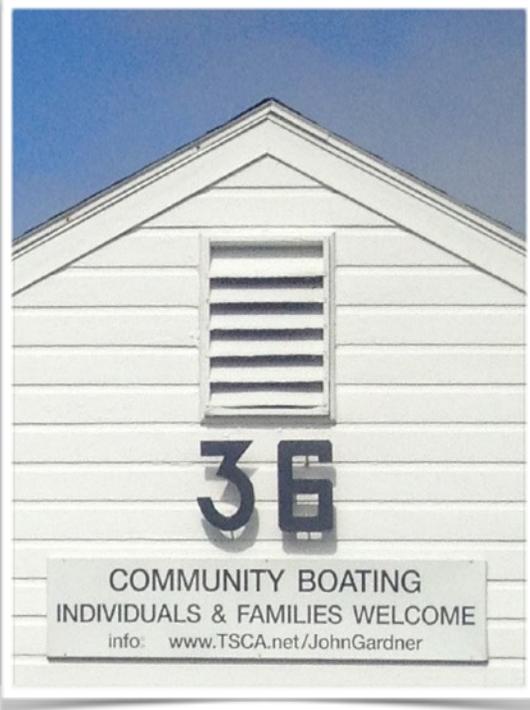


# JGTSCA

John Gardner Traditional  
Small Craft Association



“Viking Longship Dragan Harald Harfagre in the Mystic River”  
(Photo courtesy of Mystic Seaport)

Welcome to  
**John Gardner  
Traditional Small Craft  
Association**

Visit us at the Community Boat House:  
Building #36  
UConn Avery Point  
1084 Shennecossett Rd  
Groton, CT 06340

Local: [www.JGTSCA.org](http://www.JGTSCA.org)  
[www.facebook.com/JGTSCA](https://www.facebook.com/JGTSCA)  
National: [www.TSCA.net](http://www.TSCA.net)

We invite you to attend  
one of our meetings, go for a row,  
or get involved with our next  
boatbuilding project.

**Next Meeting: Sunday, June 3rd  
Potluck 12:30PM, Meeting to Follow**

## Viking Navigation - Getting Back from Mystic

The photo is of visiting Viking Longship replica Dragonship “Harald Harfagre” named for Harold Fairhair, first King of Norway. Dragon ships, at 110 feet, were reserved for Kings. The ship is visiting Mystic Seaport after an exciting crossing of the Atlantic and cruise of the Great Lakes. Legend has it that Harald was courting a fair Viking maiden who would have nothing to do with him until he had proved himself by conquering all of Norway. Which he promised to do and refused to cut his own long blond hair until he was King. Hence his name. Which proves two things: the independence of Viking women and the colorful last names of Viking men. And of course, Harold succeeded in uniting most of present Norway and won the fair maiden.

But the question before us today is how did the original Vikings navigate their way back from Mystic 1000 years ago? Were they here? If not moored at the Seaport, they at least passed by this area. Franck Pettersen of the Northern Lights Planetarium in Tromsø, Norway thinks so:

“Were they there, at the North American continent? There is absolutely no doubt that they were, but the only place where archeological evidence is found is at L’Anse aux Meadows at northern Newfoundland, Canada.

When I look at the question "how far south did they go?", I approach this from three different angles.

1. Compare with the other adventurous Viking voyages, and the social pressure on the Viking captain.
2. What are the geographical descriptions in the saga.
3. What are the important pieces of astronomical information from the Vinland Saga.

Vikings before Lief Eriksson went from Norway through Gibraltar and all the way to the eastern Mediterranean. Vikings had crossed the Atlantic Ocean and settled at Iceland and Greenland. We also know that they crossed the much shorter distance over to the American continent. The Vikings in Iceland, Greenland and Newfoundland knew about these voyages. There is no reason to believe that they stopped at Newfoundland, but rather that they went much further south. The distance from Newfoundland to New York is only one fifth of the distance they sailed in Europe. Having reached Newfoundland, there was a pressure on the next Viking captain or Viking chief to go further south to explore new lands to prove that he was a man, and that he was a skilled navigator and explorer. In the saga we read that Bjarne Herjulfsson in the year 986, on his way to Greenland, went into fog and lost his direction. They turned south, sailing for two weeks with land on the port side of the ship before reaching the latitude of southern Greenland. Years later in Norway, Bjarne had to suffer a lot of teasing for being a coward because he did not go ashore in this new land. But in the year 999 Leif Eriksson was the one to continue. And he wanted to be sure that he went further south than Bjarne did. Quite a few things surprised Leif and his men in this new land. The most important to us are:

- The whole winter went by without temperatures below the freezing point, and without snow.

- They found wild grain.
- There was hardly no brown grass, even in the middle of the winter.
- They found wild grapes.

One of Leif's men was originally from Germany. One day he was missing, and when they found him again, his face was red, they did not understand him when he talked, his eyes were rolling, and he did funny things with his face as he talked. The explanation was that he had found grapes, and he knew from Germany how to make wine of them. Leif named the land Vinland the Good.”

So, based on the Sagas, Franck Pettersen believes the Vikings, more correctly, the Danes, were at least this far south. So how did the Dane explorers, who were mostly coastal navigators, cross the Atlantic in a straight line? Their usual sailing instructions were, again from Pettersen:

“In the saga Landnámabok it says: "From Hernam (near Bergen) in Norway you must hold on to a due western course, and that will take you to Hvarf in Greenland. On your way you will come so close to the Shetland Islands that you can just see them in clear weather. And you will sail so far from the Faroe Islands that you will see half of the hills in the water. And you will be so close to Iceland that you will see whales and birds from there."

There are no hills in the mid-Atlantic, and continuous daylight north of the Arctic Circle in summer so no stars to steer by and very few at 62 degrees north in summer when the Danes voyaged. Again I quote from Franck Pettersen:

“The astronomical observation mentioned in the Vinland saga is as follows. At skamdagr, the shortest day of the year, Leif observed the sun to be in Eyktarstad and Dagmálsstad. Eykt, or in modern Norwegian økt, means a period of work. Eyktarstad means that Leif had seen the sun in the direction on the horizon where work was to finish in the afternoon according to the tradition in Norway. In modern language he observed the sun above the horizon 60° west of south at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Eykt at sea is still today 4 o'clock. The saga does not say set in eyktarstad, so it is to be understood "had not set in eyktarstad." The most radical interpretation of the information from the

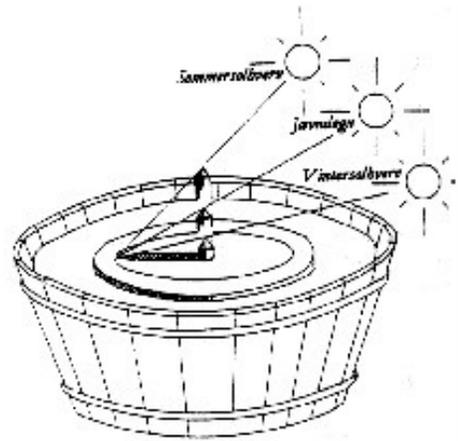
saga gives us a northernmost possible latitude of 37° north for Leif's winter camp. Chesapeake Bay in Virginia is in this area. The distance from Greenland to Chesapeake Bay is the same as from Bergen in Norway to Gibraltar.

The calculations can be done in spherical astronomy, and they are not very complicated. If we instead of the most radical interpretation of the observation use the most conservative, we will still find Leif's camp at 42° north. (i.e. Mystic - Ed.)

How did they find their way back from (Mystic)? They sailed on a course due west or due east along latitude 62° north. To manage this, they did navigate by a star, the Sun. Two simple but amazingly accurate devices helped them with that. The first one was a "solskuggefjøl" - a sun shadow board. This was a circular board with a tip in the middle, and the board was allowed to float in a bucket of water. Concentric circles represented different dates. When the shadow of the tip was observed around noon it was supposed to reach the circumference of the right circle, and they knew they were on the right latitude. Another possibility was to move the tip in the middle up and down according to different dates.

The other instrument was the real amazing one: The Sun Compass. This instrument draws on the fact that the Sun's shadow from the tip in the middle of a disk describes different hyperbolas at different times of the year. When you have the hyperbola representing 62° and the four weeks around summer solstice, you do not have to know the time of the day in order to find the general directions. All you have to do is rotate the disk until the shadow of the tip falls on the hyperbola, and the general directions are given with an accuracy of a few degrees. One of the ingenious things about navigating with this instrument is that if you choose the wrong gnomon curve and get a course that is a little too much north in the morning, this will be corrected in the afternoon by a slightly south bound course and your average direction will be correct.

The archeological evidence for this Viking compass was found in Greenland by the archeologist C. L. Vebæk of Denmark. Later it was interpreted by Captain Sølvér and by Søren Thirslund at the Nautical Museum at Kronborg Castle and by



professor Curt Roslund at the University of Göteborg. The Viking compass that was found had different hyperbolas or gnomon curves, and the north direction is clearly marked with 16 small cuts crossing a long line. If we count the spikes from north and to the right we have 90° or due west, at spike number 8. This also indicates that dividing the compass into 32 directions was done already by the Vikings, before the magnetic compass was in use in Europe."

*The basis for this newsletter item is Franck Pettersen's 1993 article "The Viking Sun Compass" published in 1993 and available on your closest internet at [http://www.ips-planetarium.org/general/custom.asp?page=a\\_pettersen1993](http://www.ips-planetarium.org/general/custom.asp?page=a_pettersen1993). Or you can send for your very own hard copy of "The Viking Compass" from the Danish Maritime Museum Kronborg Castle, 3000 Helsingør, Denmark. This article was originally presented as a paper at the International Planetarium Society (IPS) in Utah (of all places) in 1992. Portions are quoted here courtesy of IPS. Please support them.*

## Recent Activities-

**Bluff Point Cleanup:** On April 17th Ellie Czarnowski, Steve Barton and others flipped burgers and roasted hot dogs for a hearty lunch to support Prof. Syma Ebbin and her Eco Huskies environmental club. The club collected mounds of trash from along the shores of nearby Bluff Point State Park and Beach. A big thanks to all who participated!

**Earth Day:** Our chapter participated in UCONN-Avery Point's celebration of Earth Day on April 19th. Dan Nelson and others participated in an Open House of our Community Boating Center, Building 36. A number of students as well as Professors stopped by and expressed interest.

**March Full Moon Row:** Phil Behney led a full complement of dories on a (cloudy) moonlight row from our dory stash by Mystic Shipyard East, around the point and up to the Mystic River dinghy dock in downtown Mystic where got off for some hot chocolate before braving the chill return. It is not often we get to celebrate a Blue Moon (a second full moon in a month). April's full moon row got rained out. May's full moon is May 29th; contact Phil Behney to sign up.

**Trip to Herreshoff Museum:** Dane Rochelle reports: "It actually worked out quite well. Eight members and two Club guests showed up, including Dave and I. Afterwards, Carl K and Debra and Dave and I and John Hacunda collected at the DeWolf Tavern for an enjoyable lunch and conversation. Nicolas Alley and two friends of his caught breakfast in Warren RI and so did not join us for lunch, due to their already stuff bellies.

We joined a docent-led tour at 1030, which was well worth the entry fee, as we learned quite a bit of interesting information from him that we might not have otherwise. Carl K's interest seemed particularly piqued when we walked up the road to one of the Herreshoff shops a couple doors up from the museum, where a new build of a Herreshoff steam launch is being built.

Magnificent Museum and a must-see for anyone with an interest in beautifully-lined wooden boats small and large, and a mind excited by history."

## Behney's inspection by the Coast Guard, or What Happens When You Miss the Bus

So a couple of Thursday mornings ago our Dory Master, Phil Behney, missed the United Technologies employee bus. It takes those formerly used to working at the Groton facility on the east side of the Thames River across to the new facility in New London on the west side of the mighty Thames. No worries, thought Phil, for he often rows ago work in one of our John Gardner Traditional Small Craft Dories. In all kinds of weather, I might add and at all times of year. So he hustled down to riverside, hopped in a dory and started his way across the busy river. For those not familiar, the River is a busy place most mornings with the dockside activity around Electric Boat, traffic from the Submarine Base and ferries going to Block, Fisher's and Long Islands. Nothing unusual for Phil, except this particular morning the Coast Guard decided to do a safety check on the green dory with the single individual hustling across to work.

They came alongside and shouted down, "Permission to Board". Their standard opening gambit. Phil looked up and said, "You are welcome to come on down, if you can find room." The Coast Guardsman thought better of it and replied, "I think I'll just stay up here", as he pulled out his electronic tablet and started down his checklist. Meanwhile, the two craft were sliding down the River on the outgoing tide. The Coast Guardsman did not notice, but Phil did. Phil carefully replied to each Coast Guard question and produced the required safety equipment as requested. This dragged on for a while until Phil pointed out their down-river progress and the upriver place he had to go. So slowly the inspection was completed. Phil passed. The Coast Guard vessel motored off and Phil bent to his oars. The blisters on his hands he showed us on Friday night were impressive.

So what equipment was required, you might ask. Remember, Phil's boat is a 15'-6" manually propelled vessel transiting the River in broad, or almost broad, daylight, a Class A vessel, less than 16 feet with no gasoline engine. As described in your "2018 Boater's Guide", available for free at your local Town Hall, Connecticut and U. S. Coastguard minimum requirements are:

- \* One approved TYPE I, II, III or V Personal Flotation Device for each person on board. Phil was wearing his.
- \* A means of making an efficient sound signal. Phil had his trusty police whistle.
- \* A Visual Distress Signal if in Fisher's Island Sound or Long Island Sound. Phil had an orange distress flag as well as an optional signaling mirror. If it had been night, Phil would have showed them his hand-held flashlight.

Pretty simple, you might say, but it quickly gets more complicated as boat length exceeds 16 feet and any kind of motor is attached. The moral of this story, then, is cruise in small boats with oar and sail.

## Upcoming Events

### At the Seaport:

On May 19, Mystic Seaport opens [\*The Vikings Begin: Treasures from Uppsala University, Sweden\*](#), the international debut of an exhibition that features early artifacts of the Viking culture. The same day they open [\*Science, Myth, and Mystery: The Vinland Map Saga\*](#), an exhibition in partnership with Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library that will display one of the most controversial maps in history and take you on the journey of its remarkable story.

## Around the Shops -

### JGTSCA Boathouse at Avery Point:

Dan Nelson reports: Spring is here - Come down to the shop and help out with some projects that are in the works:

We have **three pairs of 7 foot oars** that need finishing touches before they hit the water, mainly whittling away on the looms to fair them, from grip to blade. Once they are faired then two coats of clear epoxy sealer can be applied to the blades and upward about a foot onto the loom. Then, paint or varnish, apply leathers, and they are done. We need these to make boats go!



Andy Strode and fellow volunteer spiffing up the Seaport's Good Little Skiff, an example of which JGTSCA plans to build. (Photo courtesy of Mystic Seaport)

The **Payson/Wolfe dory** is nearly done and will be off the shop floor soon. Check with Phil B. or Bill A. at the shop to see what else needs to be done to make it ready.

George S. stopped in and dropped off the **Good Little Skiff (GLS)** plans and patterns. He spent a lot of enjoyable (his words) time doing this work, a few hours at a time, in the common area where he lives. When folks asked what he was doing, he would feed them a tall tale, another part of his pleasure in the task.

We owe George a hearty **Thank You** for all he has done. The plans and paperwork are in the cardboard tube, next to the fridge and file box.

So, the build of the **GLS** should be in the near future - we have the plans and pattern in hand (thanks again George!) and the recycled NINA molds are waiting in the shop. A once-over of the lumber racks will tell us if we have any useful lumber on hand for the GLS project. The shelf above the work bench was been inventoried and little to nothing was found that will be of use. Steve B. has a bundle of "D" shaped oak stock stored on the oar rack and he has generously offered to donate enough material to use on the GLS as rub rails or similar.

**Thanks Steve.**

Finally, Steve B. has made another generous donation to the boat house - a brand-new **mini-fridge!**  
**Excellent Steve!** - we needed one!

Stay tuned for details on up-coming outings, events and projects.

## Small Craft Workshop

### JUNE 22 - JUNE 24 2018



The John Gardner Small Craft Workshop will again be held during the WoodenBoat Show at Mystic Seaport Friday to Sunday, June 22 – 24 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., hosted by the Traditional Small Craft Association's John Gardner Chapter.

In addition to having a booth to acquaint show attendees with the TSCA, there will also be demonstrations of skills that enhance the traditional small boat experience. Mystic Seaport Boathouse craft will be available at no charge for participants to use. We are hoping for a continuous back drop to the show of traditional small craft in action on the river.

Workshop participants can register to stay onboard the full-rigged *Joseph Conrad* on Friday and Saturday nights.

Registration for the Small Craft Workshop also allows you admission to the WoodenBoat Show all three days at no additional cost. We will be having early check-in this year for advance registrants starting 7 am Friday and Saturday mornings so you can bring in your car-top boats before the gates close at 9 am. Of course you can launch all day at nearby Isham Street.

Registration information is posted on-line at [MysticSeaport.org](http://MysticSeaport.org). Click on Visit, Calendar and scroll on down to Small Craft Workshop June 22-24. If interested in staffing the booth or demonstrating a skill, add a note on the registration form or contact Bill Rutherford at [smallcrafter@gmail.com](mailto:smallcrafter@gmail.com) or 860-222-5249. If off the grid, just give Bill Rutherford a call or drop him a line at 26 NW St., Stonington. CT.

#### Workshop Activities

##### Demonstrations and Workshops

Attendees are encouraged to help with a workshop, staff the TSCA booth at *Australia Beach* or give a demonstration of some skill such as sail rigging, sculling, boat building, hardware making, etc. If you have a skill that you would like to demonstrate, please volunteer. Demonstrations usually last about half an hour and will be held at 11 a.m., 1 p.m., and 3 p.m. each day.



## Get out on the Water Together

At 8 a.m. on Saturday and Sunday morning, there will be a cruise in-company open to all workshop attendees. We will gather at the *Australia* Beach at 8 a.m. and cruise either up river past the highway bridge to the beautiful salt marshes or down river past the Museum Village with classic yachts on their moorings. And new this year, at 4 pm on Saturday, we plan to rig for sail and informally cruise along the Museum waterfront.

## Tour the Mystic Seaport Small Boat Collection:

The Museum's Small Boat Collection is not normally open to the public but will be open each day of the Show from 2:30pm to 4:30pm and is accessed through the loading dock doors in the rear of the Collections Building across from Latitude 41. We will offer a guided tour of the Collection leaving from the TSCA Booth at Australia Beach at 2:30pm both Saturday and Sunday afternoons.

## Saturday Night Potluck Dinner:

An offsite potluck dinner will be organized for participants. See Bill or Karen Rutherford at the event.

## Special this Year:

We plan a rowing workshop, open to the public, at 1 pm Saturday afternoon, complete with opportunities to try your hand rowing a racing shell, sliding seat or traditional fixed seat. John Gardner TSCA dories will be available as we all pitch in to share our various ways to row. We also expect a few Viking era boats will be available as well as they stick around from the previous Viking weekend, including Ben Fuller's Afjordsfaering "Liten Kuling".

All TSCA members are encouraged to attend with or without your own boats. There is plenty to do if you don't bring your own vessel. Launching and parking details are posted on line in the "Letter SCW Participants 2018" as well as with your registration materials. Come and enjoy the WoodenBoat Show, Mystic Seaport and the John Gardner Small Craft Workshop, all seen from the thwart of a traditional small boat.



## View from the Side Deck

Warm “Summer” evenings are here. The garage door to the side deck of the Boathouse is open for the first time in recent memory. The warm breeze feels good. The completed Payson/Wolfe Dory is right side up, sitting on its cradle in its new coat of dark JGTSCA green. A big thanks to Phil Behney and Bill Armitage for leading this effort. We look forward to seeing Andy Wolfe sitting at the oars with a big smile in his face come June as we splash the boat at our John Gardner Small Craft Workshop.

Lots of activities this recent month: Ellie led another excellent lunch for our UCONN Eco Huskies, Dane led an outing to Opening Day at the Herreshoff museum and Phil led our first “moonlight” row; actually it was quite dark and we won’t mention one participant who rowed up a blind alley into a boatyard.....

A big shout-out to Bob Hicks and his “Messing About in Boats” magazine! Bob not only complemented our group in his editorial space but included one complete issue of our newsletter in his May Issue. Bob has been very supportive over the years and is a champion of our kind of boats and boating. It is nice to be recognized and he appreciates that our successes are the result of a strong group of very creative and energized people who just happen to love small boats.

Keep those articles coming, folks and think of some facet of small boating you would like to share with others at our upcoming Small Craft Workshop.

Fair Winds, All.

Bill & Karen Rutherford  
Editor & Publisher

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