

## A Year In Review: Carmarthen Coracle & Netsmen's Association

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The extreme weather conditions added to various other factors meant we had a very poor and slow fishing season in 2018. Not wanting to dwell on the negative, here is some positive coracle news from the Towy.

Last September, we welcomed the National Association of City and Town Sheriffs of England and Wales to the Carmarthen Coracle. The day saw many distinguished visitors, who were all keen to learn about our history.



Photo: Carmarthen Coracle & Netsmen's Association

Television viewers would have seen us take part in the BBC One programme 'Britain Afloat' alongside the Teifi and Ironbridge coracles.

October saw the opening of Specsavers opticians in our hometown and the coracle featured in the day's celebrations, when a miniature coracle was presented to two very proud Welshmen – Specsavers' founder Doug Perkins and designer Jeff Banks.

The interest in coracles always increases come March and this year was no exception. We worked with Carmarthen Town Council to

produce a 'Coracle Trail' as part of the St David's Day and Welsh Week celebrations in Carmarthen town. Six coracles were placed around the town, each with a history of an old coracle fishing family – visitors were given a map of the town to follow the trail.

Later that month, one of our miniature Towy coracles was travelling with Team Wales to the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games, ready for the Welcoming Ceremony in April. Pictured is Team Wales representative Nicola Phillips presenting our coracle to the Yugembah people in



Photo: Carmarthen Coracle & Netsmen's Association



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the Gold Coast Fire Ceremony. It was given in exchange for a Fire Stick – both representing their country's ancient cultures.

Probably our most important news of the year was our additional home – we have joined various local river users and taken over an empty building on the Quayside. It's warm, dry and an ideal place for visitors to come and see our collection and us. We've welcomed local schools, Cubs, Beavers, our local special needs school and adult groups – it's been a very busy time. Our lease finishes at the end of March and our council want to knock the building down to make offices – so we're making hay while the sun shines and using the time we have to welcome as many visitors as possible.

For those who are too young to visit, I've been taking the coracles around local nurseries. My initial feeling was that they were too young to understand, but when there are cries and tantrums because they don't want to get out of the coracle, you know you've done something right!

The summer saw our popular Carmarthen River Festival take place on the Quayside – it attracted a record crowd of over 2000 people. It was great to welcome Frome Men's Shed and their coracle collection again this year and an added nice surprise was receiving support from Black Rock Lave Netsmen – we will return the support soon! We used the River Festival to unveil our new fibre-glass coracle, which was kindly donated by The Coracle Society. We named our coracle 'Logan' after Towy coracle man Matthew Dagnall's son, who suffers from mitochondrial disease. Ten year old Logan came to cut the ribbon on the new coracle and set sail on its maiden voyage with his dad to enter the Coracle Race. Pictured is Logan with his dad when he just realised he won the coracle race.



Photo: Carmarthen Coracle & Netsmen's Association

Lastly, we have been contacted by a gentleman who is well known locally for his heritage work and story-telling. He has offered to work with us in promoting the story of the coracle to local schools, produce an education pack and also capture the old coracle stories on film. Last week we were advised that the grant application had been successful... so just when we thought it was getting quiet!