The Greenwich Hospital barge of 1832, scale 1:48, by David Antscherl

Most of us think of barges as heavy, ungainly cargo-carrying vessels, either towed or under sail. However, there is another class of barge that defies this stereotype. These are ceremonial rowed barges; long, light and lean passenger-carrying vessels. British examples of these craft were seen on the River Thames until the 19th century. A modern revival example is *Gloriana,* built for H.M. The Queen in 2011-2012 to celebrate her Diamond Jubilee.

In the past, barges of this type used to be displayed on ceremonial occasions by Royalty, the Lord Mayor of London and the various City Guilds. The annual Lord Mayor’s Show has been a major event in City life for many centuries. The City Guilds vied with each other for position and in the decorative splendor of their barges. They must have made an impressive sight, rowed in procession along the River. Manned by up to eighteen oarsmen in livery, with ensigns and flags flying, it was a great show of pomp and pageantry.

The Governor of Greenwich Hospital in 1832, the year that the Hospital barge was built, was Admiral Sir Richard Keats. He served from 1821 to 1834 and was succeeded by the celebrated Sir Thomas Hardy of Trafalgar fame. Hardy, promoted to Vice-Admiral of the Blue in 1837, continued to serve as Governor until his death in 1839. He must have sat in the coach of this barge on many occasions. A far cry indeed for him, after commanding a 100-gun first rate ship of the line!

I first came across the draught for the Greenwich Hospital barge of 1832 some years ago. At the time I was fully occupied with commissions and conservation work, but the image of this sleek craft stayed with me. As a child I had seen Prince Frederick’s barge at Greenwich, so was familiar with her beautiful lines, accentuated by her graceful run of clinker planking. In my mind’s eye I could see how the Greenwich Hospital barge might look as a jewel-like model at 1:48 scale.

The present model of the Greenwich Hospital barge is built of Castello boxwood and measures only 10" in length overall. The asking price is $10,000.00 and terms are available upon request.