



DOCKYARDS

The Naval Dockyards Society

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SHEERNESS DOCKYARD CHURCH SAVED!

Marvellous news from July was the announcement that the Grade II* listed Church had been the subject of a CPO by Swale Borough Council which then passed ownership to the Spitalfields Historic Buildings Trust for restoration. Following closure of the Royal Dockyard in 1960, the Church was used for worship until 1965 but its condition then worsened until a fire gutted its interior in 2001. A developer had put forward various unsuitable plans and in the meantime the state of this fine building had further deteriorated. Since acquisition, the Spitalfields Trust have taken urgent remedial action, including in September removal of the beautiful weather vane, for reinstatement in future, as it was in danger of falling into the church! Will Palin of the Trust commented "The Pole is enormous about 15 feet long, and the actual vane itself is beautiful bronze and copper construction and of the highest quality".



The current St Paul's church was built in 1826–8 to the designs of George Ledwell Taylor (1788–1873). Sheerness is rated the most impressive of England's four surviving dockyard churches. The acquisition follows the Spitalfields Trust's purchase of Georgian houses in the former Officers Quarter of the Dockyard in 2011. More news on ongoing restoration of these and of the Church on page 2.

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A Special Event at Sheerness

On 27 September, I represented the NDS at the AGM of the Spitalfields Trust, held in the derelict shell of the Dockyard Church acquired by the Trust in July (see the headline article in this issue). Defying spots of rain, the formalities of the AGM were quickly dispensed with and we learnt from subsequent speeches that AGMs of the Trust are normally held 'on site' at newly acquired buildings although this evening's event was by far 'the most derelict (yet?)'. The Trust is proud of its acquisition, which includes the triangle of land in front of the church. Ownership of the church is to be passed to a new trust, with many trustees also belonging to the Spitalfields Trust.

There is no question, of course, of bringing the building back into use as a place of worship. Currently, the plan is that after restoration the ground floor will house the superb Rennie model of the Dockyard within a heritage centre. On the upper floor (presumably created as a new, mezzanine floor) there is scope for an artistic or communal space. Apparently a sculptor has shown interest already. The NDS will keep a watching brief on these plans.



The burnt-out shell of the church

There are two existing heritage centres in Sheerness, including one nearby in Bluetown (with excellent displays on the Dockyard). Hopefully these centres and the proposed new one will collaborate fruitfully. I understand that Peel Ports (who own most of the commercial dockyard) have shown an interest in housing the Dockyard model in their Boat Store, presumably once they have attended to overdue but vital repairs to this Grade I listed building, which is on English Heritage Centre's Heritage at Risk Register.

With an ominously grey sky gathering, we were led around the back of the church and to the long-blocked gate into the Dockyard, where the last few bricks were

ceremonially knocked away. This allows access for the first time in many a year to the Georgian Officers' Quarter.



Breaking through the old entrance!

We walked along a path that Navy officers would have used until the Dockyard closed in 1960. It is now uneven and requires some care to avoid slips and trips. Either side of the path, gardens of the houses would have stretched, though now overgrown. Restoration is planned but not to the nineteenth-century designs, which would have complemented the newly renovated houses.

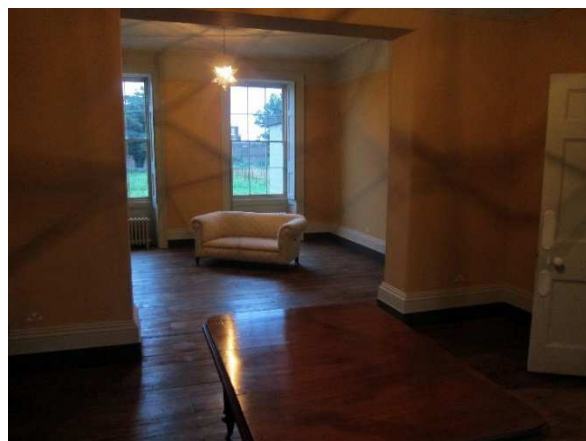


Church, gardens and the Captain Superintendent's House

Avoiding the temptation of a hog roast, I was fortunate to be able to view the interiors of four of the houses and see the renovation work in progress, which is still far from complete. The first of these was the Old Police House, where a roaring fire welcomed us and a door linked to the Old Surgery. For those with deep pockets for extensive restoration, these are currently on the market for a combined price of £380,000. Upstairs accommodation included a very large airy room with su-

perb views over the Dockyard.

Close by was the Boatswain's House aka Dockyard Cottage, for sale at £350,000 now (sold at time of going to press). Two of the five properties in Dockyard Terrace were also open for view; one, a little more renovated than the other.



Dockyard Terrace – interior

We were glad to meet up and compare notes on the Trust's work with David Hughes, who has campaigned long and hard against previous development proposals and to whom we should all be most grateful.

With time in hand before the AGM, we had a wander around the town of Sheerness. It is under-rated architecturally as it has several surprises. There is a mix of many Georgian and late Victorian buildings of some note particularly many former pubs/hotels. The surprise comes in the shape of a lovely windmill (minus its sails) currently used as insurance offices.

With all the renewed interest in the historic Dockyard and some smart apartments in town-centre sites, perhaps the area is on the up. If so, this will take time to percolate to the Isle of Sheppey as a whole. The town's former main employer, the steel mill, remains closed and there are limited employment opportunities elsewhere. Locals have to travel more widely – there is a line to Sittingbourne mainline station and a newish road bridge to the mainland.

Nowhere captures Sheerness's past better than the Blue Town Heritage Centre (see www.bluetownheritagecentre.com and page 20 beyond), situated in the shadow of the Dockyard wall. It is quirky and staffed by an enthusiastic and dedicated band of volunteers who do their best to promote the area.

The centre itself opened in 2009 on the site of two earlier buildings: the Royal Oxford Music Hall and the Criterion Public House, which had a 'palace of varieties' at the back. The spirit of 1868 is still alive today, with

performances of music hall classics and a community cinema. The centre runs tours of Sheppey, incorporating the closed areas of the Dockyard (although for security reasons passengers stay on the minibus while visiting the Dockyard); the writer has been on one and recommends it.

While sampling an excellent tea and scone I was reminded that HMS *Victory*, built at Chatham, was fitted out at Sheerness. With this illustrious connection, there are hopes for a new display about the *Victory* for the upper floor. Literary scholars have recently suggested that *Beowulf* might have been based here on the island. A BBC crew has been filming for a programme to be screened later in the year.

All of this indicates that Sheppey has a rich heritage across the centuries as well as its maritime past so notable in Sheerness.

Richard Holme (acknowledgements to Sue Daniels)

Portsmouth's First Dockyard – an opportunity to stimulate new research

Maritime historian and archaeologist John Bingeman is driving this project, supported by historian Dr Philip MacDougall and geographer Dr Dominic Fontana (see the documentary evidence below). John has collaborated with Portsmouth City Council to create a display board at the proposed site in St George's Square in Portsmouth (see draft image). The total cost of the display board will be £900. Portsmouth City Council will pay £300, and manufacture and install it. John raised £300 from HWTMA (now called the Maritime Archaeology Trust – see <http://www.maritimearchaeologytrust.org/>) and approached the NDS for a further £300.

The NDS committee wholeheartedly supports this opportunity to raise awareness of the site and stimulate further research, but has no available funds, as they are expended fully on publications. However, this opportunity to publicise the NDS through inclusion of our logo on the board would undoubtedly be beneficial for the Society and its profile. Prompted by a member who agreed to match up to a certain level of donations, the Committee therefore suggested that members donate via an online appeal, which we are pleased to report reached the required sum within a week..

The NDS Committee also agreed to urge Portsmouth City Council to carry out detailed archaeology whenever a development project occurs in this area. The site is beneath housing and will only become accessible for archaeology when new developments such as

Brunel House take place. The Portsmouth Harbour railway line, Gunwharf Quays, Brunel House, Millgate House and the petrol garage previously on the grassed area at the entrance to St George's Square may have destroyed much archaeology when they were constructed. Further historical information will be uploaded on the NDS website as it becomes available.

Argument and evidence for placing the dockyard in this location

'The reason for locating the dockyard at that location is a combination of the small inlet shown on the earliest chart of the harbour in the UK Hydrographic Office collection (D623) and the topography of the land at that place. If one looks at the height of the land surface it accords very well with the position of the inlet on the chart – there is a 1 to 1.5 metres lower area across the inlet where the land has been filled in. The coastline on D623 has proven to be very accurate around the circumference of Portsmouth Harbour and features such as the pond which became later the Mast Pond are accurately located. As far as I am aware there has been no archaeology done on this area – it probably should be. I have heard that a number of large timbers were found during the construction of the underground car park at Gunwharf. As I understand it these were not recorded. It is possible that they may have formed part of the timber breakwater commissioned by King John to protect the ships in the dock during the winter.' (Dominic Fontana, 3.8.2013)

From internal evidence Dominic dates the chart D623 to 'between 1586 to 1620', that is 400 years after the dock dates (Fontana, 2013), but the docks post-dated the eleventh-century fall in sea levels in the Solent area, so the shoreline may not have changed considerably in the intervening years.

It is recorded that royal ships or ships hired by the crown were stationed at Portsmouth during the reigns of Richard I (1189–1199) and John (1199–1216). Richard was rarely in England, spending much of his youth in Normandy and some of his reign on the Third Crusade to the Holy Land and in prison in Europe (1192–94). In May 1194 Richard gave Portsmouth its first charter and embarked on his final voyage from England on a campaign to regain his French lands, during which he was injured and died (Quail, 1994, pp. 2, 4, 11–14, 20).

Historical documents inform several secondary accounts. Quail (1994, p. 19) stated that in Richard's reign 'a dock was built which in the next reign was strengthened with a strong wall and provided with store houses.' The Victoria County History 3 reported that in 1205 John amassed 'a fleet of unprecedented size there' (1908, pp. 172–92). According to Carr Laughton, in 1212 John di-

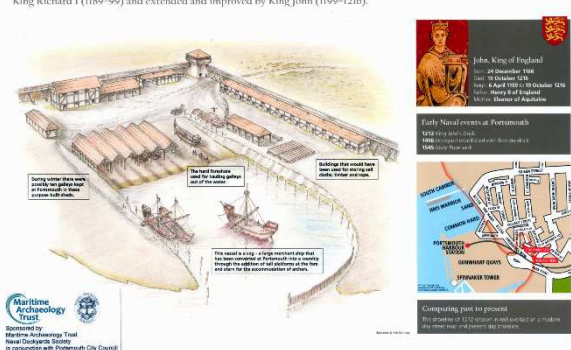
rected the sheriff of Southampton to 'cause the "docks" at Portsmouth to be enclosed with a strong wall for the preservation of the king's ships and galleys; also pent-houses were to be erected for the tackle of the galleys.' He also noted that 'this particular basin or dock was in connexion with a mill-pond . . . situated near the present Gun Wharf.' Ships were dragged and 'docked as far up as possible on the mud at the head of the creek at high water', then closed off from the next flood tide by a wall across the creek (Carr Laughton, 1912, p. 361). This implies temporary mud docks rather than permanent dry docks. Colvin conflated the structures of Richard and John and noted that the galleys' gear was kept in lean-to sheds built against the wall (1963, p. 988). Rodger, however, concluded that John built a 'substantial harbour which was a wet dock or basin with a lock' built of stone, to shelter galleys, making this the earliest such structure in England (1997, p. 53).

In 1228, Henry III (reigned 1216–1272) 'commanded the constable of Rochester to provide wood to fill up the basin and to make another causeway there, notwithstanding that King John had caused walls to be built close by for the protection of his vessels from storms', but it is known that a royal ship was at Portsmouth in 1232, and two in 1233. (Victoria County History 3, pp. 172–92; Rodger, 1997, p. 69) According to Colvin, Henry III demolished the wall in 1253, the stone being re-used to repair his town house (1963, p. 988).

If the shoreline shown on the plan is accurate for Portsmouth Harbour in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, this could be the possible site of temporary facilities for ships in the king's service. The form of the galley sheds could have been influenced by Richard's journey to the Holy Land, where he would have seen Mediterranean galley sheds in Sicily, Cyprus and Corfu. Clearly, more research is needed, which it is hoped this publicity will stimulate.

King John's Dock

In front of this board is the site of England's first medieval royal dockyard built by King Richard I (1189–99) and extended and improved by King John (1199–1216).



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Ann Coats, Chair

Sunshine . . . and Maritime Heritage in East Anglia

Sixteen members (shame there weren't more) enjoyed a great long weekend in early September, based at the excellent Hotel Victoria in Lowestoft, England's most easterly town . . . and with plenty of maritime heritage in its own right. We started there with a fascinating tour of the Museum of the Royal Naval Patrol Service. We learnt that 66,000 men served in 6,000 ships and that for them the war lasted from 1939 to 1946, due to continued mine etc. clearance after the official surrenders. The Museum had an amazing collection of photographs as well as the Service's Honours Boards, rescued from scrap. One VC was awarded. Close by was the excellent Lowestoft Maritime Museum, run by the Lowestoft and East Suffolk Maritime Society. A wide range of exhibits reminded and informed us of many aspects of local maritime history. Fishing has until recently always been a significant industry. Shipbuilding has also played a major role in the local economy, with the two main players being Richards Ironworks, closed in 1994, and Brooke Marine, which closed in 1992. Christopher Cockrell developed the hovercraft locally in the 1950s and the museum displays his workshop. *Inter alia* the German raid of April 1916 is an unusual incident, well covered in the Museum. Between the museums and the sea was an interesting group of old anchors and hurdles used to dry ropes. It was near the original Lowestoft Beach settlement destroyed by the 1953 floods. Both early in the morning and later in the evening, members of the group enjoyed walking along South Lowestoft's

elegant sea front created by Samuel Morton Peto in the late 1840s as well as viewing the extensive fishing harbours (now largely deserted). The sunshine and sea air and one or two local hostelrys were also pleasant features of our base town.

Great Yarmouth was the next destination. The Nelson Museum featured Great Yarmouth connections with Nelson, and we were welcomed by curator Hannah Bentley. It was good to see it very busy and noisy, visitor numbers swelled by a day of free admission, sunny if blustery weather and the boisterous and popular Maritime Festival on the adjacent South Quay, boasting a range of attractions from historic ships (the excellent drifter *Lydia Eve* as well as *MTB102*, Dunkirk veteran and tug *Challenge* and Dutch tall ship *Morgenster*) to (rather loud) folk singers and local crafts. Splinter groups then visited other historic buildings including the Fishermen's Hospital of 1702, the adjoining parish church and the Naval Hospital, built by Henry Peto, uncle of S. M. Peto, and completed in 1811. The latter has had a spell as a psychiatric hospital but has recently been converted into high-class housing.



Drifter Lydia Eve at Yarmouth Maritime Festival

The next day saw us make the short jaunt to Dunwich, one of England's biggest ports in the thirteenth century but whose sad decline began in 1286 with a massive storm which destroyed the port and started to erode the cliffs, a process that has continued ever since. Current population of this sleepy village is now barely into three figures. We were fortunate to be guided by our former chairman, Dr David Davies, who led us daringly up on the cliffs from where we saw the site of the sea battle of Solebay (tranquil now but 4,000 sailors died there in 1672) and through what remained of the formerly extensive Greyfriars Franciscan Priory. We then inspected the excellent Dunwich Museum, having a short talk by Val Bethell before it opened for business to the public. One of the few surviving medieval buildings

is the chapel to the leper hospital, necessarily founded at one extremity of the settlement, and adjoining the one remaining church, the other seven now being on the sea bed. We learnt of a 2008 survey of the site and the Museum shows many images of the remains of buildings uncovered by storms.



Leper Chapel and St James's Church, Dunwich

Members on (current!) clifftop at Dunwich



Our next destination was the very pleasant and thriving resort of Southwold, where we parked close to the very popular pier, opened in 1900. Unusually it has both been restored and extended to a length of 208 yards in recent years.

We were made very welcome at the Southwold Museum, which had varied displays on local history. The star exhibits for me were two oak rudders. Dating from c. AD 950 and from different boats of either Saxon or Viking origin, they had been discovered locally in the 1980s, although their significance was not immediately appreciated. Close by was the wonderful parish church

of St Edmund King and Martyr with its superb hammer-beam roof and medieval fittings such as a rare pre-Reformation pulpit. Some members of our group took the opportunity to stock up with supplies at the tempting Adnams' brewery shop.



Sea front at Southwold

All Saints' Church, Burnham Thorpe

On our final day we went to the peaceful and interesting village of Burnham Thorpe, Nelson's birthplace. Nelson's father, the Revd Edmund Nelson, was rector of the parish from 1755 to 1802 and Nelson himself spent his childhood in the village as well as extensive later periods when he was on half pay from the Royal Navy. Nelson wished to be buried there (we saw the graves of his immediate family) but his fame led to him being interred in St Paul's Cathedral. A final and most appetising lunch was enjoyed at Nelson's local, the Lord Nelson, before we journeyed home.

Richard Holme



We were mostly blessed with clear days and warm sun, which gave us sparkling views along this beautiful coast. Our hotel was superb, excellent rooms, food and service. At Lowestoft Sparrows Nest, an idyllic spot overlooking the sea, Lowestoft Maritime Museum was an excellent introduction to the coast, with six excellent films about the drifting and trawling industries and Peto's harbour and town development. As the editor writes, it is a shame that more members do not attend our tours. Much work goes into creating a unique experience. It is also a great means of getting to know like-minded people in a relaxed way.

The Royal Naval Patrol Service Museum nearby is a gem of a volunteer collection of photographs and memorabilia which are being catalogued and digitised. We are grateful to Leo Whisstock and his colleagues for opening especially for our group. Its buildings are not an ideal conservation environment and are owned by the council, but its great asset is the enthusiasm and collective memories of its members. The first of what would become 6,000 ships, called the Trawler Service, aka the Dover Patrol (mostly converted trawlers manned by fishermen and RNR personnel), cleared the east coast of sea mines in the First World War. In the Second World War their depot was at the Sparrows Nest, officially called HMS *Europa*. Their craft, including purpose-built minesweepers, served from Russia to South Africa and the Far East in minesweeping, convoy and anti-submarine duties using ASDIC.

John Street was a veteran who volunteered in 1942 from Hull. He recalled the benefits of serving on a small vessel: the camaraderie and relaxed atmosphere. The furthest he travelled was to Freetown in West Africa on anti-submarine duties. He explained the meaning of their silver badge, allocated by Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, in 1939 because they had none: a background of anti-submarine (or fishing) nets, two trapped mines and a shark representing a submarine pierced by a marlinspike, with a fishermen's men's bend knot either side. At first the fishermen had no regular uniform but were eventually issued with the general service uniform, not always worn fully on board. This, their

sometimes novel attitude to authority and the badge led them to be known as Churchill's pirates. Altogether 500 vessels, more than the combined losses of every other branch of the RN, and 13,890 men were lost.



Ann Coats and John Street

A short climb to the top of the hill brought us to the impressive memorial and a small cemetery.

Ann Coats

When I first received the proposed itinerary from David Baynes of the NDS tour of Norfolk and Suffolk, I was quite excited on two counts: one, it would take me to two locations with family history associations, and the other, there would be a visit to Southwold, which along with its neighbour across the Blyth estuary, Walberswick, provided inspiration for a number of major artists: Philip William Steer, Stanley Spencer, Charles Rennie Macintosh and Joseph Southall were all drawn to this location.

The first visit of our tour was a short distance from our hotel in Lowestoft – a museum to commemorate the Royal Naval Patrol Service, colloquially known as Harry Tate's Navy. This 'Navy' was made up of hundreds of vessels, principally the deep-sea trawlers and the drifters that had made up the pre-war fishing fleet modified for naval service, along with additional units purpose-built to RN specifications with trawlerlike hulls. These vessels were crewed with hostilities-only conscripts mixed in with trawlermen, and being small ship communities, they tended to operate with less formality than the pukka RN. The museum displayed hundreds of donated photos of ships and their crews, many unidentified.

My father, John Nex, was part of Harry Tate's Navy. He was conscripted in late 1940, and served on board an anti-submarine trawler of the Shakespeare class, the *Hamlet*. *Hamlet* was a coal-burner, with a maximum speed of 12 knots. She had a crew of 40 and was armed with one 12 pounder AA gun, three 20mm Oerlikon

guns and depth charges.

Over a number of years I have corresponded with Glyn Kennedy of Roxburghshire, Scotland, whose father also served on the *Hamlet*, his as telegraphist and mine as cook. We have been trying together to flesh out the story of ship and crew. Glyn located a surviving crew member, Bill Harvey, now well into his eighties, who had been *Hamlet*'s signalman. In 2010, I was able to interview him at his home in Cornwall – he had a good recall of his wartime service, giving us an insight into what so many crews of Harry Tate's Navy experienced and specifically that of *Hamlet*.

Hamlet was part of the escort to the very first convoy to Russia, known as Operation Dervish. It sailed from Liverpool on 12 August 1941 for Hvalfjord (Iceland) via Scapa Flow and arrived in Russia on 21 August. The following were among Bill Harvey's recollections.

The *Hamlet* had recently come back from Russia. My opposite number was a tough heavily built Scot called Jock. He told me lots about that convoy: – don't think the convoy was attacked, but the one that followed suffered badly. He talked about the Russian women driving the cranes, children running round trying to sell a chicken. A very cold sad place to be.

The *Hamlet* being a coal burner, there was no coal to get back. The ship was given logs to burn, as logs burn quicker than coal, the bunkers were filled, and the decks were stacked with logs.

On 9 November 1941 *Hamlet* along with its sister ship *Macbeth* again set off for Russia escorting Convoy PQ 3 but a merchantman, the *Briarwood*, suffered sea damage and returned, escorted by *Hamlet*.

Bill Harvey had great admiration for one of *Hamlet*'s skippers, a Lieutenant J. C. Boyd, who had in peacetime been skipper of a deep-sea trawler, and in appreciation of his skills as a seaman recounts the following story.

We had been told to stay with a very old merchant ship which could not keep up with the convoy, and early in the evening it signalled that it was taking in water due to a leaking plate. The weather was starting to blow hard and the skipper told me to enquire if they wanted a tow. They said no, and then the weather got rather rough. I got a signal stating that they were leaking badly and were pulling fires, and needed to be taken in tow. The sea had deteriorated. We tried throwing a line to them, but it was hopeless. The skipper told the coxswain to try a grass line (a line tied to a life belt and floated down to the merchant ship) but it was too rough for the crew of the merchant ship to get it. Our skipper sent down for a half glass of whisky and drank it in one go. He told the coxswain and the leading seaman to stand right at the stern with a weighted hand line. The waves were at least twenty feet high, and the

skipper started backing on the bows of the merchantman. This was in complete darkness and I had to shine the searchlight lamp onto our crew on the stern as we got near. Their bow was rising about twenty feet up and down above our ship, which was also running and falling. Eventually both vessels were close enough to pass a line over to them. This was then attached to the minesweeping cable on the winch, and we took them in tow. I was trembling while on the searchlight, for I could see all the depth charges stacked on our stern. What would happen I wondered if they hit the other ship's bow?

In the morning an ocean-going tug arrived to take over. Skipper Boyd told them to 'get lost'. Just before the end of the war I received salvage money, our skipper must have done well!

I spare a thought too for my father who, as cook, and with one assistant unremittingly had to provide three meals a day for the men in a galley rising and falling with the motion of the ship.

As a ten-year-old child I was walking along the seafront at Southsea with my mother – it was 1944 and just after the D-Day landings. A column of ships was heading in towards the harbour entrance. I remember saying to my mother, 'That's Dad's ship,' and it was. My father turned up later that day – it was not the complete surprise he had expected. It was the first time I had seen him since his entry into the navy. I have no idea how I knew with such certainty what *Hamlet* looked like, though I had a book, *Ships of the Royal Navy* by Frank McMurtrie, which might have shown me what a typical RN trawler would look like.

'Hamlet' courtesy of Royal Naval Patrol Service Museum



Glyn Kennedy and I have long wanted a photo of *Hamlet*, photos of almost every other ship of the class have come our way, but not *Hamlet*. The number of photos on display in the museum is almost overwhelming and I knew Glyn had previously visited, so I was not expecting to find a *Hamlet* picture. Indeed I think I was on the point of coming away from the display when my eye was drawn to a postcard-size image labelled HMS HAMLET T167. I was overjoyed and am in anticipation of re-

ceiving a copy.

How many untold stories must there be behind all these images in the museum? Sadly the museum's future is in jeopardy as its supporters, surviving crew members, are becoming elderly. Official funding seems to require the existing volunteer staff to jump through unreasonable hoops.

The itinerary's next tie with my family history was in Great Yarmouth, where we went to the Nelson Museum, and could enjoy the Maritime Festival with many ships to view along the harbour side. I was keen to visit the naval hospital, built between 1809 and 1811 to treat the wounded of the North Sea Fleet. It was later taken over by the army as a military lunatic asylum then re-acquired by the Admiralty as a mental hospital. It was there a great-grandfather of mine ended his days, on 4 February 1896 aged forty-five. George Churchill was born on 23 September 1850. His father Charles Churchill was at that time a dockyard labourer, and by his wife Mary already had three sons and a daughter. The family lived at 8 Park View Road, Portsea.

George's story is a cautionary one, a touch Hogarthian. On 31 July 1866 he became a boy seaman on the training ship *St Vincent* in Portsmouth harbour. Around this time he must have enjoyed the services of some Portsea ladies, and contracted syphilis. On 5 July 1874 he married Elizabeth Stratton at an out-of-town church, St James, Milton. She was five months pregnant. His father was now according to the marriage certificate a boilermaker.

George's service record shows that he served on HMS *Warrior* for a year, and his conduct is reported as 'Good to Very Good', and later 'Exemplary'. In 1880 he transferred to the coastguard and was sent with his family to Malinmore, Donegal, Ireland as a boat man. In 1885 he was command of the boat on that station and I have a photo showing him standing proudly alongside his boat, telescope in hand, along with his boat's crew. Prevention of smuggling, in particular of tobacco, would seem to be the main activity of coastguards on that station. George and Elizabeth produced four daughters and two sons, in that order, and all but one born in Malinmore. In April 1889 the long-dormant syphilis became active and George, who was 'feared mad', was transferred via Haulbowline Island, Cork, to the hospital in Great Yarmouth. Remarkably George's affliction was not passed on to his wife, or any of his children. How his wife and family survived in the immediate aftermath of his departure I would like to know, but Elizabeth later married a widower and had another child by him. They lived in Byerly Road, Fratton.

The buildings of the naval hospital have a simple elegance and one can speculate that they reflect the beginnings of a more humane approach to the treatment of mental illness that gathered pace throughout the nineteenth century.

The NDS tour of Suffolk and Norfolk enjoyed fine weather, a good hotel and the convivial company of its members, and of course we were never led astray under Ann Coats' stewardship, which was greatly appreciated.

Peter Nex



Naval Hospital (Peter Nex)

Many thanks to David Baynes and David Davies for organising the trip and to Ann Coats for leading it, as well as to our cheery coach driver Dave.

Dunwich Museum:

<http://www.dunwichmuseum.org.uk/>

Lowestoft Maritime Museum:

<http://lowestoftmaritimemuseum.org.uk/>

Nelson Museum: <http://www.nelson-museum.co.uk/>

Royal Naval Hospital, Great Yarmouth:

<http://www.rnhgy.org.uk/>

Royal Naval Patrol Service Museum:

<http://www.rnps.lowestoft.org.uk/museum.htm>

Southwold Museum:

<http://www.southwoldmuseum.org/>

Southwold Sailors' Reading Room:

<http://suffolkmuseums.org/suffolk1/pages/southwoldsailors.htm>

The Lord Nelson, Burnham Thorpe:

<http://www.nelsonslocal.co.uk/>

Our Quiz – the answers – which dockyard/base is being referred to?

Congratulations to Jonathan Fryer, who won the quiz with 12 correct answers

1. *Morice Yard is found here?* Devonport.

2. *Bungalow City East and Bungalow City West adjoin.* Rosyth, they were built outside the yard to house yard workers (Coad p50).

3. *The destroyer HMS Kent was a static training facility here in her latter years.* Portsmouth off Whale Island.

4. *No 2 Dry Dock was started here in 1823.* Chatham (Coad p176).

5. *A Stalker is seeing out her final days north of here.* Portsmouth, the former LST Stalker is being broken up at Pounds at Tipner.

6. *Metal Industries broke up ships here after the 1914/18 war.* Rosyth.

7. *The largest flying boat base in the world was here in the 1939/45 war.* Pembroke Dock.

8. *Vestas threatened heritage in this Dockyard recently.* Sheerness, they were going to demolish the Mast House to make way for a wind turbine manufactory.

9. *A base for the West Africa squadron initially with a green mountain and useful in a recent conflict.* Ascension Island.

10. *Great Keyham Extension was begun here in 1896.* Devonport.

11. *HMS Hood was scuttled here to block one entrance.* Portland.

12. *A coaling depot was established here in 1896 by a Camber and the names of three ships are marked out in stones on the hillside above.* Stanley, HMS Clyde is currently making its name, the fourth ship name marked out there.

13. *'Captain Mainwaring' was stationed at barracks up on the hill above this dockyard in 1939/45.* Pembroke Dock

14. *The only surviving intact 18th century slip from a royal naval dockyard is here.* Devonport.

15. *A family man from Python and Ripping Yarns lives in a Terrace here.* Sheerness William Palin.

16. *HMS Eagle was laid up here in the 1970's.* Devonport on the Hamoaze.

17. *Scamp designed a cathedral here but not in the Dockyard.* Malta.

18. *French Creek . . . but not in France.* Malta.

19. *A renowned boat store built in 1858 in a dock-*

yard owned by the Peel group. Sheerness.

20. *A Victorian gunboat is displayed here.* Chatham (HMS Gannet).

Any queries on this quiz to the editor Richard Holme, 7 Cedar Lodge, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 8BT or richard-holme@btinternet.com.

Meet the Committee – Celia Clark

Celia Clark is a writer, campaigner, photographer and academic with a particular interest in architecture, planning and the history and futures of naval and military sites.

As Education Officer of the Civic Trust she worked closely with colleagues at the National Trust and English Heritage to embed active participation in shaping the built environment in the first National Curriculum. She taught the history of architecture and building conservation to specialist craftspeople at the University of Portsmouth for nineteen years.

Living in Portsmouth since 1970 inspired her love of dockyards; her MSc dissertation in 1994 explored the history, architecture and differing post-defence experiences in Mount Wise and Stonehouse in Plymouth, Chatham Dockyard, Portsmouth and Venice Arsenale; her PhD in 2001 examined the extent to which local communities can influence the disposal process and planning of the new land uses in Portsmouth Gunwharf, Mount Wise Plymouth and the Royal Gunpowder Works Waltham Abbey. In 2012 she organised an international conference with the Wessex Institute of Technology in Portsmouth to explore international experience of defence heritage sites, which attracted delegates from all over the world. The next conference will be in Venice Arsenale from 17 to 19 September 2014. Naval Dockyards Society members will be very welcome.

In 1982 after John Nott's downgrading of Portsmouth Dockyard to a Fleet Maintenance and Repair base she recorded dockyard craftsmen – mostly on site – for the Portsmouth Royal Dockyard Historical Society, of which she was secretary from 1982 to 1984. Her recordings of four women who worked in Portsmouth dockyard in WWI will contribute to the 100th anniversary next year, the subject of the Society's next conference.

Her books include *Beacons of Learning. New Life for Old Schools* (editor) for SAVE Britain's Heritage in 1995; *Vintage Ports or Deserted Dockyards: differing futures for naval heritage across Europe*, published by

the University of the West of England in 2000; *Maritime City Portsmouth 1945–2005* (contributor); *The Tricorn: Life and Death of a Sixties Icon*, 2009, 2010, 2011; *Celia and Deane Clark's Portsmouth*, 2013; *White to Black 2012*; *Granny's Gorgeous Alphabet*, 2010; and *The Colour of Water*, 2013. With Samer Bagaeen of the University of Brighton she is planning a book exploring post-defence experience of the huge variety of former naval, army and air force sites in the UK and across the world.

Her articles in the Society's newsletter and transactions and to conferences of the Wessex Institute of Technology and elsewhere continue to explore aspects of dockyard history, disposal systems and post-defence developments in widely different political, economic and social contexts. She is the longest-serving board member of the Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust, which has a special interest in defence sites, such as Aldershot and Gosport. She is a trustee of the newly formed Wymering Manor Trust and president of the Portsmouth Society, which she helped to form in 1973.



More Papers from the Navy Board Somerset House 1786 (ADMBP 6B)

Letter to Sir Philip Stephens from the Navy Board 22nd February 1786

Being informed by Sir William Chambers that the new Navy Office will be ready for transacting Business at Midsummer next, and the Treasurers at Michaelmas; we desire you will please to acquaint the Rt.Hon. The Lord Commissioners of the Admiralty therewith, and that We may receive their Lordships directions for moving thither when the offices are ready, and how to dispose

of the present Buildings when We do remove from them.

The whole are in a very indifferent S, and have had no other repairs for some Years past than what has been found necessary to keep them from the Weather, and We also pay an Annual Rent of £375 for Buildings contiguous to those belonging to the Kings Premises and for the Office of Treasurer of the Navy. We are our your very humble Servants.

Foldover: Let Mr Stephens know and desire him to move the Secretary of the Treasury to let me know when the houses ready for the Commissioners...ready for this purpose.

Letter to Philip Stephens from the Navy Board 11th September 1786

We desire you will please to acquaint the Rt Hon Lord Commissioners of the Admiralty that the New Navy Office at Somerset Buildings being ready for Our reception., We propose moving the remaining part of Our Books and Papers into it on the 29th of this month, and hope to be settled so as to do business regularly in it about ten Days afterwards, in the mean time We shall take such measures as ay enable Us to execute any Orders or Business that may require immediate dispatch. We are Your very humble Servants.

Letter to Philip Stephens from the Navy Board 19th September 1786

Having by our letter of the 11th inst. Signified to You for the information of the Rt Hon The Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that we propose moving to Somerset Buildings on the 29th of this month, which may probably be completed in ten days or a fortnight after. We desire you will please to move their Lordships to let us know their pleasure how we are to dispose of the present Office ad buildings, or to whom We are to deliver possession of them. We are Your very humble Servants.
6th November Note: acquainted Their Lordships of the Orders We recd From the Treasury to deliver up the Office to the East India Company.

Letter to/from George Marsh of the Navy Board 13th November 1786

I cannot find any thing in my office to show what you desired, but by the inclosed it appears to me, that all the directions given on the business was grounded on Orders from the Admiralty only.

Enclosures of copy letters relative to the Hire and Purchase of the Navy offices in Crutched Friars

28th November 1688 Lords of the Treasury inform the

Commissioners of the Navy that His Majesty King James 2nd had granted unto Sir Peter Parravicin the great Edifice of Building called the Navy Office for the Term of Fourscore and Ten Years from Michaelmas preceding at a Pepper Corn per annum rent and direct the Board to take a lease from him on behalf of His Majesty for the term of Fourscore and Nine years and three quarters of a Year from Michaelmas above mentioned at the Yearly Rent of £600 payable quarterly with such Covenants etc etc as are approved by the Attorney General, but in case the Navy Board should on the Feast Day of St Michael 1693 pay unto Sir Peter Parraviein his heirs etc. the sum of £8,500, with all Arrears of the reserved Rent of £600 per annum then all Matters contained in the Lease to be void.

18th January 1698/9 The Board acquaint the Lords of the Admiralty of the title to the Office and Ground.

17th September 1700 The Board acquaint the Admiralty that they have ordered a Bill to be made out to Madam Parraviein for paying off the Mortgage on the Office.

Sue Lumas

P. MacDougall, *London and the Georgian Navy*

Philip MacDougall was one of the Naval Dockyards Society's founder members and now edits its *Transactions*. He has also written extensively on the history of the royal dockyards, but his latest book, *London and the Georgian Navy*, examines a much broader theme: nothing less than the extensive set of relationships that existed between the eighteenth and early nineteenth century Royal Navy and the kingdom's capital city.

After a prologue which describes Nelson's astonishing state funeral, MacDougall divides the book into four parts, each of which explores a key theme. The first part examines the buildings and functions of the navy's different departments: the Admiralty in Whitehall, the Navy Board at Seething Lane and then Somerset House, the victualling office and the Ordnance. MacDougall recounts several anecdotes about famous seamen and the buildings, and also brings out the complexity of, and tensions within, the relationships between the various boards. The second part examines what the author calls 'the downriver naval industrial complex' – Greenwich, the dockyards at Deptford and Woolwich (including a detailed account of the launch of HMS *Queen Charlotte* in 1810), and the shipbuilding yards on Limehouse Reach. In the third part, MacDougall examines the social relationships, notably the role of London as the navy's most important source of recruits and as the home of many famous officers. The author has often taken walking tours around many of these sites, so he writes with

the authority of someone who knows the ground intimately and can call on extensive first-hand knowledge to describe the London homes of the likes of Nelson and Cochrane. (Indeed, the book concludes with a gazetteer and suggested walking tour, which makes it valuable as a guidebook as well as an authoritative analysis of its subject.) The fourth and final part of the book considers the merchants, tradesmen and profiteers who made money out of the navy's symbiotic relationship with the City, together with such manifestations of civic pride in the navy as the Patriotic Fund.

MacDougall expertly and vividly brings out the intricate interconnections that existed at all levels between the navy and London life. As such, his book could and should serve as a template for other regional studies: for example, we have many studies of the relationships between dockyards and their surrounding communities, together with some studies of the relationship between the navy and individual counties (Dorset, Hampshire, etc.) or component countries of the United Kingdom (i.e., Scotland and Wales), but there is a clear need for studies of, say, the naval history of the north-west and north-east of England. Even so, such studies would need to be impressive indeed to come close to matching the erudite many-sidedness of MacDougall's analysis.

The range of MacDougall's source material is impressive, and even extends to fiction, with passages demonstrating how London featured in the works of C. S. Forester and Patrick O'Brian. There are no footnotes, but key statements are properly referenced in the text and an extensive bibliography is provided. All in all, this is a quite superb book, and at such a reasonable price, it surely has to be a 'must' for NDS members!

David Davies

P. MacDougall, *London and the Georgian Navy*: The History Press, Stroud, 2013), 192pp, 40 illustrations, ISBN 978-0-7524-7485-4, £14.99

A. V. Coats and P. MacDougall, eds., *The Naval Mutinies of 1797: Unity and Perseverance*

This book is undoubtedly the equivalent of a fine malt whisky, requiring many years to mature in its cask. Originally derived from two conferences that took place to mark the bicentenary of the mutinies in 1797, the book's lengthy gestation period is notable even by modern standards, but this is very much a case of 'better late than never'. For example, the fact that it has taken over a decade to emerge means that it has been able to refer to, and debate with, major works that were published in the interim, such as Nicholas Rodger's *The*

Command of the Ocean. In that sense, it is clearly a much better book than it probably would have been if it was rushed to press in the immediate aftermath of the anniversary. Edited by NDS founder members Ann Coats and Philip MacDougall, the book consists of sixteen chapters on various aspects of the mutinies, setting them in the wider context of the navy of the Napoleonic Wars. Coats and MacDougall provide four chapters each, David London two, while there are individual contributions from Christopher Doorne, Brian Lavery, Roger Morriss, Nick Slope, Jonathan Neale and Kathrin Orth.

The book sets out to re-examine the seminal assessment of the mutinies by Conrad Gill (1913) and the subsequent analyses by the likes of Manwaring and Dobrée (1935) and E. P. Thompson (1968). The great advantage that all of the authors who contribute to this book have over their predecessors is their mastery of the naval source material; virtually every chapter is based on extensive archival research, notably at the National Archives, Kew, and evidence from muster books has been used to explode many hoary old myths about the mutinies. For example, Valentine Joyce, ring-leader of the Spithead mutiny, has traditionally been presented as an Irish revolutionary brought into the fleet under the Quota Acts, a view that hinges on a number of contemporary pamphlets and other overtly hostile sources. Coats uses the muster books to demonstrate conclusively that Joyce was actually a career naval seaman from Jersey, and evidence such as this serves to present many aspects of the mutinies in an entirely new light.

The chapters cover a very broad range of themes. Coats and MacDougall provide narrative outlines of the mutinies at Spithead, the Nore and in the North Sea Fleet, with Coats providing further chapters on the delegates in the Spithead mutiny, on whether the mutineers were inspired by foreign revolutionary influences (demonstrating conclusively that they were not), and on the response of the authorities. As well as examining the Nore mutiny and the discontent in Duncan's North Sea Fleet, MacDougall provides an interesting analysis of the ways in which the mutinies were reported in the provincial press, reports which did much to shape the attitude of the middle classes in particular. David London examines the curious events on board HMS *London*, which mutinied after the problems at Spithead seemed to have been settled, and injects a welcome note of humour into the volume with his analysis of 'the spirit of Kempenfeldt' and Captain Willett Payne, a rakish friend of the Prince of Wales who provided some (actually quite pertinent) analysis of the mutinies from his distinctly comfortable quarters in the George Inn, Portsmouth.

Kathrin Orth's analysis of petitioning considers the nature and extent of the practice in 1797, while Christopher Doorne examines the 'conspiracy theories' about the Nore Mutiny, concurring with Coats about the negligible, if not non-existent, extent of truly revolutionary opinion during the mutiny. Three chapters look at the conditions aboard, or the impact of the mutinies on, individual ships: Roger Morriss studies the case of the *Minerve*, presenting it as an example of how effective crew management by officers (in this case, by Captain Cockburn) could prevent the spread of serious discontent; Nick Slope examines discipline and desertion aboard HMS *Trent*, again using material from Kew to analyse the very different flogging regimes that existed under different captains; while Jonathan Neale considers the influence of 1797 on the mutiny which broke out on the *Nereide* in 1809. The only slightly disappointing chapter is Brian Lavery's relatively slight study of lower-deck life during the wars, which adds little to his book on *Nelson's Navy* and which would probably have been better placed at the beginning of the book as an additional introductory chapter.

This is undoubtedly a very fine and important work, and its presentation by the publisher is immaculate. However, the price will undoubtedly deter many potential readers, which is a great shame. As an example of how detailed research in previously neglected archival material can explode myths, notably the politically-charged canard that the 1797 mutinies were essentially manifestations of working-class, foreign-inspired, revolutionary sentiment, this book cannot be praised too highly.

David Davies

A. V. Coats and P. MacDougall, eds., *The Naval Mutinies of 1797: Unity and Perseverance* (Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2011), xix + 316pp, 13 illustrations, 10 tables, ISBN 978-1-84383-669-8, £60

Pembroke Dock, 1814–2014

2014 will mark the bicentenary of the establishment of the Royal Dockyard at Pembroke Dock. Known as Pater yard until 1817, it was, for most of its history, exclusively a building yard, constructing well over 200 warships including five royal yachts. It closed in 1926, but part of the site was subsequently taken over by the Air Ministry and converted into a flying-boat base for the RAF, which survived until 1957. The central part of the site was altered beyond recognition in 1979, when an Irish ferry port was established there, but the western part continued to operate as a small naval support facility until 2008.

Over the last ten years or so, *Dockyards* has pub-

lished several articles about Pembroke Dock. These have focused principally on the quite impressive heritage restoration that has taken place, which could be seen as an example for other dockyard sites – notably Sheerness and Deptford. For example, the dockyard chapel has been restored and the surgeon’s house is now a visitor centre and cafe, while several other buildings have been sensitively restored as offices. Restoration work is also under way at the huge Defensible Barracks, built on the hill overlooking the dockyard in 1844. The local community plans to mark the bicentenary with a series of commemorative events, and part of this programme has already begun. Local people are being asked to contribute photographs and memories, local groups are working on the history of individual streets and buildings and a new book on the history of the dockyard by Lawrie Phillips, a long-time friend of the NDS who will be well known to many of its members, is due to appear in February 2014. Above all, a major digital heritage project aims to create a reconstruction of the dockyard as it would have appeared in 1860. Under the auspices of locally born (but now Switzerland-based) organiser Sian Dureau, and the Digital Building Heritage team at De Montfort University, Leicester, funded in part by the Heritage Lottery Fund, original plans and photographs of the yard have been trawled extensively, with the aim that they will be the basis for a 3D simulation using the latest laser-scanning and virtual-reality techniques. The current plan is for the simulation to be shown publicly for the first time at the end of 2013, and then at various public screenings – for example, on large-screen monitors throughout the town – during the bicentenary year itself. Further detail of both this and other aspects of the bicentenary celebrations can be found at <http://www.thedock.org.uk/digital/index.htm>.

As part of its efforts to increase community involvement, the organising team is staging a series of events, and on 19 July I took part in one of these as a guest speaker. After a talk about the bicentenary plans and the digital project, long-time NDS member David James of the West Wales Maritime Heritage Trust talked about aspects of the dockyard’s history. The group then split into two workshops, one on the holdings of the Pembrokeshire Record Office, the other on the use of old Ordnance Survey maps for the history of the town. My talk looked at ‘The Birth and Death of the Dockyard’, presenting some new evidence that I unearthed while

researching my new book, *Britannia’s Dragon: A Naval History of Wales*. Above all, it’s now clear that the dockyard’s closure was not the consequence of inevitable decline and shortage of work in the aftermath of World War I; until almost the last minute, Pembroke Dock and Sheerness were in direct competition to survive, with powerful forces (including the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, and Hugh Trenchard, the head of the RAF) lining up in support of the Welsh yard, principally because of its relative invulnerability to attack from the air. Ultimately, Sheerness’s more modern equipment and ability to refit submarines saved it, and Pembroke Dock was doomed. Ironically, though, the example of Pembroke Dock, which was devastated by the closure – unemployment was still over 50% a decade later – subsequently saved Sheerness, with the government refusing to accept a 1928 Admiralty proposal to close it because they were not prepared to turn another dockyard town into an economic and social catastrophe.

Other exciting plans for the future of Pembroke Dock include the possibility of building a replica of HMS *Beagle* there: details can be found at www.hmsbeagleproject.org. (The other day, I was rightly upbraided for calling this ‘Darwin’s *Beagle*’ rather than Fitzroy’s, but for good or ill, Darwin’s name probably carries more clout when it comes to fund-raising!) There are also restoration proposals for a number of the forts built during the Victorian period to defend the dockyard, notably Hubberston fort, Thorn Island, and St Catherine’s island at Tenby, although several of these have run into funding or planning difficulties. So these are exciting times at Pembroke Dock and on the Milford Haven waterway as a whole, and I hope to report again on the bicentenary commemoration in next year’s issues of *Dockyards*.

David Davies

Pembroke Dock today. Mid-foreground: substantial officers’ houses, dating from the 1820s and 1830s. Behind them, centre and right, are the hangars built in the 1930s for Sunderland flying boats, which operated from here during World War II; it was then the largest flying-boat base in the world. Just to the right of the east hangar is the eastern gun tower, built in 1851 to defend the yard. At left, tugs moored alongside Carr Jetty of 1902–3 to provide the dockyard with a proper fitting-out berth. Centre: the Irish ferry terminal, built in 1979.



Chatham Update

A new exhibition *Steam, Steel and Submarines*, in the Fitted Rigging House, will cover the most productive period of Chatham's history from 1832 to its closure in 1984. During this period Chatham launched 152 vessels of all types including its last battleship, *Africa* (1905), and began production of its 57 submarines in 1908. Considering the restrictions of the River Medway, this constituted a more than satisfactory contribution to the Royal Navy.

http://www.thedockyard.co.uk/Plan_Your_Day/Steam_Steel_Submarines/steam_steel_submarines.html

The new display fills only one sixth of the total ground floor space used previously to cover the whole span of the Yard's history. The Fitted Rigging House ground floor is still used largely as a store for items not on display. The *Steam, Steel and Submarines* gallery includes exhibits from other sources, including the convict-made model of the excavation of Basin No. 2 and the draining of St Mary's Island, a 21-year odyssey for the convicts who provided the labour. The model came from the Science Museum, who had possessed it for about a century. It makes an excellent starting point for interpreting the complexity of the Yard, particularly when juxtaposed with the 1910 O.S. map illustrating both the dockyard and its military neighbours. Peter plans a Research Paper on the period covered by the gallery, as there is a wealth of material and illustrations available.

Two new artefact curators have been appointed, one of whom also cares for the Library after the retirement of John Chambers who held the post for many years.

Paddle steamer *Medway Queen*, a National Historic Ship, preserved by a local charity, The Medway Queen Preservation Society, will return in the next few months to the Medway with a new hull provided by a shipyard at Albion Drydock, Bristol. Their workers had to consult the CDHS members on how to rivet the hull plates, as none had performed this work before. She will return (*editor - she returned mid-November*) to a new quay near Gillingham Pier which is just outside the Bull's Nose locks into Basin No. 3, now known as Chatham Port, behind the new student accommodation for Greenwich University. Once the tow home starts you can follow its progress on www.marinetraffic.com/ais/. www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/46/medway-queen www.medwayqueen.co.uk/

Peter Dawson (Chatham Dockyard Historical Society)

Nelson, Navy, Nation: The story of the Royal Navy and the British people, 1688–1815

On Trafalgar Day, the National Maritime Museum opened its new permanent gallery, which 'brings to life the tumultuous 18th century, exploring how the Royal Navy shaped everyday lives as it became a central part of society and turned sea-faring heroes into national celebrities'. Nelson is central, physically and culturally; his uniform coat is displayed, but alongside three other officers' in a section called 'Nelson's Tactical Advantage'; his stockings and breeches are there (in 'Death of Nelson'), but so are an ordinary seaman's trousers. He is in effect returned to his place in the narrative of naval supremacy and its growing hold on both the popular imagination and national identity.

The gallery is structured by a timeline wall of conflicts, 1688–1815, with paintings and explanatory keys, but the emphasis is on artefacts. The first section is 'Supplying the Dockyards', locating the royal yards and explaining their strategic and commercial significance. 'Joining Up' has the familiar ship models; 'Ranks and Responsibilities' details the community of a line-of-battle ship, and 'Daily Duties' is illustrated by NMM prints. 'Life on Board' has unfamiliar and interesting items: coins, a letter, a dish, a broken lime juice bottle, and a ship's biscuit presented to a Miss Blacket of Berwick on 13 April 1784; 'Mutiny' presents a collective letter by the crew of the *Mars*, 27 June 1797, apologising for 'false notions, errors' and asserting they are 'determined to do our duty done [sic] in the most satisfactory terms'. Officers' equipment and uniforms include a midshipman's sea chest, hardly larger than a duffel bag.

'The Emergence of Nelson' and 'Leading the Navy' place him in the context of late-eighteenth-century naval leaders and the cult of personality, with his portrait after Tenerife, injuries clearly visible. 'Celebrating Victory', though, shows Vernon, with merchandise including a lady's fan, a teapot with plate, and medals and badges, which contrast with commemorative Nile products, including a ribbon, mug, perfume bottle, banner, and curtain tiebacks. These are displayed opposite grislier artefacts from the period, including a French 36lb shot embedded in the *Victory's* timbers.

'A Hero Mourned' brings together the public reaction to Trafalgar, with Collingwood's dispatch in the *Times*, letters from Emma and Frances, Nelson's queue, and fragments of the *Victory's* Union flag leading to a wall filled with objects to suit every level in society, from handkerchiefs, snuff boxes, china mugs, and vases to toy bricks of the funeral procession. The last section, 'Trafalgar and Beyond', has an interactive display of Trafal-

gar veterans' photographs, and finally Napoleon on the *Bellerophon*.

On 21 November there is a special tour, 'We'll Rant and We'll Roar!', with live performances. 'From press-gangs and life below decks, to mutiny and the Battle of Trafalgar, hear the voices of our past through beautiful traditional song. With singers Maz O'Connor and Gavin Davenport, Malcolm Taylor, Library Director of the English Folk Dance and Song Society and James Davey, NMM Curator of Naval History.'

Nicholas Blake

A twentieth-century building makes new connections at Portsmouth Dockyard C20 Characterisation of Devonport and Portsmouth Dockyards Report

This English Heritage Project was awarded to the Naval Dockyards Society in December 2012. Defined in *The National Heritage Protection Plan 6265* (2012), the project's aim is to 'produce a general overview of the development of naval dockyards in England during the 20th century' and 'highlight the typical types of buildings that were built at this time and structures of unique interest.' It will 'inform future discussions about the future development of the naval dockyards' by the responsible authorities, and to ensure that the contribution of 20th century naval facilities to their historic value and character is acknowledged and fully understood in their historic context.'

Objectives are to provide an overview of the twentieth century development of the dockyards, address the main chronological development phases to accommodate new ship types and technologies, and distinguish which buildings are typical of 20th century dockyards and of unique interest. Recommendations will be made for structures which may merit future protection.

The Project Report will characterise the development of the active naval dockyards at Devonport and Portsmouth and the facilities within their boundaries at their maximum extent during the 20th century. The report, with an associated database of document and building reports will be lodged with English Heritage Swindon, Portsmouth and Plymouth Heritage Environment Records and the National Museum of the Royal Navy. The Report and database will be available online on the English Heritage website.

The Introduction took a considerable period to research because so little has been published on characterising C20 dockyards. Progress was also hindered by delays in gaining access to Devonport, but two re-

searchers visited in September. Completion is expected in December. The following item was highlighted in a recent report to English Heritage.

This office, store and workshop composition was connected to the Round Tower by Ove Arup in the 1970s, making use of the Round Tower's internal stairwell. Echoing its associated buildings, it is slightly battered and the profile of its southern stairwell echoes the Round Tower and Battery towers.

The old Round Tower was part of the Victorian dockyard sea defences. Built in 1843-48 under the direction of Captain H. James RE at the northeast end of Frederick's Battery, it was dismantled and re-erected in its present position in 1867 when the dockyard was extended. The circular 3-stage ashlar tower has a battered lower stage. The medieval style of its machicolated parapet and white stonework contrasts with the new dark red brick and grey stone of the Battery.

This also formed part of the dockyard's sea defences. It lay originally along the former Public Hard serving New Buildings, a dockyard workers' neighbourhood built west of the original boundary of the dockyard in the 1690s and taken into the Yard in 1847. The Battery was built at the same time as the Tower by Captain James RE, then dismantled and re-erected to allow room for the Great Extension of 1867. The 1883 Painter's Shop (2/191) and the 1886 Gun Mounting Store which became the Mechanical Engineering Weapons Workshop (MEWW) (2/165) were built on its original site. Constructed of courses of squared stone with ashlar dressings, the wall is approximately 50 metres long with a tower at either end. It is battered, with a walkway and parapet wall over seven vaulted casemates. At the southern end two round-arched entrances have ashlar tympana bearing the date 1886 and a cipher. When the battery was re-erected it extended to the Round Tower, but the northern end was demolished in 1912 to make way for a rail link. It was possibly named after Lord Frederick Fitzclarence KCB, son of William IV and Lieutenant General of Portsmouth in 1847-51, the period when the Battery was originally built.

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Howell, A. N. Y. (1913). A Plan of the Buildings taken into the Dockyard 1847. *Notes on the Topography of Ports-*

mouth. Portsmouth: Barrell.

1900. Swindon: English Heritage.

MD95/03034. Her Majesty's Dockyard at Portsmouth

Showing Development and Enlargement from 1540 to

Dr Ann Coats



Left: Royal Maritime Auxiliary Service (SERCO Fleet Support) Maintenance Base and Workshop; Centre: Royal Maritime Auxiliary Service Round Tower Store/Offices, Grade II; Right: Frederick's Battery, Circular Road (North side) SU6299200361 Grade II

Image Ann Coats April 2013 (photograph authorised by Portsmouth Naval Base Defence Infrastructure Organisation and BAE Systems Maritime Services)

From your editor....

I hope you have enjoyed reading this issue of Dockyards, my second as editor. I am writing this on my way back from Gibraltar where I was fortunate to meet local historians David Eveson (of History Society Gibraltar) and Gligi Sene to discuss issues in conserving dockyard heritage there. Following the tragic loss of the Rosia water tanks in 2006, I was sorry to see the poor state of both the jetty and former Royal Naval Victualing Yard at Rosia Bay. The latter seems to be largely used as dog kennels so I was unable to venture inside! Was glad to see former Naval Hospital, now converted to flats, showing how viable continued use of such great buildings can be.

The thirst to redevelop can also be seen at Deptford where we were pleased to note recognition for the Dockyard's plight when it was listed as one of 67 landmarks deemed at risk by the World Monuments Fund in October. This led to favourable TV and other publicity. I was glad to visit on an open day in September and briefly meet the archaeologist Duncan Hawkins who has a very good article on 'Iron Slip Cover Roofs at Royal Dockyards' in the forthcoming 'Transactions', to be issued in early 2014. We have decided that both very long features (more than c3000 words) and book reviews will in future will be published in Transactions, thus releasing more space for articles in Dockyards.

I am always looking for features and ideas for Dockyards, please send in any contributions, however long or short. Any suggestions most welcome. Maybe you have a good or unusual photograph or something to write about.

We also produce a short weekly update and to receive (at no cost) contact Steven Gray on sigray86@hotmail.com. Finally many thanks indeed to Nicholas Blake for his invaluable help and patience in putting this issue together.

Richard Holme (contact details – see back page p24)

A disastrous bit of knee jerk strategic planning? The Braye breakwater at Alderney – a white elephant or marvel of Victorian engineering?

I was really glad to visit the lovely island of Alderney in August and having checked into my hotel on a glorious sunny day, my first priority was to visit the great Victorian breakwater just a few hundred yards away. I had read it was the longest breakwater in the UK and was built at great expense to shelter the Channel Fleet c. 1847–1864. On approaching through the sheltered inner harbour and passing the massive Fort Grosnez, my first impression was of a grey majestic grey structure going far, far into the distance. I walked along the lower inner lip of the breakwater, noting the many places in which the stone structure had been renewed and also the sea weed and other debris thrown up by the rough sea. I hardly dared to go on the windswept upper section which incorporated a single railway track. I did eventually climb up there, but was nearly blown off. Neither a fall into the open sea on the one side or on to the lower



section, twenty feet below seemed a pleasant option.

On the next day, I was pleased to visit the excellent Alderney museum (www.alderneysociety.org), which inter alia has an excellent exhibit on the Breakwater's construction and history. Moreover curator Lucy Smith kindly allowed me access to their boxes of relevant original documents and cuttings. The first papers were the most recent and suggested the breakwater was a white elephant. A 1994 piece (Tuesday 27.9.94) deployed the title of this article and went on to fret about an annual maintenance bill of £550,000, £1.5/£2m backlog of repairs and £23m apparently needed to rebuild the foundations of the breakwater 'which has never ceased to give trouble since Queen Victoria laid the first stone in 1847'. Why though was this massive structure built in the first place?

Prior to 1840, Alderney was a quiet largely undefended backwater, but a breakdown in Franco-British relations led to the construction of a massively improved harbour and arsenal at Cherbourg which is only 25 miles

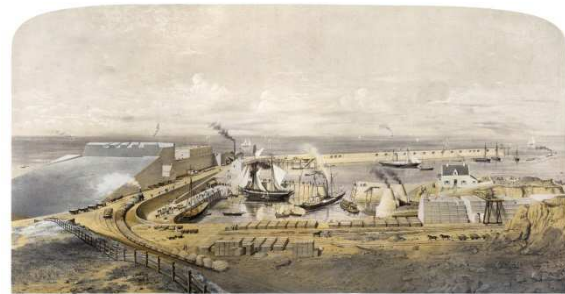
from the island. Proposals were put forward for improved facilities at Alderney at either Longis Bay or Braye. Although euphemistically referred to as a "harbour of refuge", the new breakwater would provide useful facilities to allow a close watch to be kept on Cherbourg.

Construction of the breakwater began in 1847. Designed by Walker and Burgess, the contractors were Jackson and Bean. Queen Victoria laid the foundation stone and it is reported that Prince Albert took a particularly keen interest in the project, making two further visits to review progress.

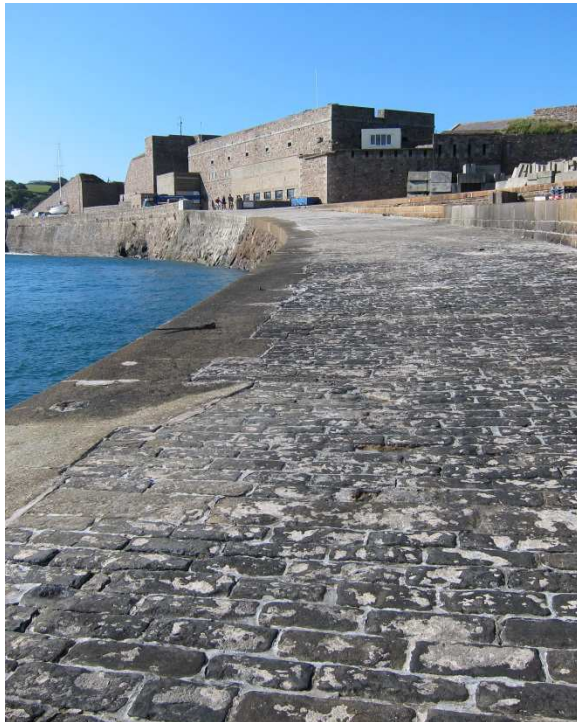
An immense effort was needed by the workforce to cater both for its massive structure and local adverse weather conditions. Initially there were plans for another breakwater to be built out from the east of Braye to enclose 125 acres, but this work was abandoned at an early stage. First of all a mound of rubble was deposited on the sea bed and then the breakwater built on top. By 1856, the structure was 900 yards from the shore and then nearly 1600 yards by 1864.

"1852 view after painting by Paul Naftel of construction work on jetty"; "Queen Victoria landing in 1854 to review progress"

(Both photos courtesy of the Alderney Society)



At the same time, a network of 18 forts and batteries were constructed from 1850 on Alderney to defend the anchorage. By 1859, these had been completed and offered a defensive armament of 217 guns, mortars and howitzers.



Fort Grosnez (1853) viewed from the breakwater it guards

Early indications were that the breakwater was considered a major and very useful assets for the British Empire:

The island of Alderney, with its fine capacious harbour, now in the course of construction, will, in the event of war with France, be most advantageously circumstanced for the purpose of affording shelter and protection to our own fleets, and Cruizers, and trading vessels, that may be intercepted from the coast of England: or to watch, confront and impede the communications of the enemy, whether warlike or commercial.... It would seem therefore to place it in a condition of perfect security for which it fortunately presents very many facilities.

With an amount of works for defence, not exceeding probably one fifth of those that have been, from time to time, constructed at Gibraltar, with a War Garrison and armament of one third what would be required for that place, Alderney might be made almost as strong: would comprise a much greater extent of available useful surface: and would be of far more importance to the British Empire..."

Sir John Burgoyne, Inspector General of Fortifications (May 1852)



Fort Raz (Rat Island Fort completed 1855)

However, such praise was not to last for more than a few years. Part of the problem seems to be the construction of a breakwater, despite the qualms of local fishermen, in an extremely exposed position. This was noted by the Resident Engineer James May in 1869.

The pier is exposed to the whole force of the Atlantic, the wildest winds of which strike it at right angles and the destructive power of the sea is greatly increased by the rapid tides surrounding the island . . . This strong sea, rapid tides and excessive depth of water caused great difficulty in executing the work, and still more in maintaining it."

The currents were considered the second strongest in the UK after the Pentland Firth.

Following completion in 1864, it seems that each winter in the 1860's there were breaches to the Breakwater, which would be repaired in the subsequent spring or summer at not inconsiderable expense.

The cost led to a Select Committee of the House of Lords in 1872 to look into future prospects for the breakwater and the associated fortifications. Not only was there a substantial maintenance cost, but developments in naval warfare to consider. A major factor were the development of ironclads, much larger vessels. This was only eight years after the completion of this massive facility at a cost of £1.5m!

In passing the Committee felt it necessary to state that 'if such a work were now for the first time proposed,

with experience of its difficulties and results, the most eager advocate for national defences would probably hesitate in recommending its commencement.'

It noted that funds to maintain the facility were limited and that indeed the resident engineer had been withdrawn. They reported that the breakwater at Plymouth was costing a mere £5–6,000 to maintain. (The author notes the Plymouth structure was of a similar length but situated in much shallower waters than Alderney.) Indeed the Committee correctly reminded readers that Alderney was 'a work of far more difficult construction'.

Having made these damning statements, the Committee nevertheless recommended the retention and maintenance of the breakwater. (Alternative proposals were to destroy it or allow it to 'perish by neglect'.) To rebut assertions presumably being made that this massive project was not properly thought through at the outset, they confirmed presumably for their own satisfaction also that "it cannot therefore be said these works were sanctioned under the influence of a transitory panic, or without the due deliberation of responsible departments."

However by 1890, the outer 500 yards of the breakwater were abandoned and were then to be demolished to reduce maintenance costs.

As an aside, in the Second World War, Alderney was occupied by Nazi Germany and what certain cynics have coined as a 'second white elephant' was built – the 'German jetty' – constructed in 1941. Built of steel and timber, the jetty was 500 feet long and boasted three powerful electric cranes. Sadly it fell into disuse and in 1979 was described as both ugly and dangerous. Shortly afterwards it was demolished.

As the years went by, the Victorian breakwater became obsolete for military purposes but still offered useful, even vital, shelter for local shipping, which berthed to unload important supplies. In 1987, the UK government handed over the burden for maintenance to the Bailiwick of Guernsey and from then on, spending on its maintenance has been something of a political football. In 1994, a panel started investigations on the future of the breakwater. In 1997, plans were announced to redevelop the harbour and these included a shortening of the breakwater. Local opinion was strongly in favour of retaining the entire breakwater and this verse 'Threatened Breakwater' by A. A. Mignot featured in these campaigns.

*A famous finger stabs the stormy sea
Protects us from an eager enemy
BREAKWATER built to brace a bygone day
Now holds the wildest winds and waves at bay
Now hugs the harbour from a furious foe
Thus boats find respite in the shelt'ring hoe*

*The storms will spend themselves against this wall
Envelop its whole length in cascade white
So fierce a force of nature can appal
Yet thrill a safe spectator with the sight
BEWARE the structure breakers soon can breach
Can spew huge rocks beyond the threatened quay
Can flood the harbour wash away the beach
Destroy the livelihood of Alderney*

(Reproduced by courtesy of the Alderney Society)

So the great breakwater is still with us and well worth a visit. Alderney is a truly fascinating place to visit with its remnants of Victorian military architecture, the Nazi occupation and lovely scenery.

Richard Holme

Acknowledgements are due to Lucy Smith, curator of Alderney Museum, the Alderney Society, Trevor Davenport and Dr Ann Coats.

Alderney's Victorian Forts and Harbour- Trevor Davenport (Alderney Society and Museum 2013)

All photos by the author unless otherwise stated

Blue Town and Sheerness Dockyard

The Blue Town triangle is nine acres and is adjacent to the wall of Sheerness Dockyard. It grew up to service the needs of Sheerness Dockyard and the military base and at one time had a population of several thousand. It was the original Sheerness but became known as Blue Town when the workers who built the dockyard built their own houses after living in hulks and then painted their homes with blue paint acquired from the dockyard.

A wall was built to separate the working and living quarters; the wall now has a living colony of scorpions as well as shrapnel holes from an air raid in 1917 which destroyed the Criterion Hotel and closed the Criterion Music Hall – plus the remains of gas lights for the workers to light their cigarettes.

The Blue Town Heritage Centre has evolved to preserve and promote the history of the area and is now the only organisation approved to take visitors into the dockyard, as part of their Island tours. It was also home to the music hall, which the volunteers have restored and is now used by professional and local performers. They have also restored the first cinema on Sheppey. This is now the only cinema.

The Centre has a room about the history of the dockyard and is in the process of making the first floor of the building into an educational research facility which will allow more space for the growing number of dockyard-related artefacts. Nelson's HMS *Victory* was built at Chatham but fitted out at Sheerness. Subject to funding, the centre plans a dockyard room, which will resemble part of a deck of *Victory*. The original dockyard room will

now be used for a First World War exhibition which will be promoting the aviation activities organised from Sheerness Dockyard as well as why the island was called Barbed Wire Island and the use of internal passports to come onto Sheppey.

The above is only a small part of the heritage offered in Blue Town and the Dockyard and the centre offers walks and tours as well as being open for most of the year from Tuesdays to Saturdays 10am to 3pm.

The project is a voluntary organisation and a registered charity, there are no paid workers, the building work has been done by prisoners and the local community who all feel passionate about this forgotten dockyard and the Blue Town community.

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www.bluetownheritagecentre.com

Jenny Hurkett

Editor's note – the Centre sells an excellent 40 minute DVD, *HM Dockyard Sheerness 1665–1960* – we understand it can be purchased for £12.50 (including p and p for UK) – cheque payable to 'Blue Town Heritage Centre', 69 High Street, Sheerness, Kent ME12 1RW.

'A devastating day for Portsmouth' Wednesday 6 November 2013

This was the emotional headline of the *News*, reporting the loss of 940 out of 1,500 local BAE shipbuilding and 170 contractor jobs (Bannister, 7.11.13). The workers and politicians interviewed by journalists predictably and rationally laid its political cause at the door of the Scottish independence vote in September 2014. Unsurprisingly, the decision was stated by Prime Minister David Cameron to have been taken in the 'UK's national interest.' (Graham & Dominiczak, *Telegraph*, 6.11.13)

A total of 1,775 BAE jobs will be lost in Portsmouth, Filton, Glasgow's Govan and Scots-toun, and Rosyth, but the announced construction of three offshore patrol vessels on the Clyde 'softened the blow to Glasgow'. Defence Secretary Hammond promised that 'Unless Scotland votes to leave the UK, the new frigates will also be built on the Clyde.' (Rossiter, *Plymouth Herald*, 6.11.13)

Such an announcement had long been expected, as BAE are due to complete the two carriers by 2015, and the Type 26 frigates (global combat ships) will not commence building until 2016, with the first expected to be built in Glasgow (Powell, *News*, 5.7.12; Monaghan, *Telegraph*, 25.11.12). However, the independence vote will not occur until 18 September 2014, creating a cynical and callous uncertainty looming over workers for a year. Offering cruel hope, the *Telegraph* cited Downing Street

sources as saying that 'the Portsmouth yard could still be restarted if there is a "yes" vote.' (Graham, *Telegraph*, 6.11.13)

Media conflation of the terms 'dockyard' and 'shipyard' has further muddled the waters, one newspaper stating that the 'historic dockyards were bought by BAE systems in 2009.' (Drury, *Daily Mail*, 23.1.12) Shipbuilding in fact recommenced at Portsmouth in 2002 after a cessation since 1967, the ship halls clearly visible from the M275 and across the city, but it occupies only 10% of the naval base. In 2012 the *Daily Mail* published the caption 'Facing closure: The naval dockyard at Portsmouth.' (Drury, 23.1.12) Downing Street was reported confirming that 'Portsmouth yard will close "by and large" with few functions being retained.' (Graham, *Telegraph*, 6.11.13)

The function of a dockyard is to build, fit out, supply and repair naval ships. Dockyards are defined by dry docks, from which water can be drained or pumped out for repairing; whereas shipbuilding can be carried out on a slip. A 'dockyard was literally the yard that grew around the dock' (Coad, *Support for the Fleet*, 2013, p. 1). Commercial or private shipyards have long been used to build new ships during wartime, from the seventeenth century to the Second World War, releasing naval dockyards to repair warships.

This is the latest in a series of blows to Portsmouth. In 1981 John Nott's *The Way Forward* Defence Review led to thousands of redundancies, reprieved temporarily by the 1982 Falklands campaign. Portsmouth Dockyard closed in 1984, replaced by the MoD Fleet Maintenance and Repair Organisation limited to 2,800 employees who could not compete with BAE for commercial contracts. Obituaries were placed in *The Times* and the *Evening News* by the Portsmouth Royal Dockyard Historical Society, mourning the death of the dockyard at 'midnight September 30, 1984 of considerable age. Has been seriously ill since June 25, 1981. Will be sadly missed by thousands.' Further cuts of 400 jobs in 1993 were a prelude to privatisation – with privatisation came competing loyalties. The MoD aims to reduce employees and allocate building to industry, in the process fragmenting workforces.

After the 2010 decision to base the carriers at Portsmouth offered long-term stability, politicians have now opted for a short-term political gamble which will waste money, resources and skills. Portsmouth City Council leader Gerald Vernon-Jackson condemned the decision to 'shut down the last remaining shipyard in England with the capability to build advanced surface warships' (Rankin, *Guardian*, 6.11.13). This qualifier excludes BAE at Barrow-in-Furness, which is building As-tute-class submarines, but overlooks Babcock's Apple-

dore shipyard, which is also building sections for both carriers. The essence however remains: five years of high-tech investment in Portsmouth will be lost. This in a situation where the two carriers, or one, if *Prince of Wales* is mothballed (Rankin, *Guardian*, 6.11.13), face a shortage of naval electronics engineers.

Dockyard workers are not only trained in specific shipbuilding skills, they uphold a sub-naval discipline and build weapons of war – which they perceive are of greater national importance than consumer goods. Elvis Costello lyricised the dilemma: the consequence of shipbuilding jobs is that ‘people get killed’ (Costello, *Shipbuilding*, 1983). In dockyard towns for centuries, the brightest young men aspired to a dockyard apprenticeship, a job for life; since the 1980s they have become more dispensable.

Dockyards created new communities at Sheerness and near old towns at Portsmouth, Chatham and Plymouth, surrounded by fortifications and vulnerable to war–peace cycles and government cuts. Experienced workers were impressed from the Thames yards to ‘breed’ future generations of skilled apprentices. In the seventeenth century workers were laid off, endured wage arrears for fifteen months, and their children starved; in the eighteenth century they were fined for working elsewhere. Dockyard towns suffered reduced poor rates because the government did not pay rates on their properties, yet their communities bore the brunt of caring for injured servicemen and their families during and after wars.

During the nineteenth century the total British naval dockyard workforce grew from 10,000 to 30,000, comprising the largest industrial population in the country. Once concentrations of dockyard and commercial workers used their votes to influence elections, the placing of orders drove political choices between dockyard and commercial communities. What is said about Barrow is true of all shipyards and dockyards: ‘For every job within the yard, another two are supported in the supply chain.’ (Griffiths, *This is Money*, 23.9.13) The competition now divides naval bases. From the seventeenth century, dockyard workers struck to oppose cuts in other yards, but privatisation has forced them to compete for scarce jobs. Portsmouth shipyard’s closure was seen immediately as ‘an opportunity for Devonport Dockyard’, prompting parliamentary questions about the relative ship maintenance cost-effectiveness of BAE/MoD at Portsmouth and Babcock at Plymouth (Rositer, *Plymouth Herald*, 6.11.13).

This devastation is not just about Portsmouth, Devonport, Glasgow, Rosyth and Filton. It is about the loss of skills throughout the country. The health of the British shipbuilding industry is of concern. Governments who

choose to fund a product rather than an infrastructure relinquish control, and taxpayers pay a higher price. With 6,000 to 14,000 workers between 1900 and 1984, Chatham Dockyard also worked long hours to refit submarines and surface ships for the Falklands campaign. After John Nott announced its closure in 1981 in the Defence Review it remained the navy’s main submarine dockyard only until Devonport could take over nuclear submarine refits. 31 March 1984 is still remembered as the day the dockyard closed, with 7,000 lost jobs: ‘The heavy industrial and skilled core of Medway simply ceased to exist. It has never been revived.’ (‘The day the dockyard died’, 9.12.11) Workers at Tyneside, Belfast and Liverpool have also paid the price, as their main occupation has gone.

Portsmouth Naval Base is now charged with ‘defending the nation’s interests through the twenty-first century.’ Instead of ships lasting twenty-one years, they are designed to last forty years and are manned by smaller crews. HMS *Victory* was operated by a ratio of approximately 1 ton per person, but the new carriers will represent 100 tons per person. For fifty years Britain maintained a navy which it could not afford; now ‘The two carriers will enable the country to influence events around the world in a way we have not been able to for fifty years.’ (Captain of the Base Ian Greenlees to the Portsmouth Society, 6.11.13)

Portsmouth dockyard, a state-funded instrument to build, fit out, supply and repair naval ships, has been Portsmouth’s business for eight hundred years, defining the town, and creating a workforce of 22,000 at its peak, a community and a built environment. This announcement emphatically does not mean the end of Portsmouth Naval Base, which possesses surface fleet facilities that exist nowhere else. The shipbuilding function takes up only 10% of the naval base area and 11,000 maintenance jobs will remain at Portsmouth. It nonetheless marks a significant loss of shipbuilding skills to the city. The departure of BAE contractors for Scotland also marks the end in December of the Royal Standard pub, run by the same family for fifty-two years (Pickford, *Financial Times*, 6.11.13).

The MoD was already planning to invest £100m in new facilities at Portsmouth Naval Base in preparation for maintaining the carriers and Type 45 destroyers. According to the Naval Base Commander, the tonnage of naval ships based in Portsmouth will increase from 70,000 in 2013 to 200,000 by 2020, bringing another 2,000 sailors into the yard. Structural changes to the base will not only transform public access to historic buildings but ‘will last the nation for a hundred years.’ (Captain Greenlees to the Portsmouth Society, 6.11.13) The MoD’s decision to release more buildings of no op-

erational utility to the Heritage Area and to re-use others which have long been empty and neglected is positive for both the navy and heritage, but some of the so-called 'multi-million pound package' (O'Learly & Semke, 6.11.13) was already on the table at Portsmouth.

The lost Portsmouth BAE engineers will no longer constitute a pool upon which the MoD can draw to provide trained maintenance for the carriers or capacity in another Falklands situation. Downing Street confirmed that 'Royal Navy contracts for warships were always placed within the UK' (Graham & Dominiczak, *Telegraph*, 6.11.13), but short-term political expediency cannot replace investment in skills, which cannot be acquired in the short term.

Chair Dr Ann Coats with contributions from NDS committee and members

People are being invited to show their support by signing the e-petition on the government's website. When a petition reaches 100,000 signatures, the issue is debated in Parliament. To sign the petition, visit tinyurl.com/saveshipbuilding.

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Note the Annual Conference in your diary: 'British Dockyards in the First World War', Saturday 29 March 2014, at the National Maritime Museum Greenwich

The NDS conference will be one of the first in 2014 to commemorate this momentous centenary.

Opened by keynote speaker Professor Eric Grove with 'British Warship Building during the First World War; An Analytical and Comparative Survey', we are also proud to offer

- Professor Ian Buxton, 'Rosyth Dockyard and Battles'
- Dr Vaughan Michell, 'Dreadnought Battleships'
- Paul Brown 'Docking the Dreadnoughts: Dockyard activity in the Dreadnought Era'
- Dr Celia Clark, '“Drilling ‘Ammock ‘Ooks for Sailors”: Women working in Portsmouth Dockyard in the First World War'
- Peter Goodwin, 'Submarine Construction and Development in the First World War'
- Martin Rogers, 'Rosyth Dockyard Expansion'

The focus on Dreadnoughts and Rosyth is apt, as these warships were crucial to the arms race leading to the First World War, and Rosyth's use was vital to its success. The programme will address both national policy and social history.

Please see the attached booking form and we very much hope you can attend.

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The deadline for copy for the next edition is 15 April 2014. Contributions are most welcome, however short or long.