

Report for the July 2015 meeting of the Malvern Civic Society

On Friday 10 July Commander Andrew Wynn gave an excellent talk entitled "*The Hereford Bull*". It was about the historic replica of a River Wye trow built to fly the Herefordshire flag in the Thames Diamond Jubilee Pageant in 2012.

The Civic Society was treated to a superb inside look at the construction of the Wye trow, the Hereford Bull, and the trials and tribulations before it was first floated. Commander Andrew Wynn RN had served on HMS Ark Royal from 1984 to 1986, followed by a time as equerry to HRH Duke of Edinburgh, then went on to Eton College, where he was Bursar.

Lord Salisbury was in charge of the arrangements for the Diamond Jubilee River Pageant and the theme was a contribution from each county. However, Herefordshire did not have a coast line, so the Countess of Darnley, Lord-Lieutenant of Herefordshire was asked to organise something suitable! She put together a team of three retired naval officers including Commander Wynn. These three officers used the diagrams from historian Colin Green and a Wye trow was designed and built.

Flat-bottomed boats of some type had been used from the Roman times onwards to carry goods up and down the river as far as Bristol. The trows were flat-bottomed barges, clinker- built on the bow and stern. These vessels were moved by manpower either by rowing or were pulled from the tow path. There were no reliable accounts of horses being used since the river developed numerous obstructions and the men had to pull the trows overland in places. River obstructions were common for the millers needed weirs, fishermen used traps, in fact Tintern Abbey had both! A Common Right of Navigation started by Edward 1st did not get Parliament Assent until 1651. It was, and still is, a busy river.

£100,000 was generously donated by the Herefordshire Community Foundation and the wood was also a donation from Herefordshire woodlands. The boat builders were told that the trow must be capable of 4 knots, a tall order. The pageant had to move with the flow and not cause an obstruction. This was achieved without incident by seven men and one woman. There were no clashes of oars, although some near misses and no sinkings on the day, much to the organiser's relief.

The trow then went "on tour" round several historical jubilee events, moved by trailer. It was used for educational visits and as a social history base for other events. Today it is in Gloucester Dock, where unfortunately it is suffering from fungus damage. Repairs are under way on the bottom and part of the stern. This is a sad turn of events for such a magnificent boat and the event in which it appeared.

For further information on Civic Society events, please see <http://www.malverncivicsociety.org.uk>.