

‘Dartmouth at the helm of project to bring Pilgrims’

by KAREN PERROW

‘DARTMOUTH at the helm of history.’

That is the new motto of the town’s Mayflower 400 group and one it is already living up to as plans have been unveiled for the building of a ‘virtual’ vessel at Bayard’s Cove as part of the celebrations in 2020.

The Dartmouth steering committee took the lead when it presented an overview of how early plans are shaping up for the international project involving the USA and Holland.

Trail towns involved in UK commemorations to mark the sailing of the Mayflower to the New World in 1620 gathered at the Guildhall on Thursday.

One highlight of the meeting was a presentation by technology expert Professor Bob Stone who outlined an exciting virtual reality project to design and build a Mayflower in a ‘hands across the Atlantic’ cultural legacy.

Prof Stone, of the human interface technologies team at the University of Birmingham, said the project would be both a collaborative and educational exercise involving members of the public, local historians, artists, actors and school children, all of whom will contribute to the development of the virtual models and scenes.

Students at Dartmouth Academy are being invited to take part in early research relating to the history of Bayard’s Cove – where the Mayflower and her sister ship the Speedwell sought shelter – its buildings, occupants and local trades.

Prof Stone and his team visited the academy on Friday where he explained the project to students from all year groups.

He said: ‘Students will be taught how to develop basic 3D models that will ultimately ‘frame’ their research and become incorporated into the final educational virtual reality experience.’

Prof Stone said another goal was to involve local artists in developing scenes by providing rich visual materials that will be used to ‘paint’ the 3D models and bring them to life with colour and texture.

The virtual Mayflower concept has come about following a similar project carried out by the university team in 2014, focusing on a 17th century ship, the wreck of which exists on Pett Level Beach near Hastings.

Launched in 1678, the Anne was a 70-gun third-rate ship of the line built as part of the restoration of King Charles II’s Royal Navy, overseen by Samuel Pepys.

She was beached 12 years later during the Battle of Beachy Head. Under the command of John Tyrrell, the vessel was deliberately torched to prevent her from being captured by the French.

Working with the Nautical



Prof Bob Stone speaks about the virtual Mayflower project at the Guildhall

Karen Perrow



Students at the Academy learn about the virtual Mayflower project. With them is Dartmouth mayor Rob Lyon

Gina Coles



Special virtual reality head sets will be used to bring the Mayflower to life

Gina Coles

Museums Trust, which owns the vessel, Prof Stone’s HIT team ‘resurrected’ the Anne using virtual reality, superimposing the 3D model of the ship over its real-world wreck site.

Prof Stone said unlike the virtual Anne project, the virtual Mayflower presented more of a challenge, as the intent was to develop much more than simply a ‘walk through’ of a ship moored alongside.

Sophisticated software tools will enable developers to build each part of the ship to precise levels of geometric detail, including its cargo, and avatars representing the passen-

gers and crew. To give a realistic finish, there will be representations of flag, sail and clothing material, wood grain effects and even skin texture will be generated using image processing packages.

Special effects can also be added, such as simulated weather, ocean movement, time of day changes and sound effects.

The same engine will enable the end user to explore the scenes in real time and to interact with a variety of objects, including the passengers, explained Prof Stone.

The virtual Mayflower will be viewable in 2D and 3D using VR



The Anne as she may have looked in her natural setting

HIT, University of Birmingham

head-mounted displays, high-definition screens and projectors, Smartphones and tablets and possibly interaction will be possible with other devices, such as gaming consoles.

Prof Stone said drone technology would also be used to conduct aerial surveys of buildings and historical sites.

Dartmouth Castle will be one of the locations to be surveyed this way.

‘Once the 3D version of the Mayflower has been developed, there will be opportunities for the residents of Dartmouth to test out some of the technologies and using tablets or special

head-mounted displays bring the virtual Mayflower back to the real Bayard’s Cove,’ he said.

Dartmouth project manager Peter Johnson told the meeting a framework document was being developed to take the Mayflower 400 project forward.

‘It’s really beginning to catch on and is going to be very beneficial to Dartmouth,’ he said.

‘We want to move forward and engage the whole community.’

He said ideas included an opening ceremony with a Mayflower anthem and a celebration of British and American music.

Amanda Lumley, chief executive of Destination Plymouth, said it was hoped to link up nationally all significant commemorative dates in the trail towns.

She said an educational resource pack was now available for all schools on the Mayflower 400 UK website and representatives from the trail towns had been invited to visit the US Embassy next year.

Babette Grobler, Plymouth’s Mayflower 400 project manager, said afterwards that everyone had been ‘bowled over and was very excited’ about the virtual reality project.

history' with virtual reality Mayflower ship back to life



The Anne on the water

HIT, University of Birmingham



Ropes, planks and canons are all included on the virtual Anne, above. Below, every detail is brought to life

HIT, University of Birmingham



Gina Coles

A member of the University of Birmingham teams explains how a drone will be used to help create the virtual reality experience



Village Voice

THE Christmas buffet lunch run by Slapton Cricket Club takes place on Saturday, December 12, for all those of pensionable age in the Parish, tickets at £8 per person are available now from Shirley Sullock, please can all tickets be purchased by Wednesday, December 9, so that numbers are known.

This has always been the most joyous of occasions and for those who have been somewhat reticent in the past to join in take the plunge and come along!

The church Christmas fair takes place on Saturday, December 5, in the village hall starting at 2pm with all the usual stalls including cakes and bric-a-brac. There will also be stalls selling Christmas decorations and gifts.

I think all enjoyed the SAP's production two weeks ago, the sum of £500 raised for Children in Need and the Devon Air Ambulance Trust continues the village tradition of being constantly supportive of charities.

The village hall committee hold

just one fundraising event each year, this being the grand Christmas raffle which is drawn at the Whist and Euchre Drive on Wednesday December 2. Raffle tickets are available from any Committee member, some of whom are Mike Bowles, Tony Caldwell, Marlene Luscombe, Shirley Sullock, Dan Mercer, Amanda Baker, Sue Staines or any other committee member.

The church cafe held this year during the summer months raised £1600 towards the maintenance of the church and churchyard. Hilary Davey would like to thank all those who supported the cafe and would welcome those who would be interested in helping in anyway next year.

SLAPTON

Pat Edgcombe
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