

■ Wherry Albion skipper Henry Gowman talks to the UEA film team.

Picture: SIMON FINLAY



Film set to capture life on the wherries

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Wherry boats used to be a familiar sight sailing along Norfolk's rivers and canals 100 years ago and this week a film crew jumped on board one of the vessels as it arrived in Norwich for a public open day.

The students from the University of East Anglia filmed the iconic wherry Albion as it travelled from Frostbite Sailing Club in Thorpe to moor at the Broads Authority Yacht Station at Norwich Riverside yesterday to give visitors the chance to have a look around the 115-year-old vessel.

The film crew included the students Jervais Kouloungou, Simon Taylor and Kate Maclanon, from Postcode Films, who were shooting a short documentary film about the wherry boats and the people who lived on them.

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Simon Taylor

The programme focused on Jayne Tracey, a member of the Norfolk Wherry Trust, who was born and brought up on board the wherry Bramble, which was based at Beccles.

Mr Taylor said: “Basically we are doing a short five minute documentary film on the wherry boat. Really it is more about the people who lived on the boats and their lives.”

He added the film makers wanted to provide an historical perspective of a way of life that had almost become extinct as there were few remaining wherries which

were no longer involved in trade on the rivers.

“It is important just from a local historical perspective and also the wherries are unique to the Norfolk Broads and their way of life.

“We spoke to the crew about some of their experiences and why they got involved with wherry boats. Jayne was our main area of interest because she was born on a wherry boat.”

Currently, there are eight surviving wherries, which are either privately owned or used for private hire, but during the heyday of the wherry in the 20th century, the boat was the main form of transport, ferrying everything from bricks to lime and brick kilns and fertiliser across the country.

Henry Gowman, the Albion skipper, said the film would capture the historic importance of the wherry.