

# How Terror was Brought Back to Life

by Ian McIntyre

No ship can have had a better send off. Emsworth Town Quay was bathed in warm summer sunshine. The band broke into 'We are Sailing' and hundreds of spectators in town for the Emsworth Food Festival applauded as *Terror* first motored away down-channel, then upped her sails, and flew down the harbour like the greyhound she is.

The only remaining boat from the magnificent Emsworth fishing fleet of a century ago was back in her element. It nearly didn't happen. Three years earlier, *Terror*, built as a working boat supporting the Emsworth oyster fleet, was in a very sad state, rotting away in a Southbourne greenhouse. Her transom had fallen off, much of her planking was rotten, and you could see daylight through her seams. Her owner had hoped to restore her, but was leaving the area and appealed through the local paper for a new owner to take on the job.

By a happy co-incidence, the Conservancy was putting together its bid for Heritage Lottery funding (HLF) for the 'Rhythms of the Tide' project. Lt Col John Davis, the Harbour Master, read the item, went to see *Terror*, and despite her sad state could see that restoration was possible. The Conservancy and the Emsworth Maritime Historical Trust put together a rescue plan, and the project was added to the HLF bid.

As it turned out, the Conservancy's idea was welcomed by the Fund. Jane Weeks of the HLF, who re-launched *Terror* following a blessing by the Dean of Winchester, told the watching crowds: 'We recognise that Britain is a maritime nation, and we have supported the restoration of 40 boats - it is a real joy to see how well *Terror* has been restored'. She added that this had been an exemplary project - on time and budget. ➤

*Terror* dressed overall ready for her launch (above), the Dolphin Quay team sat in the boat during the launch watched by hundreds of people on the sea wall (left), Jane Weeks of the Heritage Lottery Fund pouring champagne on *Terror* (right)



## Essential Information

*Terror* is 28'10" long minus her bowsprit, with a 9'6" beam. She is gaff-rigged, with a 32' mast. Her distinctive rounded deck is designed to maximise the cargo she could carry, and make it easier to haul sacks of oysters aboard

Among the guests witnessing the launch of *Terror* from the Conservancy's solar boat was Ernest Rudkin, aged 101, who recalled sailing on the *Terror* in the 1930s

Would you like to sail on *Terror*? There are opportunities during the summer for sails of around two hours, departing from the pontoon at Emsworth. Full details will be published in the Programme of Guided Walks and Boat Trips which is sent out with the harbour dues plaques.

Copies can also be collected from local libraries and tourist offices or downloaded at [www.conservancy.co.uk](http://www.conservancy.co.uk)



It is good to report that this historic Emsworth boat was restored by an Emsworth team at the Dolphin Quay boatyard in Queen Street, only a few hundred yards from the former JD Foster yard where it is more than likely that she was built.

Earlier, John Davis had described the scene in Emsworth over a century ago when *Terror* had been built. The town today looked much as it did then, he said, but the activity on the water would have been very different. In September 1880, the finest oyster fleet in the country would have been preparing for a long winter.

Some of the boats, built mainly by JD Foster, were over 200 tons and were the most beautiful working boats in England. They dredged for oysters in the English Channel and the North Sea. Smaller boats like the *Terror* met them while they were still in deep water, and brought back the oysters to ponds and shallow lays at the top of the harbour. At this time, 100,000 oysters were despatched weekly to London (and 10% of the town's 3,000 population relied on oysters for a living).

*Terror* was probably in use until 1902, and the catastrophe which, John said, was a turning point for the Emsworth oyster industry. At a mayoral banquet in Winchester, guests were taken ill after eating Emsworth oysters and the Dean of Winchester subsequently died of typhoid. Sewage contamination of the oyster beds was the cause, and trade more than halved, with further reductions caused by the First World War.

Much of the Emsworth fleet was sold off, including *Terror* in the 1930s. She was laid up, and little was heard of her until the 1950s when she was in use in Portsmouth Harbour as a training boat for sea scouts, and for some leisure use.

By 1973, stuffed with paper to stop leaks, and minus her centreplate, she was in the workshops of Portsmouth Museum awaiting restoration - a project which wasn't able to get properly under way for a further 30 years.

The main players in the successful 2003-6 restoration were all either onboard or on the town quay when she was re-launched, and each talked to me later with great enthusiasm about the project. First, John Winterbotham, the marine surveyor who had the job of drawing up the specification for the re-build. 'When I saw her in the greenhouse, she was a wreck really', John says. 'On closer inspection, there was quite a lot that could be saved - virtually every other plank, some of the oak ribs and knees, but not the spars, centreplate box or keel.'

However, old sepia photographs of the boat proved invaluable when it came to making replica sails, and in ensuring that the re-built boat matched the original as closely as possible.

It was a fascinating and challenging project for John, a very experienced marine surveyor, who oversaw all stages of the building project at Dolphin Quay. Although he is familiar with smaller boats - he owns an original Seaview Mermaid class dayboat - much of his consultancy's time is spent surveying or restoring much larger vessels, including recently *Lulworth*, which at 127' (38 metres) is the biggest gaff cutter in the world, now back on the classic boat circuit.

John signed off the now re-built *Terror* a day before the launch ceremony. He is full of praise for the standard of work achieved by the team led by Tim Gilmore at the Dolphin Quay yard, now making a name for themselves as wooden boat specialists. 'They were determined to make a success of the job, and they did. They have a right to be proud of what they have done.'

The master craftsman with the challenging job of re-building *Terror* during her two years at Dolphin Quay was Richard Uttley. He admits he did feel a sense of pride as he helped to sail *Terror* away from the town quay after the launch. 'To get a chance to restore and save a part of Emsworth's history was wonderful', he said.

Richard is used to major boat building projects - he recalls dragging a 12 square metre Sharpie off a bonfire when he was a boy, and restoring it. He has renovated old Wayfarers, and a 37' Buchanan sloop, and with his wife Janice built his current

boat, a catamaran. But the *Terror* project was the biggest re-build he has had to do: from the stem head to the transom, via the keel.

After assessing what could be saved, the next stage was to secure the timber for the job. The original boat had been built with oak frames and ribs, and pine planking - much of the timber would have come from nearby Stansted Forest, Richard thinks. The builder at the Foster yard was unlikely to have had detailed plans, but would simply have copied the lines from an earlier boat built for the same purpose.



Before and during the three year restoration



Some oak has been used in the 'new' *Terror*, in particular the entire stock of curved grown oak which they found at a local supplier's and used to make the new frames. For economy reasons, iroko was used in place of oak to make other sections of the boat, like the stem, keel, stern post and transom. ➤

The biggest problem was in shaping the garboard planks - the ones next to the keel. Because of *Terror's* unusual design, these go from horizontal to vertical in only 8', and trees just don't grow that way. Eventually, a system was devised of enclosing the planks in a large plastic bag and pumping in steam to soften them. The resulting pliable, softer piece of wood could then be bent into the correct shape.

Richard's main helper in the long rebuilding process was Sam Poore, an apprentice boat builder at the yard, funded by the HLF with the object of helping to keep alive traditional boat building skills. Sam had started an engineering course at South Downs College when he heard of the opportunity at Dolphin Quay, and decided it was too good to miss. Boat building was in his blood, he said, because his father had rebuilt a Thames Spritsail barge.

One of his jobs was to make new frames, using the worn old ones as templates. Looking back now, he is astonished at just how much work has gone into transforming the boat from wreck to elegant work boat.

*Terror* was built with a lifting keel so she could take the ground when necessary. The old centreplate case and keel had disappeared, but again with the help of old photographs, John Winterbotham was able to scale up a plan and a new box was made from marine ply. The original winch for raising the plate was still there, but needed re-galvanising. An engine bed had to be constructed, new cockpit coamings made (iroko again, this time 1" thick), new rudder built, and seating installed for future passengers and crew.

And that was just the hull. A new mast,

gaff and boom had to be built out of solid pine; standing and running rigging made (synthetic hemp was chosen for the sheets to most closely match the natural fibre rope originally used) and sails made in a distinctive cream colour by local sailmaker Arun Sails.

Richard says that as word spread about the project, more and more local people would call in at Dolphin Quay to see how *Terror* was getting on in her temporary shed. He found this sense of local ownership very satisfying. And at the four open days organised by the Conservancy, 2,000 people came to see how the old boat was being brought back to life.

The massive task of rebuilding and restoring *Terror* is only the start of the story, however. She is not going to be a static museum piece, but a working boat again. She will form the centrepiece of a heritage experience aimed at retelling the story of the Emsworth oyster fleet.

She will be available from May 2007 during the summer months to take the public on tours of the harbour; a group of enthusiastic local yachtsmen have volunteered to man the boat.

With a bit of luck and good management, there is no reason why *Terror* should not be gracing the harbour scene in another 100 years time. ❁

