



Additional Information and Answers  
for  
Group Leaders and Teachers

## About The 'Coracle Challenge' Trail

To make the most of your visit to the New Coracle Shed we recommend that you download and print the 'Coracle Challenge Trail' from our website for your children to complete:

<https://ironbridgecoracles.org/>

The trail is designed:

- primarily for children aged 7 -11 however younger and older children could still engage meaningfully with the activities.
- all the activities take place in the New Coracle Shed.
- as 'stand-alone' activity to engage children with the exhibits but it also provides a hook or prompt for further activities back at home, youth group or school.
- To be used in its entirety or for group leaders or teachers to select the activities and challenges that are most appropriate for their group.
- The trail comprises 3 challenges. We suggest you divide your group into 3 smaller groups, each working on different activities in rotation to avoid overcrowding.

### Prior to your visit:

1. Contact the Ironbridge Coracle Trust (ICT) to book your visit.  
Email: [info@ironbridgecoracles.org](mailto:info@ironbridgecoracles.org)
2. Print or download from our website: <https://ironbridgecoracles.org/>
  - Copies of the '**Coracle Challenge**' Trail for your children.
  - '**Weird and Wonderful Coracles**' – these are for reference so can be shared by children. Colour copies would be ideal if possible.
  - A printed or electronic copy of the '**Coracle Challenge Group Leader Notes**' may be helpful for reference.

On the day of your visit children will need pencils, colouring pencils and clipboards. With advance notice, the ICT **may** be able to provide these. Please enquire when making your booking.

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## Introduction to the New Coracle Shed



Many of the objects you can see on display in the 'Glass Shed' came from the 'Old Coracle Shed' down by the River Severn, close to the Iron Bridge.

The shed was owned by Harry Rogers and later his son Eusty.

There is a photograph / poster of the Old Coracle Shed on display that you can point out to your group.

The old wooden shed was full of coracle making tools, traps, fishing nets and strange animated puppets.

Eusty used to call his dad Harry's shed the '**Old Shed of Curiosities**' after Charles Dickens' novel 'The Old Curiosity Shop'.

## The Rogers Family

Tommy, Harry and Eusty Rogers were 3 generations of a family of **local coracle makers**. They all lived in Ironbridge.

### Tommy Rogers 1843 - 1924

- One of the last generation of watermen who worked on the barges and trows on the River Severn.
- He inspired the black and white paper cut artwork of the coracle man carrying his coracle on display in the New Coracle Shed.

### Harry Rogers 1888 - 1967

- Harry worked at a sawmill and carried on the family coracle-making tradition.
- He gained a living from the river in his spare time and had a succession of pet foxes that he called 'Billy'.

#### Harry's Pet Foxes 'Billy'

The fox in the Glass Shed is **not** one of Harry's Foxes. It was bought in a local Antique Shop.

### Eusty Rogers 1914 - 2003

- Eusty worked full time at Ironbridge Power Station.
- He carried on the family tradition of country pursuits, coracle making and handling.
- Eusty made 2 of the coracles on display in the New Coracle Shed:
  1. the green and black coracle in the glass shed
  2. the prehistoric style coracle, displayed in the roof space, made with a woven willow frame tied together with horse-hair and covered with bullock hide

## Challenge 1: Where in the World?

### Activity 1

There are a number of different models of the Ironbridge coracle on display.

We suggest you direct your children to draw the large Ironbridge coracle in the glass shed as this is an original coracle made by Eusty Rogers.

### Activity 2

This is a short film children can watch. It is located on the bench opposite the glass shed.

### Activity 3

There is no definitive answer as it will depend on which coracles the children choose to include in their 'count'. For example:

- coracles (complete and incomplete)
- model coracles
- photographs and / or drawings and artwork

A **currach** is another word for a coracle.

**Suggestion:** Once children have completed their 'count' we suggest they re-count the coracles on display as a group to agree their final total.

**Answer:** As a guide, approximate numbers are as follows:

- The number of large or full-size coracles on display (complete and incomplete): **7**
- The number of model coracles and currach in the display case of coracles from around the world: **8\***

There are other model coracles as well as photographs and posters on display that children could include in their count.

\* This number may change if the displays change and does not include the paper models.

### Activity 4: Sit in a coracle

Encourage children to sit in the coracle and they can note down what it feels like.

Additional Information: Climbing into a coracle on water is not an easy task!

A coracle sits on the water and not in it because it doesn't have a keel. The trick is to get in or out of the coracle as quickly, smoothly and carefully as you can. Once you are sitting in the coracle it is more stable because your weight is distributed across the boat.

Activity: Paddle down the river

Pupils decide how easy they think it would be to paddle a coracle and shade / colour in the relevant number of coracles:

1 coracle = easy

2 coracles = quite difficult

3 coracles = difficult

Activity: Have a go! Coracle Run 1779

This interactive activity is located on the bench opposite the entrance door.

Children attempt to paddle a coracle down the River Severn under the watchful eye of the local landowner who is on the look-out for trespassers and poachers.

This activity will also give children a sense of the dangers of poaching in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

#### Poaching:

Coracles were also a perfect tool for poaching which was a crucial activity necessary for putting food on the table.

Activity: Which base is best?

A flatter base is best.

Coracles don't have a keel and the flat bottom evenly spreads the weight of the boat and its load. Coracles therefore don't need much water to float so they are ideal to use on rivers and shallow waters.

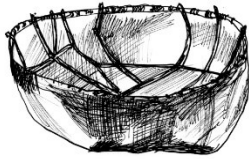
Activity: Which is easier?

Paddling up stream will be more difficult than paddling downstream because:

- it requires more effort
- you are paddling against the current
- generally speaking (although this will depend on the strength of the current) over the course of an extended journey you should expect to go about half the distance upstream than you would normally travel downstream

**But** when there are strong winds and the winds are with you paddling upstream may not be as difficult.

Activity 5: Where in the world?



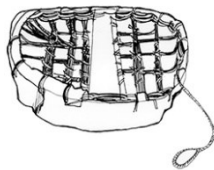
**Country:** America

**Name:** American Bull Boat

**Exhibit:** Model

**Location:** Display case of model coracles from around the world.

Used by the American Indians for travelling and fishing. Then also used from the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the American frontiersmen.



**Country:** Ireland

**Name:** Boyne Coracle

**Exhibit:** Model

**Location:** Display case of model coracles from around the world.



**Country:** India

**Name:** Parisal

Used to ferry goods and people across rivers.

**Exhibit:** Poster

**Location:** Next to display case of model coracles from around the world.

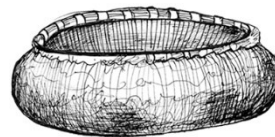


**Country:** England

**Name:** Ironbridge Coracle

**Exhibit:** Coracle made by Eusty Rogers

**Location:** Glass Shed

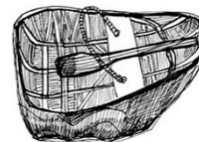


**Country:** Iraq

**Name:** Quffa

**Exhibit:** Poster

**Location:** Next to display case of model coracles from around the world.



**Country:** Wales

**Name:** Teifi Coracle

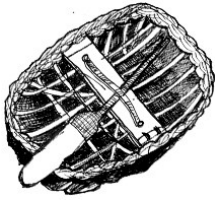
**Exhibit:** Model

**Location:** Display case of model coracles from around the world.

Anagram answers:

Iraq  
Wales  
England  
India  
America

## Activity 6: Coracles of Great Britain

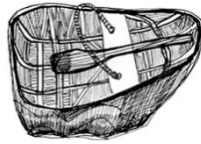


**Country:** Wales

**Name:** Towy Coracle

**Exhibit:** Model

**Location:** Display case of model coracles from around the world.

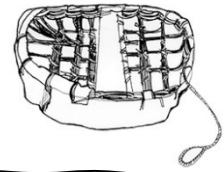


**Country:** Wales

**Name:** Teifi Coracle

**Exhibit:** Model

**Location:** Display case of model coracles from around the world.



**Country:** Ireland

**Name:** Boyne Coracle

**Exhibit:** Model

**Location:** Display case of model coracles from around the world.



**Country:** Wales

**Name:** Dee Coracle

**Exhibit:** Model

**Location:** Display case of model coracles from around the world.



**Country:** Scotland

**Name:** Spey Coracle

**Exhibit:** Not on display but similar shape and size to the Eusty's 'prehistoric' replica coracle.

**Location:** Prehistoric replica displayed in the roof space.



**Country:** England

**Name:** Ironbridge Coracle

**Exhibit:** Coracle made by Eusty Rogers

**Location:** Glass Shed

Along the River Severn, coracles are also built at Welshpool, Shrewsbury and Bridgnorth. They all have a slightly different design.

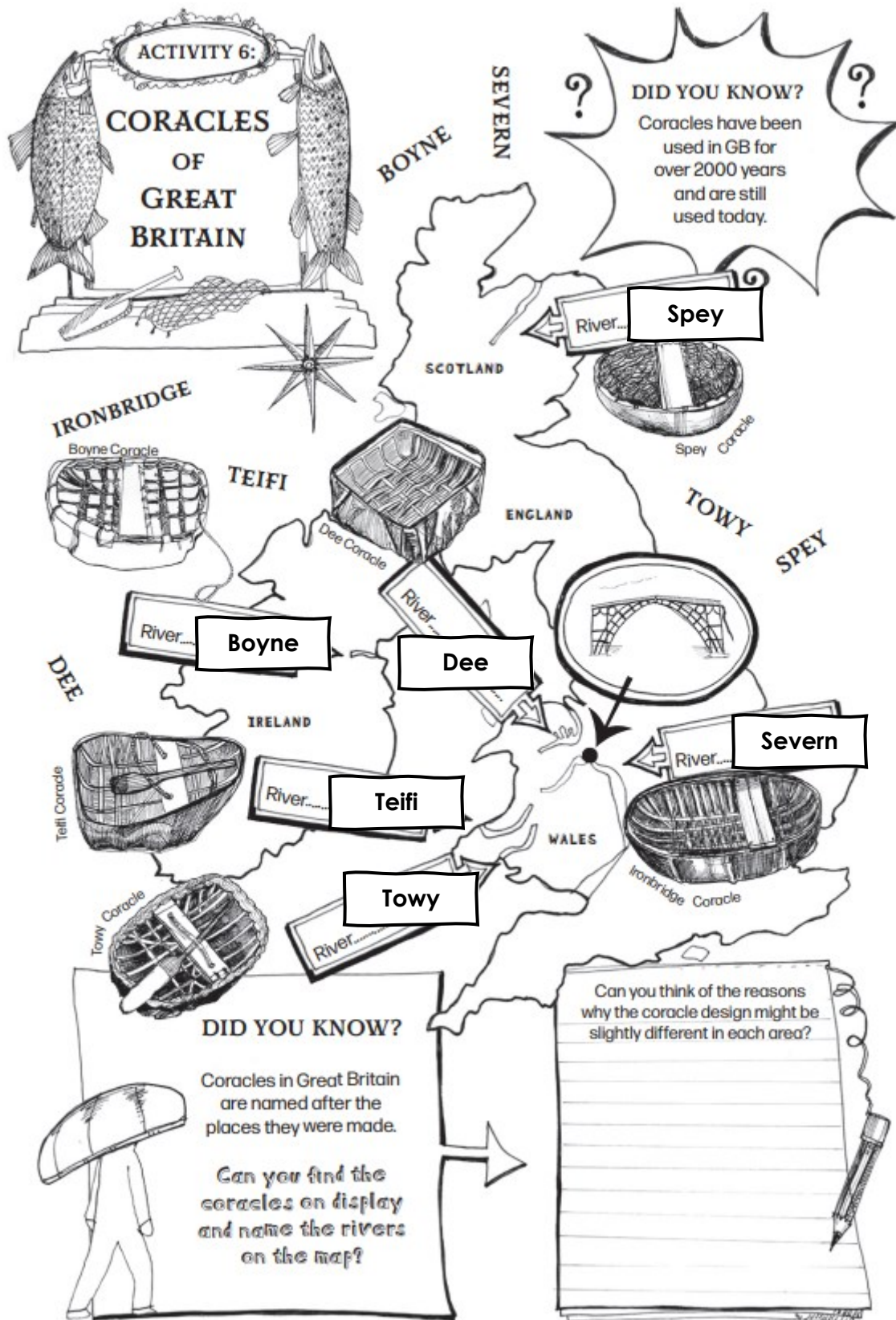
Activity: Why does the design of coracles vary from area to area, country to country?

Coracle design will depend on:

- the materials available locally to make the coracle
- the size required – you need to be able to reach over the gun wale of the coracle to paddle. If a coracle is too big for your size you won't be able to paddle.
- the intended use of the coracle
- the conditions of the water the coracle is to be used on
- personal preference



Name the rivers: answers





## Challenge 2: How do you make a coracle?

### Activity 1: What are coracles made of?

Children read the information about each of the coracles and then match the coracle to the correct materials.

The only information children may require is that they use reeds to make Iraqi coiled basketry coracles.

Traditionally **animal hides** were used to cover the coracles. Nowadays calico painted with bitumen is more often used.

### Activity 2: Design a coracle

A perfect opportunity for children to let their imaginations run wild!

Their designs can be inspired by the traditional coracles on display or by the photographs of the Ironbridge Coracle Regatta on the 'Weird and Wonderful Coracles' resource sheet.

#### Ironbridge Coracle Regatta

In the past, participants have recycled all sorts of materials to create their coracles including:

- estate agents' signs
- a baby's cot
- plastic barrels cut in half
- oilcloth table cloths
- foam packaging!

### Challenge 3: The Shed of Curiosities

Eusty used to call his dad Harry's shed the '**Old Shed of Curiosities**' after Charles Dickens' novel 'The Old Curiosity Shop'.

How many tools can you find?

All the tools are on display in the glass shed:

#### Tools

Plane  
Pillar Drill  
Tacks  
Brace for Drilling Wood  
Saw  
Harness Oil

#### Location

on the floor in front of the work bench  
back right-hand corner of the workbench  
in the window  
at the front of the work bench  
on the back wall (other saws are on display)  
on the bench (right hand side)

Can you find any more tools?

Children can sketch or write the names of any other tools they can see in between the illustrations on the Activity Sheet.

#### Mystery Objects

See Next Page

#### Activity 3: Puppets

Both replica and original puppets are on display. They are located inside and outside the glass shed. They should be easy for the children to find.

There are also pictures and posters on display of the puppets in use.

Watch the story of Annie the Witch

This is located on the shelf next to the glass shed.

#### Activity 4: Create a Shed of Curiosities

This activity is hopefully self-explanatory! It is designed to encourage children to start thinking about the importance of objects in representing and recounting the past.

## Mystery Objects

All the objects in this activity can be found in the glass shed.

**Further information** about the other objects on display can be found in the posters included in the wall mounted flip display on the opposite wall.

**Object:** Sundial

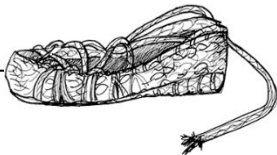
**Location:** Floor of glass shed



**Object:** A child's slipper

**Location:** In the window, on a beam

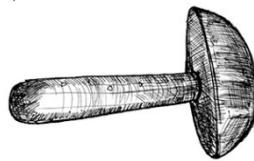
**Additional Information:**  
Looks similar to a Roman slipper



**Object:** Darning Mushroom

**Location:** Floor of glass shed

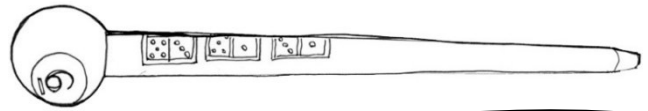
**Additional Information:** Used to darn and mend clothes.



**Object:** Walking Stick

**Location:** Hanging on the wall

**Additional Information:** Dominoes have been inset into a billiard cue to create this unique walking stick!



**Object:** A natural walking stick in the shape of snake

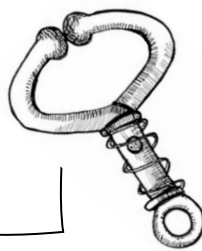
**Location:** In the window, standing on the floor



**Object:** An unknown object!

**Location:** Floor of glass shed

**Additional Information:** Possibly a nose clip for a bull.



**Object:** A skating blade

**Location:** Window on the floor

**Additional Information:** The River Severn has frozen over several times in the last 100 years



**Object:** Monkey Walking Stick

**Location:** Hanging on the wall

**Additional Information:** When the trigger under its chin is pulled it sticks out its tongue!



**Object:** Iron Plaque

**Location:** Hanging on the back wall

**Additional Information:** We have no idea why they kept this plaque. Maybe they admired the workmanship or as they had cats maybe they just liked it or maybe it was a present?



## Time to spare?

### Additional Games and Activities

The variety of the displays and collections in the New Coracle Shed provide inspiration for lots of other games and activities. Why not try one of the following:

#### 1 – I – Spy

Play the classic game of *'I-spy with my little eye something beginning with ....'*

Alternatively add a twist, for example:

- o I-spy ..... an animal
- o I-spy ..... something made of (insert material)
- o I-spy ..... something used to make a coracle / used for fishing etc.

#### 2 – The A – Z of the New Coracle Shed

Challenge children to try and find an object beginning with each letter of the alphabet.

This could be completed as:

- o a written or sketching activity
- o a group discussion with children volunteering objects for each letter of the alphabet

#### 3 – '20 Questions'

- o One child chooses, without revealing their choice, an object on display.
- o Divide the group into 2 teams.
- o The teams take it in turn to ask a question to try and identify the object. The questions can only be answered with the answers 'Yes', 'No' or 'Maybe'.
- o Each team can only ask a maximum of 10 questions.
- o The team to guess the object correctly with the smallest number of questions wins the point.
- o Rules can be adapted to suit the group or depending on the amount of time available.

#### 4. The New Coracle Shed 'Star Attractions'

Challenge the children to select their favourite 3 – 5 objects on display. Children either:

- o report back to the rest of the group which objects they have selected and why **or**
- o design a 'New Coracle Shed Star Attractions' leaflet including an illustration and brief description of the objects and a reason why they have selected each object as a 'star attraction'

#### 5 – Mime Time

- o Children pick one object on display.
- o Children mime the object or its use and the other children have to guess what it is.
- o Depending on the confidence levels of your group, this activity could be completed in pairs.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Follow-Up Activities</b>  <b>Suggested Themes, Topics and Curriculum Links</b></p>
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### **Challenge 1: Where in the World?**

Curriculum / Topic Links and Themes:

- Design and Technology
- Geography
- History

Post Visit Activities

- River Investigation: the River Severn. An investigation to understand the features and characteristics of a river.
- Research project: the River Severn. Themes could include local wildlife, environmental threats and pollution.
- Use the 'Coracles around the World' activity to inspire a project to find out more about another culture.

### **Challenge 2: How do you make a coracle?**

Curriculum / Topic Links and Themes:

- Art and Design
- Science and Technology

Post Visit Activities:

- Floating, sinking, upthrust, gravity and water displacement experiments
- Make a coracle – experiment with different shapes, sizes and materials
- Research project: natural v man made materials. Coracles are usually made from local, sustainable materials. Children could consider the following questions:
  - Which objects in our daily lives are made out of natural and man-made materials?
  - What would be the benefits and / or disadvantages of replacing man-made materials with natural materials?

### **Challenge 3: The Shed of Curiosities**

Curriculum / Topic Links and Themes:

- Art, Design and Technology
- English
- History

Post Visit Activities

- Design and make a puppet or a mechanical model
- Upcycle materials to create a toy or model
- Create a drama inspired by the story of Annie the Witch
- Design and create a museum or gallery using objects pictures or photographs
- Every object tells a story – children create a story, poem or play inspired by an object or story they discovered at the New Coracle Shed
- Discussion and debates. These could include a wide variety of topics including:
  - Why do people visit museums and art galleries?
  - What makes an object valuable? Is it the financial or sentimental value or do everyday objects also have a value?