, such as the Sunderland Trust, the local Sea Cadet unit and the ladies of the local lifeboat support group. Caterers laid on a buffet and a flotilla was invited to stop off at Hobbs Point and be transported by road. This was because Manawidan (or Poseidon if you prefer) decreed that the tide would not be in Front Street for long enough to allow the flotilla to arrive by sea.

As Robbie Burns said, the best laid plans of mice and men gang aft a gley. They "went a gley" with a vengeance when a gale roared up the Haven forcing all but the most hardy souls to put to sea and continued for almost the duration of the event. Large sailing vessels, carrying only pocket-handkerchief sized sails raced up river past Hobbs Point seeking sheltered high upriver. One large motor-boat managed to land at Hobbs Point and the crew was royally entertained by those present in the

Yard. Val Williams brought out a Breton hurdy gurdy and its quite unique sound echoed round the shed, attracting a great deal of attention, particularly from the Sea Cadets.

Another two flotillas were due on different days to ascend the Pembroke River, but they too were weather bound and unable to put to sea. Both the Pembroke Dock and Pembroke groups who had put so much effort into organising shore based events and welcomes for the visiting crews were disappointed but understood the reasons for the non-arrival of the flotillas. In Milford Docks, I met up with the German Crew of the sail training ship *Asta*. These were the same men we had made friends with in New Ross in 2007 and had come over at my invitation to take part in Sea Fair Haven. It was great to see our friends again.

This year it was decided that the pilotage role in the Pembroke River could be left in the very capable hands of the Maritime Volunteer Service, freeing society members to sail society boats. Thus *Quest* and *General Picton* were entered and sailed in most of the events, kept company by other members in their own sailing boats.

Quest has had numerous voyages since then and members have learned how to tack her successfully. However we have come to realise, that we are asking too much of her, when we try to tack down the Estuary. She was never designed to do numerous short tacks in an estuary cluttered with jetties, sandbanks and oil tankers. In spite of her drawbacks, she is a comfortable boat to sail and carries a large crew, useful when you realise that five crewmembers are needed to tack her quickly. I realise that the Yorkshire men will scoff at this but they may well have a lot more sea room than we do and probably don't have to dodge supertankers, tugs and giant ferries in confined waters. It's a bit like being overtaken by a block of flats that takes all the wind out of our sails and requires the use of the "iron spinnaker" if we are to keep out of the channel and not run up a mudbank.

We have had several yard visits, the local Sunderland Trust, the Tenby History Group and the Chepstow history group who came all the way down for a weekend with the express intention of seeing our boats and having a chat about them. Several new members were recruited during these talks so they are worthwhile doing. The local agricultural shows in August and also the open day at St. Anns lighthouse which were attended by members manning the Society stall advertising our successes for all to see. I entered one of my ship models in the shows and had a surprising degree of success in the woodwork section of the competition.

A few images of Sea Fair Haven 2008



Two crew members carrying out repairs on the topsail yard, high above the murky waters of Milford Docks.



In another 50 years this will be a vintage boat



Vintage boats drawn up on the beach at Llangwm



Happy Quest framed in the rigging of a Lune Pilot boat.



The Earl of Pembroke , Kaskelot and La Recouvrance in Milford Docks

MORE BOATS FOR RESTORATION – Peter Davison

The Society has been offered not one but two boats with regional roots for restoration.

First, we are making plans to bring the last Tenby Lugger from the Museum of Wales, who have donated her to us. David James will be telling you more about her. Second, we have been offered a lugger, currently in Aberystwyth and with a true Welsh origin. She was built for the Aberdovey Outward Bound School in 1956 and is 26 feet long, ketch rigged with dipping lug sails and ships 6 oars. She will be similar to sail as the Pembrokeshire and Atlantic Challenge gigs.

A number of members have visited Aberystwyth to inspect her and, subject to Committee approval the concensus is that we should accept her. We are looking at the practicalities of getting her here to work on her – we have the offer of a trailer and the use of a crane to load her but a towing vehicle is the problem at present – one cannot hire a 4x4 for towing, so we need to find someone with a 4x4, who is prepared to tow the trailer at modest cost – do you know of anyone?

DISQUIET AT PEMBROKE OVER SEAFAIR CANCELLATIONS – Peter Davison

Many Pembroke folk were upset that two of the three visits to Pembroke Quay were cancelled without much warning. The usual crowds gathered on the quay to welcome the Sail & Oar and the Old Gaffers fleets but they did not materialize. The Mayor and dignitaries were present and food & drink awaited the crews, but the fleets did not appear.

This was bad news for the Society as the usual River Rally was incorporated into the Seafair Events and the town only saw the Bermudan fleet assemble in the Castle Pond.

The appalling weather during the event was to blame but future plans should ensure less ambitious voyages on the days of the Pembroke visits.

IMPROVEMENTS AT THE YARD – Peter Davison

This year we have been able to improve the main workshop so as to incorporate a permanent display in the east end of the shed, leaving the west end for workshop use. Members have painted the walls and installed some electric lighting & power. Not ideal, because of the dust arising from the work area and also being blown in when the huge door is open. Improvements to this situation are being considered with the possibility of most work being done in Shed 2, west of the dry dock and the main shed being kept clean and used only for display and dry storage of boats which are out of use.

Short and Sweet – Dai Holt

At present my boating activity is severely curtailed due to circumstances beyond my control. So, it was particularly pleasurable to be able to sneak away on July 19th and take up the invitation of member Alan Billington for a sail in the Lune Pilot on the day the Sail & Oar fleet came down the Daugleddau from Llangwm to Neyland.



Arrival at Neyland Yacht Club



Quest passing by

On a beautiful morning with plenty of breeze, Alan collected me from my doorstep and we launched the boat at East Llanion. It would have been nice to start with the fleet but logistically it would have been difficult. Thus we cheated and as we pulled away from the shore we saw the first of the sails, a distinctive Drascombe Lugger some half a mile off, heading down towards "Rudders Reach", as I call it, closely followed by two other craft, which turned out to be Tideways. Alan hailed each one as we passed them, asking if they slept alright - a friend was expected to arrive in one of them and to the amusement of all concerned we only met Mary ashore at Neyland Yacht Club! The club's hospitality was first class and we had a very leisurely lunch chatting to the crews of all the boats. Thanks Alan for a great day out.

I did manage another day on the water when I booked my Grand daughter for an adventure day at Pembrokeshire Activities Centre. Of course I couldn't let her go alone could I? We had a sail in a Laser thingy, together with three demented boys one of who seemed to prefer being in the water. Strangely the Instructor kept recovering him to the boat -great for man-overboard drill but.....I think I'd just have reported him as a deserter. We played games in canoes after an excellent lunch in the centre's restaurant, getting completely soaked (not in the restaurant) but totally relaxed & happy. My 18 month old grandson is now showing interest in boats (he calls them doats - and why not?) -so, if I'm not mistaken, there's another sailor in the family. Oh Goody!!!