



2024 SPRING ISSUE

STEEP HOLM NEWS

Official Newsletter of the Kenneth Allsop Memorial Trust

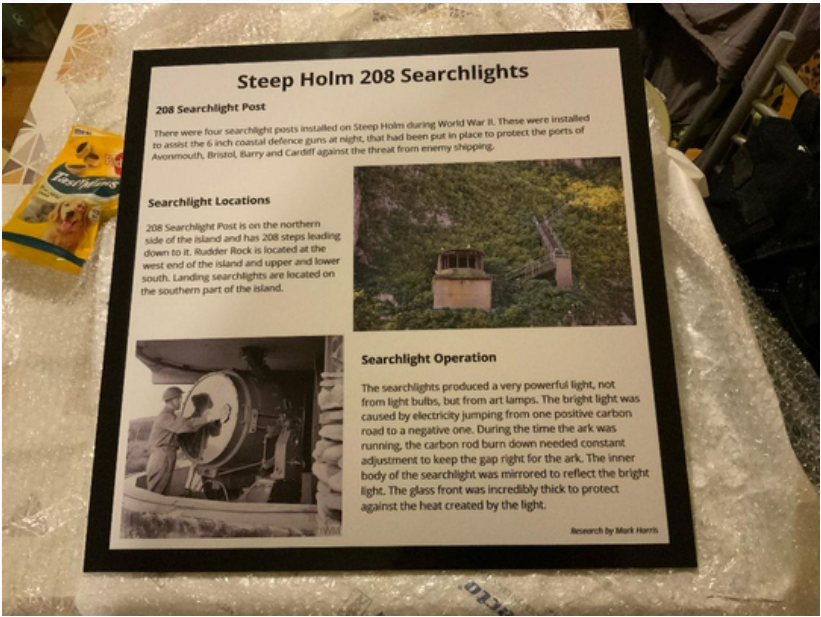


208 Steps Searchlights ‘highlighted’

BY STEPHEN PARKER

A new information board has been produced highlighting the significance of the 208 Steps searchlights. Visitors can expect to see it displayed at the top of the 208 Steps in the upcoming 2024 season.

Read on for more insight to other works in progress on the island.



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New Restoration Project for the Island

BY MARK HARRIS

2023 marked the first stage of the restoration of the underground cartridge store at Tombstone Battery, to bring it back to its original condition as was in 1867.

The first stage involved gaining access to the cartridge store, which was totally overgrown and inaccessible. After 12 hours of hard graft by Greg Avis and myself, we managed to hack back all the scrub and undergrowth.

The next stage was to dig it out. This took six of our foolhardy volunteers (with shovels, pickaxes, and wheelbarrows) over 10 hours, shifting out five tons of soil rubble.

A massive thanks to the volunteers Tim Bennett, Martin and Rachel Pratt, Anthony Smith, Rob Gillett, Meredith and myself.

Once the clearance works had been completed, we were able to commence on the restoration. Starting with a lot of pointing to the original stonework. Then the rather large and very messy task of painting all the walls and ceiling with lime wash. Also installing the newly re-made lighting frame window (which I'd already manufactured last year), and repairing the floor. So all in all the very good start so far.

This year we are hoping to finish it off, still remaining to do are the new concrete steps leading down to it. New retaining walls are in scope to be built as well as fitting out all the internal fixtures and fittings. I have already made these items and are just waiting to be transported to the island.



The Fluvial Boundary of Bristol County

BY ANTHONY SMITH

On 30th September, I, one of the Steep Holm trustees, attended the perambulation of the 1373 county boundary of Bristol to celebrate 650 years since the charter to grant county status to Bristol by Edward III was awarded.

Steep Holm is on the fluvial boundary of Bristol County and at one time ships had to wait in the Bristol Channel before entering the port under authority of the County Sheriff, Bishop and Mayor. The division from Gloucestershire and Somerset was important to the merchants in Bristol so they could go about their business without being called to Gloucester or Taunton on county business including jury service etc.

Marking the boundary was an important ceremony and continued until 1835 when the City underwent its first boundary extension. The only interruption being the English civil war when Bristol was occupied by Parliamentary, Royalist and then Parliamentary forces again but as soon as the war was over the perambulation recommenced in 1647.

The old county boundary was about 9 miles and this time we started the walk by taking a shore voyage on the Matthew (a replica of the ship that John Cabot took across the Atlantic and 'discovered' North America). We were pleased it was motorised as the original journey would have taken them 2 days to row the ship out to the Channel.

The fluvial boundary had been covered in 2007 on a Royal Navy minesweeper when a boundary stone was left on the island. We discovered the stone in the barracks so hope to put it on display in the barracks museum, but certainly something to look out for if you make it to the island. The fluvial boundary of Bristol County touches the top of the island and goes across to Flat Holm, and still exists to the present day.

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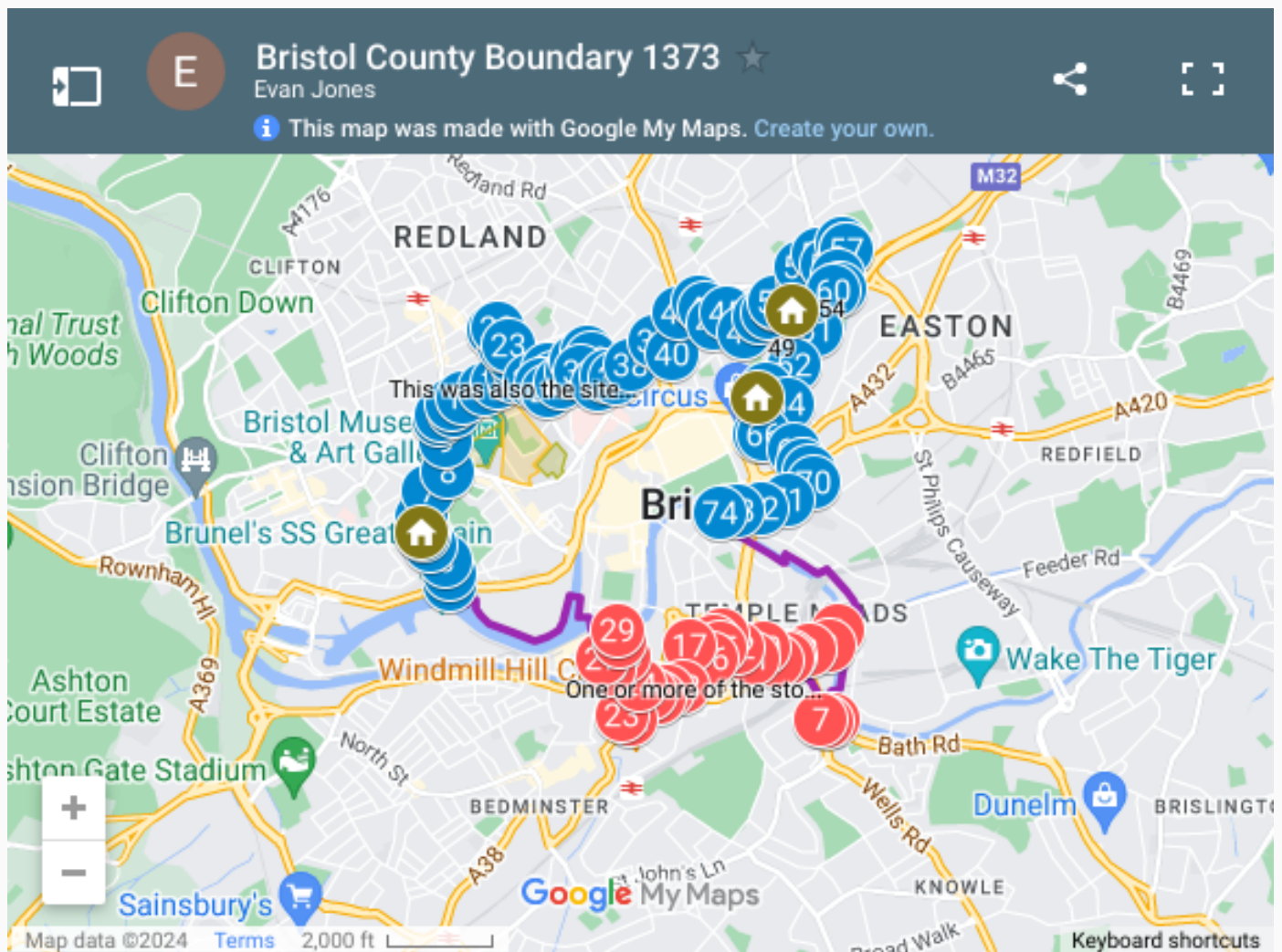


The Fluvial Boundary of Bristol County (contd)

We walked the land boundary from the bottom of Jacob's Wells hill with a lot of historical interludes from Professor Evans. It was very interesting although most of the perambulators were not used to walking. As I am also chairman of Woodspring Ramblers this was a fairly easy stroll for me and all on dry ground with pavements rather than over the Mendips or through the muddy fields!

We took a Bristol coat of arms flag and I wore my Steep Holm cap and sweatshirt (available from the barracks on the island).

Details of the the route can be found below should you be interested in doing the route.



The Final Trip of 2023 Season

BY MARK HARRIS

This trip normally happens towards the end of November each year, when we normally carry out maintenance on larger projects,. Usually involving over three or four days staying in the barracks.

In 2023, we were planning to replace the steel girder above the main entrance gate as it is heavily corroded, and a new second-hand RSJ was taken to the island in January ready for installation. However, our plans were somewhat scuppered for the second year running due to poor weather conditions. It posed a little bit of a problem as not only we carry out maintenance works, but we also shut the island down for the winter. This involves disconnecting the water pump from outside and bringing it into the barracks, disconnecting all external pipework, and draining the water out. All this to prevent it from being frozen.

Unfortunately, this happened to us a few years ago, when we had “the Beast from the East”. Our water pump was frozen solid, split in two, and needed to be replaced. We hurriedly rearranged for a one-day trip on Saturday 2nd December to carry out this task and also do some small maintenance jobs.

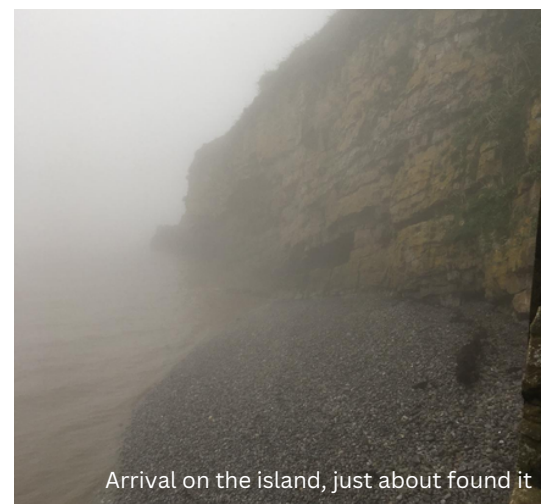
We left Lightstone Harbour at 08.30hrs. Unfortunately that particular morning the weather conditions were a little cold, plus freezing fog. The boat's arrival was understandably late in ‘white out’ conditions - skipper had to use his navigational skills and radar to get from Cardiff to Weston. We loaded the boat up with ten bags of sand. That warmed us up a bit, and then we set sail for the island.

It's a little disconcerting when you can't see more than 20 feet in front of you. Just fog! However, the skipper (Andy) did a fantastic job. As the island loomed out of the fog, the cold temperature was all the more evident when your waterproof clothing is covered in a layer of ice from the freezing fog. Moreover, you cannot feel your fingers despite wearing thermal gloves. This changed very soon to well warmed up after shifting 10 bags of sand from the beach into the boathouse.

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Leaving Weston harbour



Arrival on the island, just about found it



Cannons in the cold

The Final Trip of 2023 Season(contd)



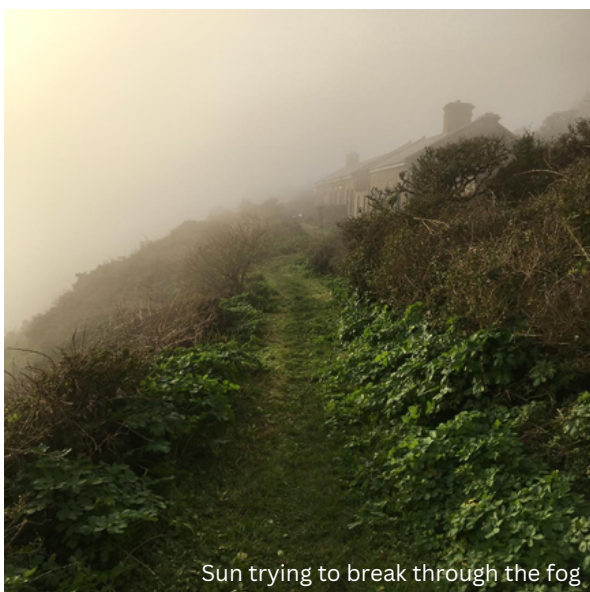
Six of us volunteering that day set about our various tasks. Greg Avis, had bought some new bolts so he could fix the wheel back onto the new flail. Chris Maslin had brought replacement drive belts for the old flail; Jenny Smith was out with the trimmer cutting back the paths; Anthony Smith and Stephen Parker both were busy cleaning the barracks from top to bottom along with the toilet block, and I disappeared down into the underground cartridge store.



After the repairs to both flails, Greg and Chris were out and about clearing the paths of the island. However, this didn't last too long as Greg picked up a puncture on the new flail, which was now stuck in the dark at Rudder Rock. We ended up taking the carrier down and giving it a piggy-back back to the machine shop where the wheel was taken off and brought back for repairs. We will likely buy a spare wheel and tyre as this has happened to us on previous occasions - a bit of a pain.



Then the pump was bought inside and pipework drained down. One of the final things we did was to incinerate the waste that had been generated in the last few months. This was mainly cardboard packaging, off cuts of wood, etc. The incinerator we have got has seen better days, but is worsening quite quickly. There is a rather large crack with the two parts parting company. This looks like another job to add to the 'to do' list in the near future. Any bricklayers out there fancy a little job?



The return trip was also somewhat eventful as although the cold had gone and the fog had lifted, there was a south easterly blowing. So we took a bit of a swell on the beach, this filled in the back of the boat with water. Once again, skipper Andy soon took care of it with the bilge pumps and we arrived safe and sound back at Weston.

Worth noting, in the 40 years Chris Maslen has been going out to the island, that day was the coldest he has every experienced out to the island.

Meeting with Volunteers

The Board will be hosting an open meeting for new and existing volunteers on Saturday 20th April 2024 (2pm) at Puxton Park (1st Floor Meeting Room), Cowslip Lane, Hewish, BS24 6AH. Approximately 1/2 mile from Junction 21 M5. Follow the A370.

The meeting will be an opportunity for volunteers to meet with the Board, learn about ongoing and upcoming projects, discuss volunteer opportunities, working both on the island or from the mainland. Do come, we would love to meet and work with you.

Tea, coffee and biscuits will be provided.

2024 Annual General Meeting

The 2024 AGM is planned to take place on Saturday 28th September 2024 in Weston-Super-Mare. Further details to follow nearer the date.

Do make a note in your diary!

It is a great opportunity to have your say and meet other members and the Board, all sharing a common interest in Steep Holm.

Board appoints a new Trustee

The Board is pleased to announce the appointment of Stewart Benford as a new member of the Board of Trustees.

Stewart is keen to put into practice his proven track record of enterprise success for the Charity's benefit, working on and off the island.

Visit STEEP HOLM in 2024

If you ever wonder what lurks on the island that looks like a whale in the Bristol Channel seen from Weston seafront, why not join one of the sailings and find out?

The island is a site of special scientific interest and a peaceful haven (when the gulls have finished rearing their young) with 360 degree views of the Bristol Channel and the Somerset and Welsh coastlines.

Visitors can wander the clifftops, explore the military buildings, underground ammunition stores, and buy one of the island's own postage stamps.

Trips are operated by Bay Island Voyages, and these are scheduled to take place on 2024 as set out in the table, subject to weather conditions.

For further details visit our website www.steepholm.online or advert below.

Day	Date	Month	From Weston	From Cardiff	Return
Friday	29	March	07.30	06.30	19.30
Thursday	11	April	07.30	06.30	19.45
Saturday	13	April	09.00	08.00	21.00
Thursday	25	April	06.30		18.30
Saturday	27	April	08.00	07.00	19.30
Thursday	9	May	06.30		18.30
Saturday	11	May	08.00	07.00	20.00
Saturday	25	May	07.00		18.30
Monday	27	May	08.30	07.30	20.00
Sunday	9	June	08.00	07.00	19.30
Sunday	23	June	07.00		18.30
Tuesday	25	June	08.30	07.30	20.00
Sunday	7	July	07.00		18.30
Tuesday	23	July	07.30	06.30	19.00
Tuesday	6	August	07.30	06.30	19.00
Thursday	8	August	08.30	07.30	20.40
Wednesday	21	August	06.30		19.00
Friday	23	August	08.00	07.00	20.30
Thursday	5	September	07.30	06.30	19.00
Saturday	7	September	08.30	07.30	20.00
Thursday	19	September	06.30		18.30
Saturday	21	September	07.30	06.30	20.00
Saturday	5	October	07.30	06.30	18.30
Monday	7	October	08.30	07.30	19.45
Sunday	20	October	07.30	06.30	19.30

"An island of history at the seaside"

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How YOU can help Steep Holm Island



Volunteering

Do you have skills Steep Holm can benefit from? Want to be part of the team to help, protect, preserve and enhance for the benefit of the public the landscape, antiquities, flora and fauna, natural beauty and scientific interest of the Island?

We are currently looking for volunteers that can help with any one of the following roles:

- E- News Editor
- Publication & Merchandise Sales Co-ordinator
- Museum & Archive Coordinator
- IT & Social Media Co-ordinator
- Fundraising Co-ordinator
- Volunteers' Co-ordinator

If so, we would love to hear from you. Please contact
steepholmcompanysecretary1@gmail.com

Lottery

Consider buying lottery numbers if you haven't done so yet. You can win up to £50.

For further details please contact our membership secretary on
mgmembersholm@btinternet.com.

Wishing you good luck!

Membership fees

This remains £25 per year. If you would like to become a member of the Trust or set up a direct debit please contact our membership secretary on email mgmembersholm@btinternet.com

Applications for membership will be welcomed on the form by post or electronically, as you prefer.

Legacies

We would be delighted if you could consider leaving a legacy to the charity to help us maintain and enhance Steep Holm as an extraordinary nature reserve full of historic interest and open to the public.

Please contact mgmembersholm@btinternet.com if you would like to consider making a gift under your will to the Kenneth Allsop Memorial Trust Limited (register charity 270059) for its general purposes as trustee of the charity.

Stay connected

For all the latest news on the island find us on www.steeptholm.online and other social platforms.

