

Worfolk Boat Trust prepares for launch

A successful hog roast at King's Lynn Town Hall has shown how much support there is for the Save the Baden Powell project. The 130-ticket feast at Halloween last year raised a grand total of £4,168 from enthusiastic Lynn people keen to see the 109-year-old Norfolk cockling boat back in the water.

Apart from the succulent pork and cracking crackling there was a raffle and Auction of Promises. Many who were unable to attend sent donations, which made up £911 of the total. Borough Mayor and Mayoress Councillor David and Sheila Johnson revealed their enthusiasm for the project.

Now the Baden Powell committee under Chairman Dr Paul Richards, Lynn's historian and champion of the importance of the town's heritage as part of its future prosperity, is preparing to secure independent charitable status so that fund-raising can get serious. The organisation will be called the **King's Lynn Norfolk Boat Trust**. It will maintain strong links with True's Yard, which owns the Baden Powell and also has its own fishing boat, the Activity.

'It is remarkable that the Baden Powell, the first fishing boat to be built in Lynn by Walter Norfolk, should have fished the Wash for eighty years,' says Tim Clayton, the Lynn jeweller who is spearheading the campaign to get it back in the water.

'And even more remarkable that it should have survived for so long on dry land, and still be in a condition that makes us hopeful that it can once again go to sea.'

It is thought that Walter Norfolk, and his sons Gerald and William, built in excess of 600 boats in Lynn between 1900 and 1981. Their first yard was on the Nar close to the South Gate. Then they moved downstream to the Friars, and the brothers ended up with premises in Alexandra Dock. The family employed up to 30 men at one time.

As well as fishing boats, the Norfolks built whalers and other wooden craft for the Royal Navy; crab boats for Cromer fishermen, plus yachts, barges and pilot cutters. Some are overseas now, like the yacht Lady of Lynn, which sailed to Newfoundland on her maiden voyage in 1977, and the pilot cutter Christina Lynn, now on the Cote D'Azur and available for charter.

Advising on the restoration of the Baden Powell is local man Vic Pratt, who was a Norfolk apprentice before starting his own boatbuilding business. Now retired, he will be watching progress closely, and offering valuable advice, such as where to find suitable materials, and practical help in replacing worn timbers.

A series of fund-raising events is planned this year to help get the Baden Powell back in the water, some with a very direct connection with the river and the Wash.

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