



Learning about the history and importance of the Torpoint Ferry

Earlier this month we welcomed a group of Year 2 pupils and their adult leaders from Morice Town Primary School to the Torpoint Ferry.

During their visit the youngsters learnt about the geography and the workings of the ferries, tying in with the curriculum topics they had been studying in the classroom.

The children were all very excited as they learnt about the history of the ferries, with ferry staff sharing information about some past incidents to help inspire their imagination. They also went up to the ferry controller's cabin to see how the ferries are controlled and were even able to use the public address system to speak to their classmates.

It was great to have the opportunity to help the younger generation understand just how many people use the ferries on a daily basis and why this service is so vital and we look forward to building on our links with the local community in the future.



Ferry refits

Some maintenance activities, inspections and surveys cannot be done while the ferry is afloat and need to be carried out in dry dock conditions. These could include:

- replacing obsolete equipment
- installing new power management and IT systems
- removing the prows to completely overhaul them, including repairs to the steel structure and work on the hydraulic prow systems
- cleaning the hull
- repainting the vessels both above and below the waterline.

Refits also give Lloyds Register and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) the opportunity to carry out their five-yearly dry docked inspections which are aimed at ensuring that the ferries are in a good condition, and that they meet all compliance requirements that make them safe and reliable to operate.

Each of the Torpoint Ferries has a refit once every five years. The next scheduled ferry refit will be PLYM II which is currently due to take place in Spring 2023. This will mean that for a period of 6 to 8 weeks the service will reduce to two ferries, further increasing the maintenance pressure on the technical team.



Keeping busy at the 'Bridging the Tamar' Learning Centre

This October half term saw the Learning Centre transform into a hive of transport activity in miniature – as families took over the space for a series of Lego workshops.

Led by Julian Surtees from Brick Ideas, a Lego learning specialist based in Devon, children and their parents and carers created trains and bridges inspired by Brunel.

The Autumn Term has also seen visits from a number of local schools. These included pupils from Pomphlett Primary School who visited the Learning Centre as part of a whole day workshop in partnership with the Box in Plymouth.

Pupils visited the bridges in the morning, and then went on to the Box in the afternoon to consolidate their learning and have a look around the new museum.

During the national Heritage Open Days week members of the public had a rare opportunity to see 'under the bridge' in a special tour with the learning and engineering teams, as well as a look inside the anchorage chamber.



Visiting the Clifton Suspension Bridge

Earlier this year some of our volunteers visited colleagues at Clifton Suspension Bridge for a Vaults Tour and a look around their Visitor Centre.

Like the Railway Bridge across the Tamar, the Clifton Suspension Bridge was built by Brunel. The group had the opportunity to walk across the bridge and to look underneath the structure, as well as fitting in a quick visit to the shop.

It was a fascinating visit which the volunteers thoroughly enjoyed. We look forward to returning the favour and showing volunteers from Clifton around in the future.





Wanted - more volunteers to join our Bridging the Tamar Ambassadors

We currently have a group of 30 volunteers supporting activities at the Learning Centre, but more are needed for 2023!

Our volunteers are on hand to welcome visitors, deliver tours of the Centre and local area, and to support school visits. They also support our events programme, as well as assisting with online events, and carrying out historical research.

Volunteers lead guided talks on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturday mornings as well as delivering bridge tours to groups. One of our current Bridging the Tamar Ambassadors is Michael Rodd.

"Becoming a Bridge Ambassador has been an interesting and rewarding experience. It shows that, even at the grand old age of 80, it is still possible to take up new challenges. Perhaps there might even be time for me to see Plymouth Argyle in the Premier League – although they are cutting it a bit fine."



Having grown up in Plymouth, Michael worked for the civil service at HM Admiralty Headquarters in Bath for ten years before being seconded to the personnel department at Devonport for 12 months where he met his future wife Gail.

After a further two years back in Bath (punctuated by frequent trips to Plymouth to visit Gail and watch his beloved Plymouth Argyle in action) Michael resigned from the civil service and joined Devon and Cornwall police where he worked for the next 25 years.

It was while working for the police that Michael first became interested in volunteering – joining the team of volunteer National Trust stewards at Cotehele – a role he carried out for around three years.

After taking early retirement from the police to care for his wife, her death left Michael with time on his hands. "After looking around I decided to apply to become an Ambassador at the Visitor Centre," he said. "During the past six months I have thoroughly enjoyed learning about the history of the bridges and sharing the information with visitors to the centre, who regularly express their appreciation and comment on the excellence of the exhibits on display. I have received tremendous support from Mary and Mark and from the team of volunteers who have been welcoming and helpful and very happy to share their knowledge with the new recruit."

If you are interested in joining our fantastic team of volunteers please email volunteer@tamarcrossings.org.uk. Full training and inductions are provided, and there is no requirement to have an engineering background – just an interest in sharing the heritage with people from all walks of life.

You can find out more at www.bridgingthetamar.org.uk/volunteering

Keeping safe in the water

We take the safety of all of our passengers and staff very seriously and last month arranged for four members of staff working on the ferries to attend a water safety course.



Specially designed for people who work near or in water, the aim of the course was to increase the number of people who are available to carry out critical ferry maintenance from the water, particularly around areas where the chains enter the ferry.

Working in the water carries a number of serious risks. While the prevention of drowning is always a key priority, there are also many other risks that we need to consider, including health hazards.

Led by our Health, Safety and Environmental Officer Leon Brimble, the course began with a day in the classroom planning for emergencies and ensuring appropriate rescue plans are in place for the work we need to carry out. The team then moved to the River Dart Country Park, which offers an excellent natural training environment.

After squeezing into dry-suits, and donning PPE (buoyancy aids and helmets), the team made their way to the river, over a half a mile away, carrying other equipment before getting in the water.

Having begun the training in good weather, the rain started just as the team entered the water for the first time, increasing the height and speed of the river. While this created some additional challenges for the instructors, it really emphasised the importance of carrying out this sort of training.

The course was designed to provide the opportunity to deal with a range of different obstacles. These included strainers (obstacles which allow water to pass through such as tree roots, branches, fences); syphons (these are created when the water is flowing under or through a natural or artificial obstruction such as a drainage pipe or culvert); gradients, which increase water speed; foot entrapments and stoppers (where water can hold a person and circulate them like a washing machine).

By the afternoon the water was still rising and becoming even faster, testing rescue techniques and the team's ability to deal with the different obstacles. Even crossing the river at lower parts became extremely difficult.

Following a very tiring seven hours in the water, the day ended with the four members of staff returning to the base to try and get out of their dry-suits (not easy after such a gruelling day!).

This type of training is very important for the ferry staff and it was great to read the positive comments below from those taking part.

"Excellent training sessions held on the River Dart. Lots of new skills learn by all" Mark C

"Great training course, with great life experiences if needed in the future" Luke D

Supporting charity

We are passionate about supporting charities, both national and local, and earlier this year we took part in two coffee mornings to support Macmillan Cancer Support.

The events were held at both the Tamar Bridge office and the Torpoint Ferry office to allow all our teams to contribute.

Staff enjoyed a catch up with colleagues with tea, coffee and a selection of baked goods, raising £350 for the charity.



Marking Remembrance Sunday

We suspended services at both the Ferry and the Bridge at 11am on 13 November to mark this year's Remembrance Sunday.

Milly Southworth

From: gary.davis@torpointtowncouncil.gov.uk
Sent: 08 December 2022 18:52
To: Milly Southworth; Rachel Evans
Subject: Fwd: Torpoint Ferry Gantry Replacement

Fyi

Begin forwarded message:

On 8 Dec 2022, at 10:04, David List <david.list@tamarcrossings.org.uk> wrote:

Hi Gary

I hope you are well.

The six chain tensioning gantries are near the end of their lives and need replacement. We have a capital project which is now running to do phased replacement, synchronised with the ferry refits – these refits are scheduled for the coming cycle April 2023 (Plym), 2024 (Tamar), 2025 (Lynher) and then the next cycle 2028, 29, 30. Because there is very limited accurate information on the construction of the weight pits that the gantries sit on, and also on the ground conditions underneath and around the pits, we will be doing some site investigation over the next couple of months to establish any constraints on the design and construction of the replacement gantries and associated pits. Because we need this information before tendering for the work we will not be able to do the Plym gantries in time for its refit in 2023, so we will be doing some repairs and strengthening to the two Plym gantries to extend their lives through until 2028.

The replacement programme is currently as follows:

- Plym gantries – repair and strengthen during April/May 2023 refit period and replace utilising 2028 refit period
- Tamar gantries – replace in April/May 2024 utilising refit period
- Lynher gantries - replace in April/May 2025 utilising refit period

We have every intention of undertaking the repairs and replacements utilising the respective refit periods as far as possible.

I trust that this gives you and the local community reassurance that we are trying to minimise disruption to them and to the service.

Best regards

David

David List

General Manager, Tamar Crossings

Phone: 01752 361577

Web: www.tamarcrossings.org.uk

Address: Tamar Bridge Office, Pemros Road, St Budeaux, Plymouth, PL5 1LP

