

Worfolk boat project – wet or dry?

The century-old Baden Powell, built in Lynn by the famous Norfolk family, could sail again. Or she could sit under cover on public display as a reminder of the family's contribution to King's Lynn's maritime history.

Chapel Street jeweller Tim Clayton is behind the move to restore the Baden Powell so she can sail the Ouse and the Wash again. But the boat has been out of the water for years. Opinions are divided as to whether she could be restored to sailing condition, or whether it would be better to build a replica as a Norfolk tribute.

One source of professional advice says a restoration would take two years and cost £250,000, whereas to make another one like her would take one year and cost £150,000. In either case the work would need to be done in a boatyard away from Lynn.

Advice from another source says that with volunteer help carrying out non-specialist parts of the job, a less costly restoration could be carried out locally under skilled supervision. Specialists would be brought in at each stage where tasks are beyond the skills of the volunteers.

The Baden Powell is an unusual craft: a double-ender designed for cockling. She would go out to the Wash on a falling tide, be grounded on a sandbank while the fishermen dug up cockles, then return to Lynn with the returning tide. She was built to sail, but had an engine fitted later.

True's Yard Museum was given the boat after her fishing career ended. The museum already has a fishing boat on static display, and funds have not been available to do anything about the Baden Powell. Tim, a trustee of True's Yard, has wanted to do something about the Baden Powell for years.

Now he is forming a trust under the chairmanship of Dr Paul Richards, Lynn's leading historian, to see how a restoration project can be achieved.

Tim is clear about his objectives. "I want to see the Baden Powell in the water again, where she could become a valuable town resource. The sea cadets could use her for training, and other youth groups could use her as part of their activities.

"She could be brought into the school curriculum relating to the town's history. She could run trips into the Wash to see the seals, or take small parties out to a sandbank to experience how the boat would have been used a hundred years ago.

"There are obstacles of course. But anything worthwhile has obstacles. And I and the people who are helping me as part of the trust are getting to know those obstacles to see how they can best be overcome."

Is it possible? While investigations are under way, readers can register an interest in the project by leaving their details on the project website: www.floatourboat.co.uk or by sending a stamped, addressed envelope to The Baden Powell Project, Tim Clayton Jewellery, 21 Chapel Street, King's Lynn PE30 1EG.

Add a note if you would like to volunteer some time to help the project. There will be all kinds of jobs, from making tea to stripping timbers.

Publicity contact

Ken Hill

4 King's Staithe Square

King's Lynn PE30 1JE

01553 763675

hill.k@virgin.net