



# DOCKYARDS

## The Naval Dockyards Society

*Exploring the civil branches of navies and their material culture*

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[navaldockyards.org](http://navaldockyards.org)



Chatham Dockyard Historical Trust

### **HMS Cavalier**

The destroyer HMS *Cavalier* arrived at Chatham in 1998 for long-term preservation in No. 2 Dry Dock. She was commissioned into the Royal Navy in 1944 and left active service in 1972. For a time she was judged the fastest ship in the fleet. After decommissioning and sale to the Cavalier Trust in 1977 for £65,000, relatively unsuccessful stints followed as a museum ship at Southampton (from 1977), Brighton (1983) and at Hebburn on the Tyne (1987–98). A stand-alone ship as a museum will sadly often struggle to generate visitor numbers. At Chatham she forms a major part of the dockyard's attraction along with her fellow ships the submarine *Ocelot* and the Victorian gunboat *Gannet*.

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## Notes from the Editor

Welcome to the latest issue of *Dockyards*, hoping you find many matters of interest!

In 2016 the Naval Dockyards Society held a popular walk through Woolwich examining not only remnants of the old naval dockyard (closed 1869) but also the Arsenal, where there are many listed buildings which have been preserved notwithstanding the very substantial development of the area by Berkeley Homes. I noticed on a recent visit that many of these older buildings (such as the 1696 West Pavilion, Laboratory Square, pictured here, actually the oldest purpose-built industrial building in London) are somewhat dwarfed by the new residential blocks.



It was disappointing also to see in Woolwich that the excellent Greenwich Heritage Centre had been closed (July 2018, in fact), although it is to be reopened on another site. The Society is making representations to support the case made by the Greenwich Archive Users' Forum that the new proposed site in an industrial unit at Anchorage Point, Anchor and Hope Lane, Charlton will be too remote for easy public access, requires expensive fitting out to meet the required environmental conditions, and will only be available for five years. Its closure until December 2019, without adequate warning or proper public consultation, means that Greenwich is the only London borough without a publicly accessible local history archive, necessary for both developers and local historians.

I have made a couple of visits to Chatham Dockyard recently and gather the 'Call the Midwife' tours are bringing in another 10,000 people, so visitor numbers now total a very respectable 190,000. Portsmouth tops this with 850,000 but good to know that over a million visit these two dockyards annually. The Chatham Dockyard Church (pictured below) is now used by the University of Kent, making access a little harder to the building.

I was fortunate in March to visit the Van Heyghen company in Ghent, Belgium. Founded in 1928, they are now part of the Galloo group and the largest shipbreakers still operating in mainland Europe. They are breaking up expertly, and in an environmentally friendly manner, several French navy ships. Nearly all Royal Navy ships go for break-up at Aliaga in Turkey, though Van Heyghen did deal with the Falkland veteran assault ship HMS *Fearless* in 2007. Pictured at the top of page 3 are images of the French frigate *Anocit*. Completed in 1972, she left service in 1997 and has since been used as a break-water, hence her ragged appearance.







To further enhance both the running and future plans of the Society, we have formed two additional sub-committees – ‘Media, Marketing, Membership and Tours’ and ‘Conference’, chaired by myself and Philip MacDougall respectively – to add to the existing ‘Conservation’ sub-committee, which is chaired by Ann Coats.

We have a new Twitter account, @DockyardSociety, so please follow us there if you are already tweeting, there are several messages each day with updates on dockyard and other maritime matters, from a huge variety of sources. If you are not on Twitter, why not join? It is free and easy to get on to, even I managed!

We are always looking for and welcome new members. The Society has a wide variety of activities and publications and we feel that there are many potential members out there. With new members in mind, I recently wrote an article in *Warship World* magazine on the current state of UK naval dockyards, past and present, which looked to publicize the Society. I’d be very happy to send you a copy, let me know if you’d like one. We have a large number of followers on social media, over 1,200 on Facebook, for example, and it would be good to persuade more of these to become members so as to enjoy the full benefits that the Society offers. Any ideas on increasing membership please let me know.

All photos in the newsletter are from the author of the article, unless otherwise stated.

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## Around the dockyards

### Portsmouth

The plan to move the Royal Marines Museum from Eastney to No. 6 Boathouse in the dockyard has suffered a setback, which is likely to delay the move for at least two years beyond 2019. This is because the National Museum of the Royal Navy (NMRN) has received news that the Heritage Lottery Fund has turned down the funding application for the SeaMore project, for lack of funds, despite their Round 1 approval. NMRN will now seek to raise the funds itself, £10m being needed, of which some £3m has already been raised and £2m will come from the sale of Eastney site. Also affected is the plan to create a new Centre for Discovery in No. 12 Storehouse to accommodate some of the Eastney collection and many other NMRN artefacts. £10m will also be needed for this project, which is on the back burner until the Royal Marines Museum project has been funded.

We reported the poor state of several dockyard buildings at Portsmouth in *Dockyards* two years ago. Until March 2019 the state of the buildings had not improved, in fact some positive environmental measures were halted. However, the Naval Dockyards Society has recently written to the MoD and it is understood that the Ministry of Defence now recognize more fully their responsibilities in caring for their historic buildings, with a distinct change of attitude. We can report that scaffolding is in place on Long Row and remedial work is taking place. The Society was glad to receive favourable local press coverage of its campaign in this area.

The Society has made Freedom of Information requests asking for data on expenditure on surveys, maintenance and repairs to the At Risk buildings and docks at Portsmouth. The full list of structures concerned is:

1. 2–8, The Parade (Long Row, Buildings 1/125-131).
2. Former Royal Naval Academy, College Road (Buildings 1/14 and 1/116-9).
3. Iron and Brass Foundry east wing, Victoria Road (Building 1/136).
4. No. 5 Dock, Basin No. 1.
5. No. 6 Dock, Basin No. 1.
6. No. 25 Store, Yard Services Manager's Office, Jago Road (Building 1/118).
7. Former Pay Office, College Road (Building No. 1/11).
8. Block Mills and Nos. 35 and 36 Stores, Main Road (Building No. 1/53).
9. Surviving rail tracks, in various locations.

## Sheerness

I was glad to visit Sheerness recently (see the article on the Boatswain's House, page 9) and noted that the Military Hospital was still empty but apparently in reasonable condition. In our last issue we highlighted the poor state of the Boat Store, pictured right before decay set in. Since then, the Society has written to Swale Borough Council, urging it to follow its own Conservation Area Strategy in ensuring that Peel Ports fulfil their statutory obligations

in actively protecting this 'earliest surviving example of a multi-storeyed totally iron framed building anywhere.' We have called for a condition survey to identify necessary remedial work. Furthermore, the Boat Store is part of a 'surviving collection of dockyard buildings and structures, together with the framework of planned routes and spaces' which 'form a coherent group of exceptional historic and architectural interest.' Among these, particular features need urgent care, such as the original iron lock gates (probably the oldest surviving examples in the world) of the Frigate Dock, the graving dock caisson and the capstans which worked the iron gates. We were glad that our campaign on the Boat Store was covered in a favourable manner in the local press on 20 March 2019.



D. Hughes Collection

## Pembroke Dock

Pembroke Dock is a relatively deprived area and it was sad to hear in a special Radio 4 programme on 11 March that it might be further damaged by the potential impact of Brexit on ferry traffic to Ireland.

The massive Grade II Defensible Barracks built to guard the naval dockyard in the mid-1840s are still up for sale for £1m, having failed to sell recently at auction. See here, with some good pictures: <https://www.purplebricks.co.uk/property-for-sale/8-bedroom-character-property-pembrokedock-514384-developed/>.

It was good to hear the Heritage Centre housed in the old Dockyard Church is doing well and attracted a very respectable 8,000 visitors last year. It has displays mainly on Pembroke Dock as a major flying-boat centre in the Second World War.

Pembroke Dock has an unusual connection with Japan. In a visit arranged by David James, of the West Wales Maritime Heritage Society, a party, including distinguished Japanese visitors, braved the rain during a packed schedule which took them to Angle, Freshwater West, and Pembroke Dock – special locations in Japan's maritime story. At Angle's St Mary's Churchyard they saw the recently dedicated memorial to members of the crew of the Japanese liner *Hinaro Maru*, which was torpedoed by the German submarine U-91 in the Irish Sea on 4 October 1918 – just weeks before the end of the Great War. In several locations in Pembrokeshire the bodies of crew and passengers were washed ashore and the Angle memorial replaces a long-lost one from the 1920s. Final port of call for the visitors was Pembroke Dock Heritage Centre, where naval historian Ted Goddard introduced the vis-

itors to the remarkable connections with the Japanese navy and the story of the warship *Hiei*, built locally for Japan and launched in 1877. A model of the *Hiei* – one of several made by David James – is on display at the Centre and was the focus of much interest (right).

Before leaving Pembroke Dock the Japanese visitors went to the former Master Shipwright's House in the Royal Dockyard and viewed the ginko tree which was given by the then Japanese Ambassador,

who attended the launching of the *Hiei* in 1877. The ginko is now a huge and impressive tree in the garden. Cuttings have been taken from the ginko tree and the delegates are arranging for these, once strong enough, to be taken back to Japan to be planted in places of honour. One of these is Kure, the naval base near Hiroshima in Japan. The Mayor of Kure was told that David James had said, 'The Imperial Japanese Navy was born in Pembroke Dock.' He replied that his city was born because of a ship built in Pembroke Dock.

David James reports from his West Wales Maritime Heritage Society at Hancocks Yard that the Yard is going from strength to strength. In November 2018 David arranged for the Royal Commission for the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales to have an annual conference in Pembroke Dock on the understanding that they paid a visit to the shipyard. Delegates from all over Wales attended and on viewing the yard were astounded at the enthusiasm and dynamism on display, in boatbuilding and related activities. Maritime heritage being regenerated.



## ‘Hidden Deptford: An evening of our maritime history’

Attending a *Lenox* Project event to publicize building a replica of the 1678 Third Rate ship on a chilly February evening, I was astounded to enter a packed St Nicholas's Church in Deptford. The audience figure was 268, an amazing number, showing how topical Deptford Dockyard and its shipbuilding community is to its residents. It had been advertised on <https://londonist.com/london/things-to-do/things-to-do-today-in-london-thursday-7-february-2019>, but most of the audience must already have planned to attend.

Normally the handsome church of St Nicholas is much emptier, allowing one to examine closely the beautiful carvings and eminent shipwrights' and naval memorials and those of the children of fellow-diarist and friend of Samuel Pepys, John Evelyn, who lived in nearby Sayes Court. But on this occasion Deptford residents were enjoying the relaxed, informative, and amusing talks of two leading seventeenth-century historians, Dr David Davies and Richard Endsor.

David, best-selling author of *Pepys's Navy: Ships, Men and Warfare 1649–89* and *Kings of the Sea: Charles II, James II and the Royal Navy*, began with the reasons for the dockyard's creation by Henry VIII. The most important were its convenience by river from the seats of government at Whitehall, the City, and the Tower, its protection from foreign attack upriver, and its nearness to Greenwich royal palace. As many wars until the late seventeenth century were fought in or across the North Sea, the Thames was the centre of warship building. Deptford and Woolwich therefore became key research and development yards which could be managed fairly closely by the Navy Office situated in the City. David and Richard gave many examples of Charles II and Samuel Pepys, secretary to the Navy Board and later to the Admiralty, visiting frequently for business, ship launches, and pleasure. Ultimately Deptford's distance from the sea marked the end of its usefulness, however. By the nineteenth century it was becoming less accessible for larger naval ships and was eventually closed as a dockyard in 1869.

Richard spoke of the women of Restoration Deptford, emphasizing the forcefulness of iron contractor Susan Beckford and Ann Pearson's post as rat-catcher. He tracked Pepys's seduction of shipwright's wife Mrs Bagwell, apparently with the approval of her family, through his *Diary* and the





**Richard Endsor. (Diana Endsor)**

invaluable ADM 106 correspondence at the National Archives. He also described how Charles II gave his mistresses enormous power and status. Louise de K rouaille, created Duchess of Portsmouth, was the mistress most connected to *Lenox*, the first of the 1670s and 1680s Thirty Ships building programme, as she attended the launch in 1678 with her son Charles Lenox, aged six. Apparently, Charles II treated the people of Deptford to a slap-up meal to celebrate afterwards. Richard also spoke of eminent Deptford shipwrights such as John Shish, who built the *Lenox*, the speaker's skilful watercolours adding greatly to our understanding of the events he described so fully. The talk was enriched by social and technical detail from ADM 106 which would otherwise be unknown.

The break between the speakers was enjoyably enlivened by the South East London Folk Orchestra, the church resonating with the audience joining in the folk songs and shanties. *Lenox* Project Director Julian Kingston ([juliankingston@buildthelenox.org](mailto:juliankingston@buildthelenox.org)) described the origins of the *Lenox* Project, acknowledging the artistic generosity of Richard, whose book, *The Restoration Warship: The Design, Construction and Career of a Third Rate of Charles II's Navy*, sparked the idea to rebuild the *Lenox*. Julian related how the Project is working with Deptford Dockyard developers Hutchison Whampoa and Lewisham Borough Council to bring the plan to fruition, including some innovative ideas for acquiring timber. In the process it is raising awareness of Deptford's international, national and local heritage and will train Lewisham young people in transferable craftsmanship and IT skills.

While the event was free to get in, organizer Esther Lie joked that it would cost  20 to leave! The collection box on the door was certainly accumulating significant amounts of the folding stuff for the *Lenox* Project. This is altogether a heartening story of how committed, well-organized and knowledgeable enthusiasts can galvanize a community and the authorities by what at first might have seemed a fantasy but appears to be well on its way to realization.

**Dr Ann Coats**

## Notes

Richard Endsor's oil painting of the *Lenox* launch in 1678 can be seen in the Society's website banner at <https://navaldockyards.org/>.

For more information about the event and the *Lenox* Project, see <http://www.buildthelenox.org/home/>.

For extensive studies of Deptford Dockyard's archaeology and history see Antony Francis, *The Deptford royal dockyard and manor of Sayes Court, London: excavations 2000–12*, MOLA Monograph Series 71 (London, 2017) and Philip MacDougall, ed., *Transactions of the Naval Dockyards Society*, Volume 11, *Five Hundred Years of Deptford and Woolwich Royal Dockyards* (Naval Dockyards Society, Portsmouth, 2019), ISBN 978-0-9929292-8-2.

## Medway Hulks!

I was glad recently to attend a fascinating talk in Chatham on Medway prison hulks by Jeremy Clarke of the Guildhall Museum in Rochester. Normally these hulks were old naval ships, stripped of items such as their guns, masts, rigging and rudder. Huts would be added on deck to house the guards,



an observation walkway placed just above the waterline, and bars fitted over gun ports as a security measure. The Guildhall Museum has a walk-through life-size model of three decks of such a hulk.

Above left is a French prisoner's painting of the hulk *Brunswick*; it is unsigned and undated but must date from 1812 to 1814, when she was a prison ship at Chatham. Also a picture of another prisoner's model ship, made of bone, bronze and human hair and blood! Hulks were for prisoners of war or convicts, men and some boys as young as six. Sentences were harsh, such as seven years' transportation for stealing a handkerchief! Jeremy has traced individual convicts through from prison and court records in Kent to transportation and their arrival in Australia. Prisoners of war would normally be French or American, the latter apparently particularly troublesome. There were twenty-three hulks housed in the Chatham area of the Medway from 1793 to 1815. Conditions on board were generally very poor.

**Richard Holme**

## Copper Rivet Distillery, Chatham

This interesting venture has been set up by the Russell family, Bob and his sons Matthew and Stephen. Their dream was to establish their own distillery in the Chatham area, and this they have done, renovating Pump House No. 5 to make it into the stunning distillery it is today. The Copper Rivet Distillery sits proudly on the bank of the River Medway in Chatham's Historic Dockyard. Inland lies the yachting marina, which was once the Dockyard's Basin No. 1.

Their first gin was distilled in October 2016, and the range now includes Dockyard Gin, Vela Vodka, and a cask-finished grain spirit called Son of a Gun. In addition, Masthouse Whiskies will be available from 2020, once they have matured in barrel. Vela Vodka has already received the top 'double gold' award at the San Francisco World Spirits Awards 2017.

**Copper Rivet Distillery, housed in the Victorian brick Pump House No. 5. On the right is the Boiler Shop, re-erected here after the closure of Woolwich Dockyard in 1869 and now a retail shopping outlet.**







The distillery is housed in a Victorian pump house, completed in 1873, which previously controlled the water flows into and out of the dry docks. Now, the elegant pink brick structure is home to three stills, all designed in-house and made by local skilled craftsmen. The area has long been renowned for using its metal skills to craft world-class ships.

Copper Rivet Distillery is one of only five UK distilleries to control the whole distillation process from grain to glass. Its water is filtered through chalk beds to let Copper Rivet's yeast deliver its signature fruity esters during fermentation. Local farmers, the Burdens, have

been contracted to grow and harvest the holy trinity of cereals which the distillery uses for its spirits – wheat, barley, and rye. Stephen Russell comments:

We named the distillery after the copper rivet found at the building before it became a distillery. We felt that it had a resonance to the industrial history of the dockyard and the ingenuity and historic bravery of the area. The new distillery aims to revive this local spirit with our collection of “firsts” and “onlys”. Think about what an incredible piece of engineering a rivet is and the craft it took to produce them with consistency. This is an inspiration to us. And of course, there's a great connection to the copper stills we use in distillation.

Copper Rivet Distillery from its outset has conducted one-hour tours, taking place on Wednesdays to Sundays. Since October, over three thousand guests have already toured the distillery. See [www.copperrivetdistillery.co.uk](http://www.copperrivetdistillery.co.uk).

**Above: Copper Rivet Distillery: the stills.**

**Below: HMS *Warspite* in 1886 with Pump House No 5. in the background, now the Distillery. (NRA ADM 176/66)**



The southern half of the Pump House contains the distillery, and the northern half houses the historic pump and McGuire's Fine Foods delicatessen and cafe. In future years there are plans for a fine-dining restaurant as well.

Times may change, but the Dockyard Spirit endures. There is much more to come . . .

**Rupert Ponsonby**

(Philip MacDougall notes that No. 5 Pump House was so named as it pumped water out of the No. 5 Dock built by John Rennie. The pump house was for pumping out the dry docks and No. 5 also took on responsibility for pumping out other docks once they had been deepened (beyond gravity drainage) during the early 19th century.)



## A wonderful Georgian house – the Boatswain's House Sheerness

The Boatswain's House was built in 1824–6 and positioned to give the Boatswain a good view of what was going on in the Dockyard, but chaos greeted Roy Cater and Sheila Slack (right) when they acquired the property five years ago. Besides rats and asbestos, the house, having been vacant for many years, was damp and had no power, gas, water supply or telephone line. There were thirty holes in the roof. Initially food could not be kept in the house as the rats would get it! There were dozens of scorpions in the house (the harmless southern European ones). Thankfully many original features survived, most of the wooden mouldings, the fireplaces and the ceiling mouldings, for example. The latter have been carefully picked out and now look superb. The property has been lovingly and expertly restored by Roy and Sheila and is most impressive (see photos of front after and rear before renovation). This was not a lone effort, the Spitalfields Trust had organized eight other new owners and laid the groundwork of planning and infrastructure to make the restorations possible. (The Georgian Group of the Royal Institute of British Architects gave the project their 'Outstanding Achievement Award'.) The lath and plaster walls have generally not been disturbed by necessary rewiring due to use of the old conduits within the walls. A computer-controlled power supply allowed existing metal light switches, illegal to use with 240 volts, to switch a 24-volt signal so the computer can switch the 240 volt mains safely and with great flexibility. Wherever possible original features have been restored and the paint of many generations stripped away. The fireplaces and mouldings are 'standard' and are mimicked or replicated in style in other dockyard houses at Sheerness. Curiously due to fears of floods, residents were not generally allowed to sleep on the ground floor of dockyard houses but this was possible at the Boatswain's House as that floor was elevated. There are no records of floods in the dockyard although there have been in the town.

The house was a little more modest than its neighbours, befitting the status of the boatswain as a warrant officer. However it is still three storeys high with spacious cellars in addition. It is only three windows wide, rather than the five-window wide houses of the commissioned officers' terrace, and the boatswain had to make do with just two servants! In the 1860s the supply of piped water



Cater/Slack

**The boatswain's house, before restoration (rear view) and after (front view). (Cater/Slack: Richard Holme)**



meant a three-quarters width and height extension was built on the back of this and other houses to install a toilet and bathroom. A little after this a delightful new 'Arts and Crafts' fireplace was added in the study and also around then a 'dumb waiter' was installed in the dining room to bring food up from the kitchen, which at that time was sited below in the cellar. Both of these Victorian features have been restored. The spacious cellars that included a dark room in the 1939–45 war to develop reconnaissance photographs and some fittings etc. survive from this era. At the front of the house below ground are two stores for food and coal. The only new structural feature was a skylight to bring much needed light into the stairwell, which had lost most of its only window when the extension was added.

Roy and Sheila have restored virtually the whole four floors most impressively and on their own, astonishing given their professional backgrounds in IT and finance respectively.

(I was lucky also to have a tour of the larger Commissioner's House, the restoration of which is nearly complete, but another impressive building.)

**Richard Holme**

## Two Sheerness casualties

The wooden-wall *Cornwallis*, a 74-gun Third Rate, launched at Bombay in 1813 survived as a jetty at Sheerness until the 1950s when the Admiralty demolished her weather deck. In 1960 the dockyard closed and shipbreakers were called in to demolish her, a tough task given her very solid teak hull. She is pictured here in 1957 with the Wildfire Building in the background.



David Hughes Collection





The Great Quadrangular Storehouse was built between 1823 and 1829 by Edward Holl with George Taylor seeing through his designs after his death. At that time it was the largest industrial building in Europe. In 1977 it was sadly condemned for demolition but before this dreadful task could be undertaken was undertaken, architects Mary Weguelin and David Allsop conducted in Summer 1978 a wonderful photographic survey. I have been very fortunate to have had access to this recently and discussed it with Celia Clark and Sheerness specialist James Pender. Two of the photos are shown at the bottom of page 10.

## Devonport – a behind the scenes visit

We arrived at the Albert Gate at 7am on 22 March, an early start for what was to be a very long but fascinating day, organized by SNAME, the Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers. After a warm welcome from the Babcock and Royal Navy representatives who were to guide us through the day, we donned plastic overalls, steel-capped boots, hi-vis jackets, protective glasses, and helmets. Thankfully the weather was not too warm!

First of all we had a thorough and good tour of operations in the very large 'Factory' building (built in the 1850s), seeing the extensive and often very modern machine and pipe shops particularly. What I thought initially in a senior moment was a coffee-vending machine turned out to be a computer-controlled lathe! Warships will normally have several thousand pipes and these need review at every refit. We even saw sinks being custom-made for galleys on frigates. The Factory Building covers several acres and is the biggest building in the Dockyard I think. It looked to be in good condition and I believe is Grade 1 listed.

We then walked down to the South Yard where we visited the very interesting Devonport Naval Heritage Centre ('DNHC'), enjoying a guided tour of the existing exhibits conducted by one of their volunteers. The Devonport Collection (over 100,000 items) is in the process of being transferred from the MOD to the National Museum of the Royal Navy ('NMRN') at Portsmouth, which is committed to keeping DNHC open and plans to expand the site to give walk in public access, but no timescale for this has yet been decided. At present DNHC is only open by appointment and only to groups. The Ropery itself used to contain much of the Devonport Collection but is now part of the premises of Princess Yachts and is being used by them for storage and mock-up interior yacht-building. DNHC no longer has access to this part of the site. The DNHC Archive and research centre, currently based in Plympton, is being moved to Bonaventure House, opposite the DNHC, again no timescale has been agreed, because the current occupiers the Sea Cadets have not moved into their new premises, although it is expected to be this year. Finally, most of the DNHC figureheads have been loaned to the 'Box' (the new name for the Plymouth History Centre), which opens in 2020 and is a major and exciting project for Plymouth's regeneration. Once DNHC has its own permanent building to display them, it is proposed that some figureheads currently in storage at NMRN museums will come to Devonport to replace them.



**A Catshead at the DNHC (above) and figurehead from the sloop HMS *Rinaldo* (below), one of the few left at the DNHC.**







**The Old Dockyard Fire Station,  
housing part of DNHC collection.**

Thankfully we were able to get the dockyard bus back to the North Yard, where after a short lunch break we walked to the retired nuclear submarine HMS *Courageous*, decommissioned in 1992. We were given an enjoyable and well-informed tour by an ex-submariner. Since our party comprised student naval architects (apart from me!) we had a lengthy technical presentation on the nuclear reactor system and controls. On a lighter note we were informed that on a normal patrol *Courageous* would be

stocked with 4.7 miles of sausages and 42,000 tea bags. *Courageous* is in No. 3 basin, also there are eleven other retired nuclear submarines. Two had had their conning towers removed so looked rather sinister. We were told there are plans to slowly and carefully dismantle them all. A massive and complex task no doubt. Overlooking the submarines was the grand-looking facade of the Factory which we had toured earlier.

We then proceeded to the more modern Frigate Refit Complex (FRC), opened in 1977. This facility covers three dry docks, numbers 5 to 7, and is heavily involved presently in the LIFEX project to upgrade and extend the life of the Royal Navy's Type 23 frigates, many of which are over twenty years old. The project was announced by the navy in June 2018. On our visit two of the docks were occupied by the Type 23s HMS *Somerset* and HMS *Portland* while No. 5 Dock was being prepared to accommodate HMS *Iron Duke*. All of these are having LIFEX refits. We climbed to a viewing platform high above the ships for a superb bird's eye view. HMS *Portland* has been a 'dead ship' for a

### Royal William Yard



year or two laid up in Portsmouth apparently so extra work may be needed in consequence. Finally, we walked across to No. 4 basin for a tour of another Type 23, HMS *Lancaster*, which has just left the FRC. She was originally commissioned in 1992, so is twenty-seven years old, normally about her expected operational life. She was towed to Devonport from Portsmouth in March 2017 for her LIFEX which has renewed and, in many cases, upgraded her systems and weapons. Our guides highlighted, for example, her new state of the art Sea Ceptor anti-aircraft missiles (replacing Sea Wolf) and enhanced mess facilities.

The large nuclear Trident missile submarine HMS *Vanguard* was also in for a lengthy refit but we did not see her. Based at Faslane for operations, such submarines are refitted and refuelled at Devonport. Also not seen on our visit was the assault ship HMS *Bulwark*, laid up in No. 5 Basin; there have been rumours of her being decommissioned as a cost-cutting exercise but her out of service date is officially 2034.

A super day which I was very lucky to participate in, having recently joined SNAME – see [www.sname.org](http://www.sname.org) No photos from our visit to the secure area as naturally these are not allowed. Apart from lunch we had been on our feet for over nine hours so it was good to adjourn to a local hostelry (quite a few to choose from!) to relax and recap on the day.

Many thanks to Babcock and the Royal Navy for being such excellent hosts and to Junwei Fan of SNAME for organizing the visit. Also to Paul Santillo for confirming the current status of DNHC and its collections.

On the next day I enjoyed a visit to the former victualling facility at the nearby Royal William Yard, now almost entirely redeveloped for residential and commercial use. I concluded this had been done really well, preserving the character of the superb Rennie buildings, although I understand a few think otherwise.

**Richard Holme**

## **Bermuda dockyard memories of 1939**

*George Dixon worked in Bermuda dockyard in the 1920s and 1930s and in 1997 wrote a fascinating memoir (22 pages) of his time there. His son Barry kindly passed the Society a copy of this and this is available to members, please email the editor for a copy. The extract below covers the outbreak of hostilities in 1939 . . .*

In the dockyard, the usual easy-going atmosphere was transformed into one of intense activity, almost to the point of being confused in the early stages. Although it was Sunday when the declaration of war was announced, all yard employees were directed to report for work immediately, and by any means possible. The local police stations played a major role in this, visiting all known employees at their homes to pass the message on. My father and I were notified by this means, and we reported for work early on that Sunday evening. The main priority was to get the cruiser under refit out of the floating dock and prepare the ship for sea as soon as possible. It was, I believe, the cruiser HMS *Sheffield* . . . And she had her full crew aboard, all of whom 'turned to' for the general cause. It was a major task for everyone and affected all the various dockyard departments in some way or another, whether working in the workshops or on the ship itself. Being under refit all the ship's underwater fittings had been removed for routine inspection and repair, all of which needed to be reinstalled. This included partial withdrawal of the propeller shafts for inspection of the shaft bearings and propellers, the replacement of which was one of the top priorities. My department, the Shipfitting shop, was also working on the ship's rudder, which had been partially lowered for a new hull bushing to be manufactured and fitted. Equally as important was the ship's submarine-detection gear, located in the keel. This equipment was top secret, and all work carried out was hidden by a surround of screens and guarded by an armed naval sentry. All the underwater work was given the utmost priority, the objective being to get the ship out of dry dock as soon as possible. Everywhere – workshops and aboard the ship – became areas of intense activity, but even so, it was several days before the ship could be 'flooded down' and the ship floated out and secured alongside the dockside jetty . . . A major surprise during the first war week was the abrupt arrival of the cruiser HMS *Berwick* early one

morning at daybreak. She arrived out of the blue, and by her outward appearance, had done some hard steaming, with salt encrusted superstructure and flaking hull paint as witness to this. What was even more surprising was that she had a quick docking for underwater inspection and clean off of marine growth. *Berwick* was a big ship, and normally would not have docked in Bermuda due to her dimensions and especially her length overall, which exceeded the safe limitations of the floating dock. When the dock was pumped dry, the stern was overhanging the end of the dock and could not be supported as the 'rule book' specified. It seemed a 'dicey' business to everyone, as indeed it was, and there were many big sighs of relief when she was floated again . . . Most of the warships in the yard at that time put to sea as soon as their repair programmes were completed, and they had their coat of wartime grey paint. All the cruisers disappeared, including HMS *York*, *Sheffield*, *Despatch*, *Dunedin*, *Ajax*, *Orion* – all permanent members of the Americas and West Indies squadron previously stationed at Bermuda.

(Further extracts will be included in future *Dockyards*.)

**Note by editor** – coincidentally we have recently heard from Roger Bendall who has just joined our Society and has started an excellent Facebook page: *Bermuda Dockyard – family life on the island 1936 to 1952*. Well worth looking at!

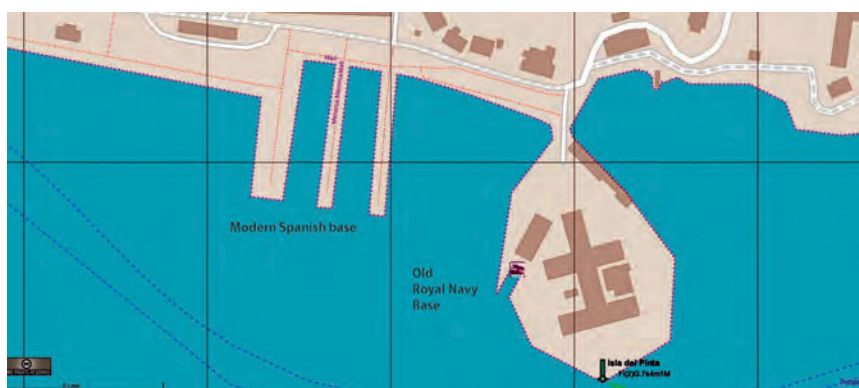
## Mahon Dockyard, Menorca – an update

This topic was partially covered in an earlier *Dockyards*<sup>1</sup> in an item on the Isla del Rey hospital located in the same harbour and which covered other local military sites. So, the author of this article has tried to provide an update and fill in some gaps without too much duplication.

Mahon Harbour in Menorca is the second largest harbour in the world, after Pearl Harbor, at some 5 km in length. It has a very narrow, easily defended entrance. After the War of the Spanish Succession, England needed a good port, strategically located and capable enough to guard the Mediterranean Squadron of the Royal Navy and to dominate the Mediterranean. The Royal Navy spotted its potential, especially as a shelter from the vicious north wind that batters the Menorca area from time to time, and Britain first occupied Menorca from 1708 to 1756. They reinforced the defences of the island and began building a dockyard and arsenal so that the fleet could remain there all year round. The Old Royal Navy base on the seven-sided Isla del Pinta leant itself to security and provided an excellent facility for careening and maintaining men of war – see the chart and photos 1 and 2.

The Royal Navy presence led to the setting up of local gin distilleries to meet demand. When the British finally abandoned the island in 1802, the people of Menorca continued to drink gin and continued making their own version instead. The Xoriguer Gin Factory on the Mahon waterfront is very much a present-day tourist attraction selling a wide range of gins but without the interest of seeing the production process. The sight of large industrial-size, plastic containers in the back yard marked 'Alcohol' rather undermined the cottage industry image.

**Chart of Mahon naval base. (<http://map.openseamap.org/> under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 license)**







**The Spanish naval base (left) and the adjacent, old RN base (right).**

Menorca changed hands several times over the years: Britain – France – Britain – Spain. In 1915 the base supported four seaplanes and some submarines, and had a floating dock based there. After the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War, with US financial aid, the maze of tunnels started to be constructed. The tunnels contain powder magazines, underground tanks and the repair shops for the maintenance of mines, torpedoes and the miniature submarines but the tunnelling ends after about 500 metres.<sup>3</sup> It was originally intended to provide facilities for a complete military community with other access tunnels but was never completed. The 1970s onwards saw a slow decline and the transfer of the naval ships and submarines to Cartagena. In 2005 an agreement was signed with the Port Authority of the Balearic Islands for an increase in docking and berthing facilities for commercial cruise liners and tankers in exchange for a contribution to improvements of the naval base facilities. The dockyard is now a relatively inactive Spanish naval base with some conservation issues in the older Royal Navy area and very limited funds to undertake it. The Spanish CO (October 2017) was keen to do what he could but has the same conflicting issues of operational matters and restoration needs very familiar to Society members in the UK.

For our privileged naval base visit, arranged through Mike Critchley's 'Maritime Heritage Tours', we were shown around by the commanding officer himself, a commander. The base piers were deserted apart from a lifeboat and a few small power boats – photo 2. On the waterfront was displayed a Foca-class midget submarine, SA-41, in service from 1963 to 1967, not to be confused with a similarly named class of Italian submarines built in the mid-1930s. They were a class of two, originally rated as experimental submarines then re-rated as assault submarines, 13.9m long with a crew of three.

We were shown around the modern part of the base, the Old Royal Navy base and the extensive tunnel system mentioned above. As suggested in the earlier *Dockyards* article the site has much potential as a visitor centre, subject to investment, but would have the same problem as Portsmouth Historic Dockyard of separating the visitor and secure military areas.

The Royal Navy also started the construction of the first purpose-built Royal Naval Hospital, on an island, Isla del Rey, in the harbour. This was in 1711, over thirty years before Haslar. It is being actively restored by a large volunteer group.<sup>2,4</sup> Since 2004 the 'Associacio amics de l'Illa del l'Hospital', and later called 'Fundacion Hospital de la Isla del Rey', protects the island and all it contains. It is open to visitors every Sunday morning throughout the year and on selected tourist season Fridays.

**Commander Martin Marks OBE Royal Navy**

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## Kronstadt – Home of Imperial Russia's Baltic Fleet: Part Two

### The Russian Civil War

The sailors and soldiers of Kronstadt rebelled during the attempted revolution of 1905–06 but were suppressed by troops from St Petersburg and Oranienbaum.<sup>1</sup> During the riots in Petrograd (as St Petersburg was named in the First World War) of 1917 the sailors of Petrograd joined the Bolshevik revolution and executed many of their officers on 1 March (14 March in the Gregorian calendar), thus gaining a reputation as dedicated revolutionaries.<sup>2</sup> In a decisive move, the sailors of the Baltic Fleet steamed the cruiser *Aurora* from Kronstadt up the River Neva to aid the communists when they stormed the Winter Palace in Petrograd. During the ensuing civil war, the sailors participated on the Red side, until 1921, when they rebelled against the Bolshevik rule.

Kronstadt and the supporting forts and minefields were the key to the protection of Petrograd from foreign forces, including the British Baltic Squadron (Admiral Walter Cowan), which was supporting the White Russians in the revolutionary conflict with the Bolsheviks. Despite this, the cruiser *Oleg* was torpedoed and sunk by a forty-foot Royal Navy coastal motor boat (CMB 4) commanded by Lieut. Augustus Agar RN, on the night of 17 June 1919 after participating in a bombardment of the outlying Krasnaya Gorka fort (on the southern shore of the Gulf of Finland) that had revolted against the Bolsheviks. From his base at Terrioki, just inside the Finnish border on the northern shore of the Gulf, Agar had had to run the gauntlet of forts, minefields and a destroyer screen to approach *Oleg*. This was followed on 18 August 1919 by a raid of seven Royal Navy 55ft CMBs on the inner harbour of Kronstadt itself, badly damaging the Soviet battleship *Andrei Pervozvanny*, and sinking a submarine depot ship, the *Pamiat Azova*. The CMBs had to run past forts and guardships, and were met by a hail of fire from harbour gun emplacements. By the end of the mission seventeen men from the CMBs were missing and three of the boats had been destroyed. Fortunately, it was later found that nine of the missing (including one of the CMB commanders) were alive, having been taken prisoner. Agar and two of the 55ft CMB commanders were awarded the Victoria Cross for their successes in these audacious attacks.<sup>3</sup>

### The Kronstadt Rebellion

The Kronstadt sailors were the first communists to try to correct what they saw as the shortcomings of the new Bolshevik regime. When they perceived that communism meant terror and tyranny, they called for the overthrow of the Communist Government and for a time imperilled it. They were bloodily executed or sent into Siberian slavery by Communist troops led in person by the Commissar of War, Leon Trotsky.

In March 1921, led by Stepan Petrichenko (a clerk in the battleship *Petropavlovsk*) and consisting of Russian sailors, soldiers from the Kronstadt garrison, and civilians from the dockyard, the rebellion against the Bolshevik government was to influence Vladimir Lenin's and the Communist Party's decision to loosen its control of the Russian economy by implementing the New Economic Policy. After years of economic crises caused by the First World War and the Russian civil war, the Bolshevik economy had started to collapse and industrial output had fallen dramatically. It is estimated that the total output of mines and factories in 1921 was 20% of the pre-World War I level, with many crucial items suffering an even more drastic decline. Production of cotton, for example, had fallen to 5% and iron to 2% of the pre-war level, and this coincided with droughts in 1920 and 1921 and the Russian famine of 1921. Discontent grew among the Russian populace, particularly the peasantry, who felt disadvantaged by Communist grain requisitioning (forced seizure of large portions of the peasants' grain crop used to feed urban dwellers). They resisted by refusing to till their land. In February 1921, more than 100 peasant uprisings took place. The workers in Petrograd were also involved in a series of strikes and disturbances, caused by the reduction of bread rations by one third over a ten-day period.

Hearing of suffering and deprivation in letters from home (many Kronstadters were of peasant origins) and seeing it first-hand in Petrograd, delegates from the Kronstadt naval base visited

Petrograd on 26 February to investigate the situation. On 28 February, in response to the delegates' report of heavy-handed Bolshevik repression of strikes in Petrograd, the crews of the battleships *Petropavlosk* and *Sevastopol* held an emergency meeting. Their first move was to form a Provisional Revolutionary Committee which approved a resolution raising fifteen political, economic and social demands. Among these were economic demands: a relaxation of the stringent conditions of war communism as well as improved food supplies to the cities. Their political demands were more extensive: the restoration of full freedom of speech, increased democratic input and consultation in policy formulation, the release of non-Bolshevik socialists from detention, guarantees of civil rights and, significantly, 'Soviets without communists' – liberation of the soviets (workers' councils) from party control. Their document labelled the Bolsheviks as 'usurpers' and described the conditions imposed by the new regime as 'greater enslavement', 'moral slavery', 'a new serfdom', all much greater than the impositions of tsarism. The Kronstadters called for the revolution to be placed back into the hands of the workers who it had originally claimed to represent. This document, which bore some similarities to a petition of 1905, enraged the Bolshevik hierarchy, but the rebels seized the naval base and started publishing a newspaper.

Leon Trotsky (then the Minister of War in the Soviet Government, and the leader of the Red Army) responded, organizing an immediate military response to crush the Kronstadt rebels. Since there were more than 15,000 of them, it would need to be a large campaign. It was winter, with the sea around the Kronstadt fortress frozen solid, and it was important to crush the rebellion before the thaw, which would have made it impregnable for the land army and allowed the rebels to use battle-ships against Bolshevik targets. The first attack by 14,000 Red Army troops, many of whom were poorly trained and ill-equipped, with low morale, was driven back by fire from Kronstadt. Some of the troops had refused to fight against their 'brothers', as they called the Kronstadt Rebels. The unreliable units were disbanded and many soldiers were shot for their refusal to carry out their military mission. Trotsky increased troop numbers and by 16 March the 7th Army numbered about 45,000 men equipped with white camouflage and heavy artillery. The new assault started on the night of 17 March. Soviet troops left the Oranienbaum and Sestroretsk areas for Kronstadt, travelled across the frozen Gulf of Finland and laid siege to the fortress. On the morning of 18 March, assault troops stormed the fortress. By 12:00 on 18 March, the Kronstadt Rebellion was suppressed. Official statistics said there were more than 1,000 rebels dead, more than 2,000 wounded and 2,500 taken prisoner. About 8,000 of the rebels, including members of the Revolutionary Committee, fled for Finland over the ice, their large number causing the first big refugee problem for the newly independent state. The Soviet troops lost 527 men killed and had 3,825 wounded. Participants of the Kronstadt Rebellion were cruelly repressed; by summer 1921, 2,103 people had been sentenced to execution by shooting, 6,459 sentenced to different terms of imprisonment, and thousands of Kronstadt sailors were sent to concentration camps. In spring 1922, mass expulsion of Kronstadt residents began (2,514 people were exiled in all). Most participants of the Kronstadt Rebellion, who came back from Finland after amnesty was declared by the Soviet government (November 1921 and 1922), were also repressed.

Lenin suggested the uprising was 'whipped up' by counter-revolutionary insurgents, foreign agents and enemies of Russia and stated that Kronstadt 'lit up reality like a lightning flash'. The All-Russian Emergency Commission held an investigation, but could not find any evidence that the Whites, Mensheviks or Socialist-Revolutionaries had been involved in the Kronstadt Rebellion. Among the sailors, numerous and unmistakable signs of mass dissatisfaction with the existing order had been evident, and Kronstadt was clearly ripe for a rebellion. The rising bore the earmarks of spontaneity, there was little in the behaviour of the rebels to suggest any careful advance preparation. Against this background of discontent, Lenin replaced War Communism with his New Economic Policy in 1922. In 1994, all participants of the Kronstadt Rebellion were rehabilitated according to a decree issued by the President of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin, and a monument to the rebels was erected close to the cathedral in Kronstadt.<sup>4</sup>

## **The Second World War**

In the Second World War, Kronstadt was bombed several times by the Luftwaffe during the siege of Leningrad (as Petrograd had been renamed in 1924). In August 1941 the Luftwaffe began bombing



Kronstadt regularly. The most notable bombing was Stuka ace Hans-Ulrich Rudel's sinking of the Soviet battleship *Marat* during two attacks on 21 and 22 September 1941. To prevent an enemy landing in the eastern Gulf of Finland thirteen artillery batteries were established in Kronstadt and more batteries in parts of the island beyond the town. The main lookout was located in the Naval Cathedral, with a visual range of up to 45km. The coastal defence of Kronstadt included two infantry regiments.

In late August, the Red Army in the Baltic States was in a critical situation. Tallinn, the main base of the fleet, was in danger and a decree to relocate the fleet from Tallinn to Kronstadt was given. By the time the Soviets had decided on a maritime evacuation of Tallinn, over 200 Soviet civilian and military vessels had been assembled in the harbour of Tallinn. After the evacuation of Tallinn, the submarine subdivision was based in Kronstadt. By the end of 1941, eighty-two naval operations had been made by submarines, frequently disrupting military supplies of strategic materials from Sweden to Germany. The Germans tried to block completely the exit from the Gulf of Finland with anti-submarine nets and mines. Despite these efforts, the Soviet submariners continued to attack German ships. In 1942, twenty-nine German vessels were sunk.

The Baltic Fleet sent more than 125,000 sailors to serve ashore at the front, including 83,000 who fought directly on the Leningrad Front. For the protection of Leningrad ten brigades of marines, four regiments, and more than forty separate battalions and companies were formed in Kronstadt. Soviet Baltic Fleet naval aircraft made over 100,000 air missions to support the military operations during the siege.

The Luftwaffe and German artillery dropped thousands of bombs and shells on the dockyard and the arsenal. In September 1941 the Baltic Fleet ships and dockyard infrastructure were damaged: several sections of the dockyard were destroyed, the docks were showered with falling bombs, and dozens of workers and engineers were killed. Nevertheless, the dockyard continued its work: in the difficult conditions of the siege the workers persevered and often the working day lasted for eighteen to twenty hours. It was thanks to the resistance of the Kronstadt complex that the destruction of Leningrad (the main industrial and cultural centre of the Soviet Union) was avoided, and the Germans were prevented from taking the Oranienbaum bridgehead near Peterhof on the southern shore of the Gulf of Finland.<sup>5</sup>

In recognition of its role in the Second World War, Kronstadt was conferred the status of 'City of Military Glory' by the President of the Russian Federation Dmitriy Medvedev on 27 April 2009, for 'courage, endurance and mass heroism, exhibited by defenders of the city in the struggle for the freedom and independence of the Motherland'. Russia's victory in the Second World War is celebrated each year on Victory Day, 9 May, Russia's most important national holiday.

**Dr Paul Brown**

(Part One of this article appeared in the December 2018 issue of *Dockyards*)

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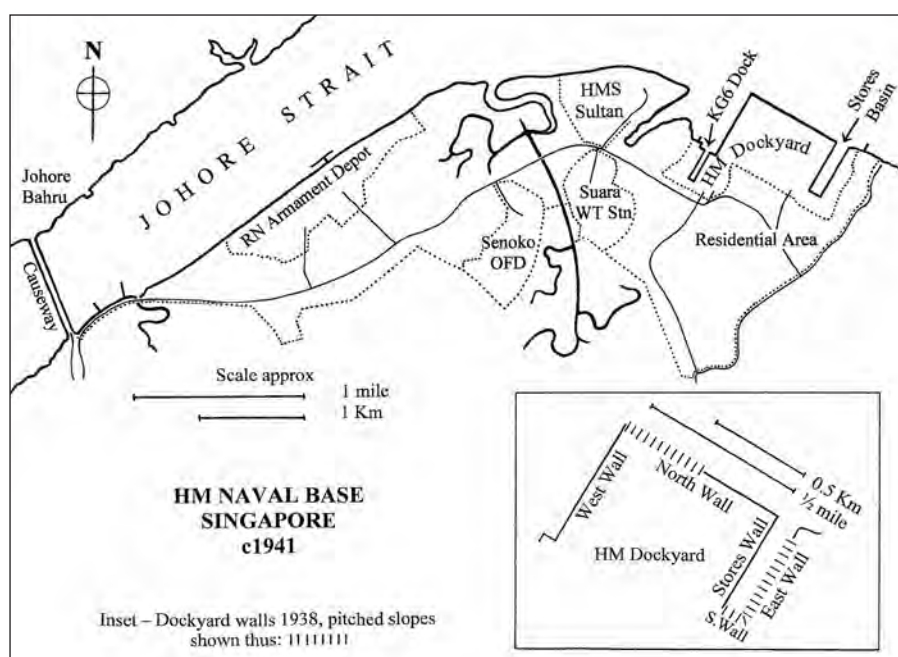
1. Ferguson, H., 2008, *Operation Kronstadt*, London: Hutchinson.
2. *St Petersburg Encyclopaedia*, 'The Kronstadt Rebellion of 1921', <http://www.encspb.ru/object/2804022887?lc=en>; Wikipedia, 'Kronstadt Rebellion', [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kronstadt\\_rebellion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kronstadt_rebellion), retrieved 9.5.2018.
3. Wikipedia, 'Kronstadt – World War II', <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kronstadt> retrieved 9.5.2018.
4. *St Petersburg Encyclopaedia*, 'The Kronstadt Rebellions of 1905–06', <http://www.encspb.ru/object/2804022723?lc=en>, retrieved 9.5.2018.
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A version of this article has appeared in the *Journal of the Britannia Naval Research Association*.

## Singapore Dockyard: the 'Truncated Scheme' and construction of the 'missing' wharf walls 1938–41

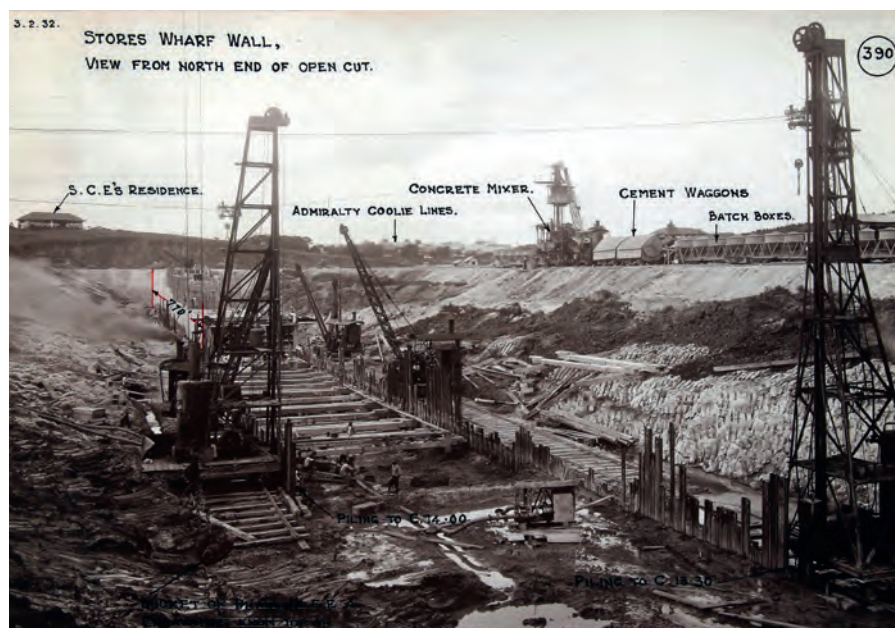
Amid concern at continued reliance on the Anglo-Japanese Treaty to help protect British interests in the Far East, a decision was taken in June 1921 to build a naval base at Singapore, and a short while later a site was selected on the north coast of the island. However, the enormous cost meant that a start on construction was continually deferred.

As a cost reduction measure to get the base started the Admiralty offered a 'truncated scheme' by omitting the western half of the North Wall and over half of the Stores Basin walls, leaving unexcavated 'pitched slopes' in their place (see Plan). This was finally approved and in September 1928 a contract awarded to Sir John Jackson Ltd to build the Naval Base.<sup>1</sup> With the election of a Labour Government the following year work was slowed down and cancellation seriously considered, but as concern mounted regarding Japanese intentions a decision was taken in April 1933 to speed up the work.



Plan of HM Naval Base. The dockyard occupied a comparatively small area of the naval base. Inset: The Dockyard walls in 1938 showing position of the pitched slopes prepared as part of Sir John Jackson Ltd's contract. (Plan: author)

**'Conventional' construction:** a start has been made on Stores Wall in the centre of the cut, view looking south 3 February 1932. The ground on the left of the photograph will later be further dug out to form Stores Basin, and the space to the right of the wall backfilled. (Photo: TNA WORK55/ 22(390)).





**Stores Basin looking north with the 'pitched slopes' on the East and South Walls clearly visible. The large Admiralty Floating Dock was built on the Tyne and towed to Singapore in 1928. Photo taken on the occasion of the formal opening of HM Naval Base 14 February 1938. (Photo: TNA ADM116/3664.)**

Immense changes to the landform were necessary to remove high ground and fill in the swamps and low-lying land to create flat areas above sea level. To start the work three giant excavations were made inland from the shoreline, at what were to become (a) the entrance to the dry dock, (b) half way along the West Wall, and (c) the SW corner of Stores Basin. The wharf walls were built in what might be called a 'conventional' manner, in the centre of an excavated 'open cut' or giant trench extending out towards the shoreline. On completion of the wall the landward side was backfilled with rubble etc. and the seaward side dug out as necessary and (later) flooded.

On 14 February 1938 HM Naval Base was opened by the Governor of the Straits Settlements at an elaborate ceremony to mark completion of the dry dock, which was formally named the King George VI dock (KG6 dock). However both the dockyard and the wider naval base were still far from completed, lacking many of the essential support facilities. Critically, with the pitched slopes that had been adopted as an economy measure, there was a one-third shortfall in provision of wharf walls, which severely limited the number of ships that could be berthed alongside.

With the threat of war increasing, approval was belatedly given to build the 'missing' wharf walls and the Admiralty sought bids for the work.<sup>2</sup> A bid from Topham, Jones & Railton Ltd (TJ&R Ltd) bid was accepted on 7 February 1938;<sup>3</sup> perhaps significantly just one week before the ceremonial opening of HM Naval Base mentioned above. It is not known whether Sir John Jackson Ltd made an unsuccessful bid. It seems that TJ&R Ltd were held in high regard by the Admiralty following previous contracts elsewhere and their record of civil engineering work in Singapore and Malaya, including construction of the Causeway (1919–23) linking Singapore and Johore. The value of the 'Wharf Walls' contract as it was known was £840,227, equivalent to about £55 million at 2018 prices. Concurrently with construction of the wharf walls there was a massive programme to complete the workshops, storehouses and other buildings throughout the naval base, but it is not known whether TJ&R Ltd were awarded any other contracts. The contract specified that the whole of the works must be completed within three years of the date of acceptance of the tender, i.e. by February 1941.

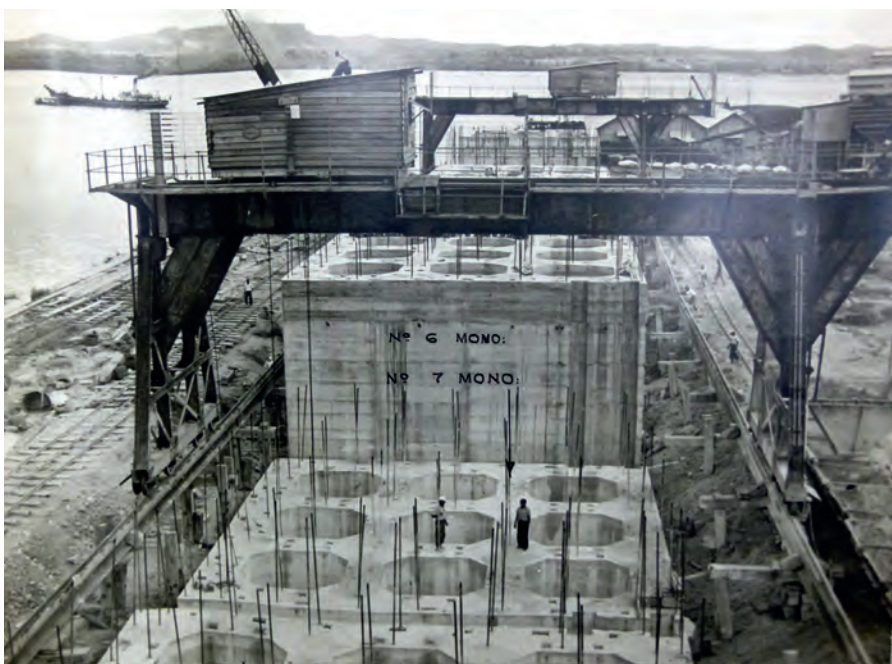
The wharf walls contract specified a completely different method of building the walls, using concrete 'Monolith blocks'. The Admiralty might have taken note of their successful use by Sir Robert McAlpine & Sons to construct the Southampton Docks Extension (Western Docks) 1927–34, which was a comparable sized undertaking.<sup>4</sup> Before work to build the wharf walls could begin the pitched slopes had to be removed, starting with the covering of large boulders and removal of soil etc. Dredging was also required and as provided in the contract TJ&R Ltd took over the Admiralty



dredger *Foremost*. The contract included work to construct foundations for the Boat House and a below ground 'subway' for waterborne access of small boats. The Boat House was mid-point on the North Wall, where the two methods of wall construction met.

Unfortunately, the drawings issued with the tender documents do not seem to have survived, but from comparison of photographs the monoliths appear identical to those at Southampton, that were 45ft square and had nine 10ft wide open-bottomed octagonal wells. Individually cast interlocking concrete blocks were lifted into position to make up each 'layer' of the monolith in situ. Excavation of the ground below was achieved by crane grab, through the inside of the monolith wells, the sinking assisted as necessary by loading heavy weights on top. After the monolith reached the required depth the front three wells were left empty, the middle ones filled with 'selected fillings' (sand or similar?) and the rear wells filled with concrete. A six-inch facing of concrete was applied to the seaward side. A 'superstructure' (as the annotation on photographs describes it) was built of concrete blocks on top of the sunken monoliths, and incorporated a below-ground-level 'subway' or service

**North Wall looking east showing monoliths in various stages of construction. The building in the background with serrated roof edge is the Boat House at the mid-point of the North Wall, 11 October 1940. (Photo: TNA ADM195/118-A460.)**



**East Wall looking north, 15 February 1940. For scale note the two workmen standing on the monolith. The shore in the distance is the Johore mainland. (Photo: TNA ADM195/116-A38.)**

duct about 6ft high. It included large diameter water and bulk oil fuel pipelines serving dispense points on the wharves for replenishment of ships berthed alongside.

It is not known when exactly the wharf walls were completed. But by then the international situation had changed dramatically. There was war in Europe and it was no longer possible to send a powerful Royal Navy fleet to the Far East to deter Japan, for which eventuality the walls had been built. Following the fall of Singapore in February 1942 it was the Imperial Japanese Navy that became the beneficiary of the newly completed wharves. In the new order the Dockyard became No. 101 Kōsakubu (Repair Facility) Shōnan, as Singapore was henceforth to be known. Three and a half years later, following the Japanese surrender and return of British forces to Singapore, the destroyer HMS *Rotherham* was despatched to the naval base on 5 September 1945: Captain H. W. Biggs took the local surrender of the Japanese navy and assumed command of the base forthwith.

The subsequent history of the dockyard is beyond the scope of this article, but a brief mention of today's use of these wharves might be in order. While the terminology has changed, the East and South Walls have become the Port of Singapore Authority's 'Sembawang Wharves', used for commercial shipping. All of the North Wall (and the West Wall) are part of Sembcorp Marine's 'Admiralty Yard', better known by its former name of Sembawang Shipyard. The original 'conventional' construction Stores Wall, now known as the Sembawang Naval Wharves (Berths S5–S7), together with the associated fuel depot at Senoko two miles distant, continue to be managed by the UK MOD for visiting RN, RAN, RNZN and USN ships.

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  2. TNA ADM 214/38 Tender invitation and Conditions of Contract dated September 1937.
  3. TNA BT 103/179. This is a Board of Trade file relating to a possible Export Credit Guarantee and includes the Admiralty's letter of 7 February 1938.
  4. The author is grateful to Dave Marden for advice regarding the 'monolith' method of construction in his history *The Building of Southampton Docks* (The Derby Books Publishing Company Ltd, Derby 2012), now JMD Media – <https://www.jmdmedia.co.uk/>.
- TNA images courtesy of The National Archives, Kew.

**Bernard Mennell**

## A tale of two 'Sydneys': naval heritage in Western Australia

Australia possesses an extensive range of naval heritage resources. The British Empire heritage is central to this, particularly the naval facilities in Sydney harbour and later near Fremantle, and also Australian association with the Singapore base which infamously failed the country in 1942. Thereafter the US naval legacy becomes more prominent, as in the Battle of the Coral Sea off Queensland and in bases such as Exmouth in north Western Australia and, for submarines, Fremantle. However, from the World Wars and more recently, a national naval heritage has emerged around historic ships and their various 'footprints' ashore.

Western Australia has a particular profile within the national heritage. Undoubtedly this originates from WA's relative proximity to past European colonial interests, but it is a distinctive part of a national narrative today. Its recorded naval history begins with the first exploration of its coasts by seventeenth-century Dutch ships, of which the remnant of the *Batavia* is now in the Maritime Museum at Fremantle. Dutch primacy is no doubt useful to a society that is now committed to a multicultural and multiracial identity. Australia's most emotive naval heritage symbols were, however, in the British Imperial service – but their exploits in defending the British Indian Ocean and beyond are now part of the national coming of age. Among them is a recent focus of centenary commemoration: the assembly of the ANZAC convoy, bound famously for Gallipoli, in King George Sound outside Albany, in the south of Western Australia.

The leading icons of this naval heritage are the two HMAS *Sydneys* of the two world wars. Without

question, they are central to the development of Australian national identity; part of the pantheon honoured by the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. Their memory also has a particular and well-documented association with their namesake city. However, the location of their most famous actions – and of vital parts of their wartime service – also gives them a particular Western Australian significance. This is what concerns the present article; visitors to Perth and elsewhere in the state might be interested in the following account.

The first HMAS *Sydney* was a light cruiser in the First World War, engaged initially in Indian Ocean defence, including against German commerce raiders. It was in this capacity that it intercepted the SMS *Emden* in 1914 at the Cocos Islands, 1500 km off Western Australia. The *Emden*'s crew had earlier occupied the islands and severed the cable and wireless telegraphy links through the Cocos from Asia to Australia; however, 'Sydney I' sank the German ship and reasserted British Imperial control and communications. This decisive victory in the first ever Australian naval battle was particularly remembered at its centennial by a nationally assisted 2014–15 exhibition at the Western Australian Maritime Museum in Fremantle; pointedly entitled 'The Last Gentlemen of War', it recorded the chivalrous behaviour of the Australian and German captains and indeed the camaraderie between the crews. Having so conspicuously contributed to an Australian naval tradition and done so in WA's bailiwick, 'Sydney I' went on to further wartime exploits. These were primarily in the Atlantic theatre, however, including pioneer launching of aircraft.

The relevance of the first *Sydney* to Western Australia is especially poignant since she was escorting the first ANZAC convoy from Albany, against the threat of German raiders, when the *Emden* action occurred. The memorial overlooking Albany's King George Sound is, however, focused on the army, and Gallipoli as the ANZACs' most infamous destination, rather than upon the ships that protected their passage to the Middle East; and the well-documented and elaborate centennial initiatives and commemorations in Albany were similarly centred upon the larger military story. 'Sydney I' was ultimately broken up in the interwar period at Cockatoo Island in Sydney harbour, and it is not surprising that the main memorial to her was erected there in what had been her namesake city as well as the pragmatic site of her remains: her foremast was re-erected in her honour at Bradley's Head in Sydney harbour, where it was rededicated in 1964 to all Royal Australian Navy losses as the centrepiece of what has become the country's premier naval memorial complex. Part of her bow was set into the Sydney harbour seawall, and her topmast was re-erected at the Jervis Bay naval base farther south. Mementoes of the ship were distributed around Australia, however, honouring her national heritage significance. Two of her six-inch guns were taken to Western Australia, serving military needs on Rottnest Island off Fremantle until 1944; in due course, following refurbishment, one was relocated outside the Army Museum of Western Australia in Fremantle.

The first *Sydney*'s heritage is one of national pride unencumbered by the trauma of loss, aside from the wider naval memorial association above. Other than that, there would appear to be no compelling reason to sacralize any particular site as a place of pilgrimage and catharsis specifically in her memory. The memory of her successor, however, is quite another matter.

The second HMAS *Sydney* was a light cruiser of the Second World War. She carried the ship's bell of her famous forebear, but ultimately it did not bring her good luck in the fortunes of war. She performed distinguished service in the Mediterranean theatre early in the war, including the legendary Malta convoys and involving successful actions against the Italian navy. She then returned to patrol and convoy escort duties in Western Australia, and between it and Southeast Asia, including leading an ANZAC convoy from Albany like her predecessor. In this role, again like her predecessor, she fought a nominally successful action against a German commerce raider, but only at the cost of mutual destruction. She intercepted the HSK *Kormoran*, an auxiliary cruiser posing as a Dutch merchant vessel, in November 1941, again off the coast of Western Australia. The *Kormoran* was sunk in the action, her survivors mostly finding their way to Carnarvon, WA, but 'Sydney II' drifted away on fire and was never seen again. This constituted the greatest single Australian maritime loss of life of the Second World War. There were no survivors and her precise end was unknown until undersea exploration in 2008 by the volunteer Finding Sydney Foundation revealed her remains some 200 km off the coast of WA. While a national tragedy, keenly felt in faraway Sydney, it fell to Western Australia to bear the immediate pain – particularly of no survivors other than enemy sailors – and in due course to erect the principal memorial.



Various memorials were erected around Australia, including of course in Sydney. In Western Australia, on the fiftieth anniversary of the ship's loss, in 1991, a wall of remembrance was added to the war memorial in Carnarvon, somewhere offshore from which she was presumed to have sunk. In 2001 an HMAS Sydney Memorial Drive was also constructed there, with 645 plaques and palms representing each of the lives lost.

The ship had however visited Geraldton, farther south and halfway up the coast of Western Australia. It ultimately fell to local agencies there, initiated by the Rotary Club and including the Batavia Coast Maritime Heritage Association, to erect the principal memorial to the second HMAS *Sydney*. It was dedicated in 2001 by the Governor of Western Australia at the sixtieth anniversary of the ship's loss, and it was recognized by the Australian government as of national significance. It stands on a hill overlooking the city centre, and more importantly commanding a wide view of the Indian Ocean. The symbolism of the view is captured in the sculpture of a woman who waits in vain for the return of a loved one, this being one of many emotive aspects of the memorial structures, which include an engraved wall portraying the story of 'Sydney II', photo images and the intended symbolism of the memorial. This Wall of Remembrance also lists the names of those lost. The central sanctuary is crowned by a dome of linked seagulls, each representing the soul of one of the 645 men; the podium beneath contains an Eternal Flame, lit from the War Memorial in Perth, and is composed of WA granite surrounding a ship's propeller upon which wreaths may be laid; a stele expresses the ship's prow and is visible from afar; and the Waiting Woman completes the original memorial. The nearby Pool of Remembrance was the final element, 'Closing the Circle' of life and death, added at the seventieth anniversary to commemorate the finding of the ship in 2008 and indicate its precise location.

**The HMAS Sydney II Memorial, Geraldton, Western Australia.**

**Below left: Main approach to the Sanctuary. Below right: Sanctuary, Podium and Stele.**

**Bottom left: The Waiting Woman; Pool of Remembrance at left. Bottom right: Pool of Remembrance, showing ship's location.**



The architectural symbolism and embodied texts are complemented by a daily guided tour offered by military veterans. It is designed and presented as a National Memorial, as its Australian flags assert; however its elements and its instigation particularly reflect WA and local organizations. Moreover the national significance of the memorial is such that it creates a focus for regional and local tourism benefits, in an otherwise pleasant but unremarkable Western Australian provincial city. Geraldton ('Gerro') is a logical stopover on the national northern 'grey nomad' circuit, and can expect to attract those older citizens to war heritage assets. It is less likely to attract a large international audience, however, motivating this article in *Dockyards*.

Following the discovery of the wrecks, both 'Sydney II' and the *Kormoran* were placed on the Australian National Heritage List in 2011. A later expedition was undertaken in 2015 to investigate them more closely. This was supported by the Australian and German governments, but it was primarily a Western Australian undertaking by Curtin University and the WA Museum, both based in Perth. This reflection, and further creation, of Australian naval heritage thereby acquired a stronger Western Australian resonance. The grave of 'Sydney II' has been marked by a memorial to its war dead, though the depth of water protecting the site from vandals will presumably negate innocent visitation as well.

In conclusion, we might reflect on where you can best anchor memorials to naval triumphs and tragedies on land. The home ports of ships and crews may be logical locations, particularly where the memorial is generalized beyond a single incident. This applies to the Royal Navy memorials, of which Portsmouth's on Southsea Common will be well known to many readers of *Dockyards*. Likewise it applies to the U-Boat memorial in Kiel, Germany; to the memorial to the losses of the Spanish–American War (1898) outside the naval base in Cartagena, Spain; and among others, as noted above, to Bradley's Head in Sydney. Great events which occurred just offshore can be readily memorialized in view of the site, permitting the viewer to imaginatively populate the empty space with the ghosts of the past. So it is by Placentia Bay, Newfoundland, where the observer may visualize HMS *Prince of Wales*, with Churchill and Roosevelt deliberating the Atlantic Charter in 1941. So also at Marazion in Cornwall, where a memorial to HMS *Warspite* reconjures images of that famous battleship of two world wars, after it ran aground offshore on its passage to the breaker's yard. And so it might be at King George Sound by Albany in Western Australia, where 'Sydney I' helped marshal the first ANZAC convoy. But what of actions, victories and losses far offshore, especially in sites unknown, as in the fate of 'Sydney II'? Their memorials might be located in home ports, nearest (presumed) land locations, or perhaps 'market' locations – where the greatest number of visitors are expected to see them. Who sponsors such memorials, and when they do so, are no doubt telling considerations.

The 'tale of two Sydneys', their resonance with Western Australia, and the presences and absences of their heritage recognitions there and elsewhere, might perhaps spark a wider train of thought into how and where naval encounters, locationally so enigmatic, have been and might best be memorialized.

Addendum: Michael Gregg of the WA Museum has kindly clarified that both 'Sydneys' have permanent displays at the Maritime Museum in Fremantle, and 'Sydney I' also at the National ANZAC Centre in Albany and in a joint Centennial memorial with Emden in the Cocos Islands.

## References:

Relevant websites include the following:

[www.awm.gov.au/collection/U50821](http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/U50821)

[www.hmassydneymemorialgeraldton.com](http://www.hmassydneymemorialgeraldton.com).

[www.navy.gov.au/hmas-sydney-i](http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-sydney-i); also ii

wikipedia *various*.

Professor Roy Jones of Curtin University, Perth, kindly provided WA naval heritage insights.

**John Tunbridge**

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## Floating Docks – A Useful Resource

Admiralty Floating Docks performed a useful function in supplementing dockyard facilities both in the UK and abroad. One of the first was a wooden one deployed at Deptford in the 1780s and the last one left Royal Navy service in 1998. They were built with a number of different purposes in mind and were of varying sizes. The benefits of floating and graving docks depended on a number of factors.

The Admiralty generally preferred to equip its dockyards with graving docks. These had the advantage of longer life, less maintenance and more space alongside for siting workshops; the relative cost depended on site conditions. Floating docks were quicker to build, often cheaper and could be moved to alternative sites . . . they could utilise narrow frontage sites and might be the only solution where foundations were unsuitable for graving docks. They could cope with ships longer than themselves and be trimmed to accommodate damaged ships. They were however less suitable for new building or long refits, they needed deep water and strong moorings and were more vulnerable to enemy attack . . . Admiralty docks were more expensive than equivalent commercial docks as they needed to be strengthened both for concentrated weights and for ocean towing to be largely independent of shore supplies of power. They needed craneage, workshops and accommodation for repair crews . . .\*

Admiralty Floating Dock 4 ('AFD4'), one of the largest floating docks, is shown in these pictures in an unusual scenario. She had been acquired in July 1946 by shipbreaker Metal Industries from the Admiralty for breaking up the German battlecruiser *Derfflinger*. The German ship is shown being floated into AFD4 for this purpose on 12 October 1946 at the Tail of the Bank.

Former SMS *Derfflinger* was a German battle cruiser, commissioned in 1914 and fighting valiantly at the battles of Dogger Bank and Jutland. She was hit by thirty-one shells at Jutland and earned the nickname 'Iron Dog'. She surrendered in 1918 and was at Scapa Flow on 21 June 1919 when, like the rest of the interned High Seas Fleet, she was scuttled, sinking at 14:45. In 1939, she was one of the last German ships to be salvaged, too late for her to be broken up prior to the war. Her salvage was tricky as she was sunk at twice the depth of other ships so the salvage crew could only work a one-hour shift rather than the normal eight due to water pressure. *Derfflinger* spent the whole of the war floating upside down at Scapa Flow behind Risa Island, on a bed of compressed air. Given the

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\* Dr Ian Buxton, 'Admiralty Floating Docks (Part 1)', *Warships* no. 160 (May 2009). An excellent article. Buxton's as yet unpublished history of Faslane has also been a useful source on the docking noted above.





wartime shortage of steel scrap, it was strange she was not demolished until 1946 and the image shows that even her propellers had not been removed for scrap. Another curious feature of her design is the bow torpedo tube, unusual as battlecruisers were built for speed and this may have reduced this. In 1946 she was towed from Scapa by six tugs for break up in AFD4 at Faslane, the demolition was complete by May 1948. Metal Industries had taken on a lease of Faslane on 15 August 1946. Previously Metal Industries had leased dry docks at Rosyth to break up salvaged German ships but these were no longer available, hence the purchase and use of AFD4.

AFD4 had an even more remarkable and long history. Built by Swan Hunter and Wigham Richardson at Wallsend and completed in June 1912, she could lift 33,000 tons and was 680 foot long, costing £271,060. Initially she was based at Sheerness (nicknamed there 'Medway Dock') where she initially undertook a number of trial lifts such as the battlecruiser *Lion* on 2 October 1912. In 1915 she was moved to the Jarrow Slake on the Tyne in 1915, where inter alia she could undertake dockings of ships based at Scapa Flow, there being no commercial docks on the east coast capable of taking the latest battleships. Spells at Portland (from 1923) and Devonport (1925) followed. At the latter she was used for the reconstruction of the battleship HMS *Valiant* in 1938. She was then located on the Clyde from 1941 before being bought by Metal Industries in 1946. Her later career was remarkable. Once demolition of *Derfflinger* was completed she was immediately in May 1948 sold to Rotterdam to becoming the Dock No. 8 there until 1984 before spells in Bergen and finally Aagotnes in West Norway where she suddenly sank as recently as November 2018, just as a fishery vessel *Norwegian Gannet* was about to dock.

**Richard Holme**

## **The Triangle Girls of Portsmouth Dockyard in the First World War**

**'Women never did anything like that before'.**

A unique album survives of fifty photographs of women at work at heavy industrial jobs in Portsmouth Dockyard in the First World War. The huge machines they worked at often dwarf the women operating them. The album is in the collection of the Portsmouth Royal Dockyard Historical Trust.

As the women – known as the Triangle Girls because of the badge they wore 'On War Service' – concentrate on their jobs without looking at the photographer, it's possible their dockyard boss ordered this special record of the 1,750 women doing men's work for the first time. By 1918 there were also 1,148 Wrens working in the yard.

The Imperial War Museum knows of no other album focused on women's work on a single industrial site. Local photographer Stephen Cribb may have been commissioned to make this celebration of women's contribution to the war effort, because so many of the images are similar to those in *Portsmouth in the Great War*, published in 1919.

### **What work did they do?**

The fifty plates in the Portsmouth album show, on the one hand, lighter tasks such as repairing and painting small boats and liferafts, making mattresses, mixing paint, painting lifebelts and sewing canvas, repairing Carley floats and Berthon boats, upholstering, mending overalls, French polishing and repairing windows. But on the other, far more illustrations are of much heavier work. The list at the front of the album describes what women are doing in each picture and the locations: Boat House, Test House, Joiners' Shop, Block Mills, Hosemakers' Shop, Nos. 1 and 3 Shipbuilding Shops, Smithery Fitting Shop, No. 2 Shipfitting Shop, Paint Shop, Plumbers' Shop, Gunnery Pattern Shop and Saw Mills.

### **Recording their memories**

In 1982 when the dockyard was downgraded to a fleet maintenance and repair base, I was asked to be secretary to the group of skilled craftsmen who founded the Portsmouth Royal Dockyard Historical Society to save the special documents, tools and equipment of the civilian workforce used by generations of local people to build, repair and equip the navy's ships. The Science Museum told us that the shipwrights' tool collection was the finest in the country. Later the society became a trust, and its millions of fascinating items are now safely stored in Storehouse 10 and other locations in the dockyard.

As the change of the yard's status and the cuts to the workforce were such a profound loss to the members of the Society I decided to record a wide range of the specialized skilled trades in the yard. These recordings are available to listen to in the Portsmouth History Library. Later I wanted to find women who might still be alive who had worked in the yard in the Great War. To my astonishment, four responded to my letter to the *News*.

What they told me brought alive the pictures, but also how much they had suffered to get these jobs. War widows and those with relatives in the yard had the first choice of dockyard jobs. Remember there were no pensions or social security then! By the time I recorded them they were in their late 80s and 90s. They had extraordinary stories to tell.

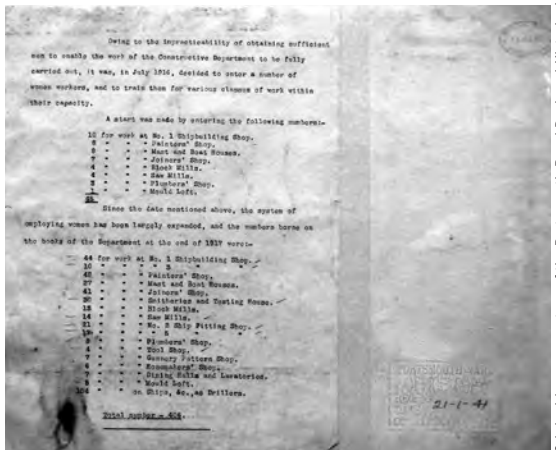
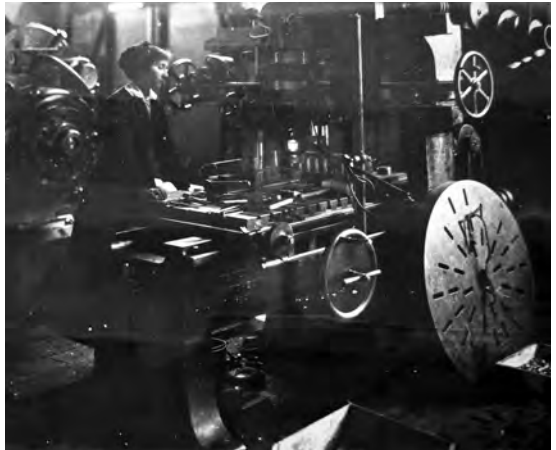
Beatrice Hobby, born in 1891, married very young but lost her first husband Bill Penfold – gassed in the trenches, leaving her a widow with a six-week-old baby, so she had to work to support him. With experience of cardboard-box assembly at Leatham's Corset Factory from the age of thirteen when she left school, she was used to manual work.

She had to go home in her lunch break on the tram or bus to bring her right round the dockyard wall to her mother's house in Duke Street to feed her baby, have her dinner and then get all the way back via the Hard to Block Mills: 'Quite a rush!'

Beatrice was ninety-three when I interviewed her. I took a pulley block with me, and the memory of how she shaped it came back to her as she turned it over in her hands. She worked on the band-saw. There were accidents. A machine took the top of a girl's finger off. 'There was a *lignum vitae* wood we used to use. I knew one man, Ed Piercy, a piece flew out and went into his eye. Very dangerous work it was.' Despite the dust: 'Well, never had a mask on.' Nor, despite the noise, were their ears protected.

Maudie Ralph's grandfather, father and brothers worked in the yard. She was born Maud Emily Bower on 20 March 1890. Her husband who was in the Grenadier Guards was posted missing, though his death was not confirmed for seven long months, despite her receiving a widow's pension as soon as he was missing. She had two little girls to support, and she 'had to do something', so she asked to go into the dockyard. She had made corsets when she was a single girl. She supposed that the management knew she had relatives there.

The work she was first offered did not interest her. When she was asked, 'Where would you care to go? I said Afloat!' The doctor tried to dissuade her. She was asked, 'How are your legs?' They asked her if she knew what sailors were like. "'I do,'" I said. "My husband and my brothers . . ."' She had



Original images courtesy of the Portsmouth Royal Dockyard Historical Trust, and Martin Marks OBE for photographing them for reproduction.



six brothers, and enjoyed her time on ships, drilling hammock hooks for sailors on HMS *Edinburgh Castle* and the *Resolution*.

Mrs Valentine Stubbs who was born in 1893 was recorded in the video made by Kathy Baker and Jan Dennis in 1986, but not on audiotape. Her father who was in the navy went down on board HMS *Victoria* in 1893. She left school at fourteen and worked in a corset factory until she was nearly fifteen, then worked for two years in the dockyard from November 1916 to March 1919.

She did various jobs including working on a boring machine powered by steam power, winding the wires round hoses, and welding as an oxyacetylene operator, a dirty but interesting job which was new technology then. Changing the carbide supply was a stinking task. She describes the flame coming out of the gun, with which she had to weld all the way down the seam and join it together.

At first, perhaps because of resentment at this 'dilution' of dockyard work, the women had to take considerable abuse from men: taunts and hustling and pushing on their way into work. One woman said that it was as well to carry an umbrella with you on the trams 'to give as good as you got'. Widow Maudie Ralph had a happier experience: 'They used to laugh at me because I was only little. I was only short but I was all there, I ought to tell you . . . They used to make me laugh. A young apprentice chap used to teach me the songs . . .'

### **How will these records be used?**

My research on the album and other photographic records of women's work in naval bases in the First World War is to be published in the Naval Dockyards Society's *Transactions* series in June. The Portsmouth Royal Dockyard Historical Trust has a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to research the Portsmouth's women's work and their lives further. They will use the trust's extensive employment records and my research to develop educational materials for schools, in celebration of the key role played by generations of civilians employed in the dockyard who built, repaired, and supplied the ships of the Royal Navy.

**Celia Clark**

## **Meet the Committee – David Jenkins, Treasurer**

I was born in Cardiff. My great-grandfather was a ship's master and my grandfather was a clerk in Cardiff Docks. When I was about two the family moved to Emsworth, a few miles down the road from Portsmouth, and my earliest memories are of the sea. My parents were keen sailors and most weekends in the summer I was put in a life jacket and popped into a boat we called *Tarka*, which we sailed all over Chichester Harbour as part of a sailing club. It was a fascinating boat, designed in World War Two to be dropped from the underside of a Short Sunderland flying boat to help downed pilots in the English Channel. It was very tough and with the addition of a mast and trapeze twelve people could sail in it. When not sailing, every year we would go to the Navy Day in Portsmouth Dockyard and I have a distinct memory of the highlight of one of those days being HMS *Victory* firing some cannons. We went over HMS *Victory* so often that my little brother would correct the guides if they got anything wrong. By the time I left university I was a fairly proficient dinghy racer. My first (and only) teaching post was with Bedford Modern School, where I spent thirty-nine happy years. Soon after I arrived I was asked to join the Combined Cadet Force, where my experience of sailing was welcomed and I became a member of the RN section. I became a Dinghy Instructor, Senior Instructor, Advanced Instructor, Power Boat Handler and Coastal Skipper and spent many years taking and instructing sailing and yachting with the Combined Cadets and the Sea Cadets in a variety of naval bases from HMS *Neptune* to RNAS Culdrose, sailing one of their yachts out of Falmouth. One of my Junior Officers was David Davies, who, when Chairman of the Society, eventually asked me to join the NDS as the Treasurer.

When I became Treasurer twelve years ago most payments were by cheque but today, they are becoming increasingly rare. This year about 15% of the payments received have been cheques. Cheques do present some issues. Firstly, there is an issue of convenience for members. You can pay by BACS, Standing Order or PayPal without leaving home. There is no need to purchase stamps or envelopes and no need to walk to a post box. Secondly, there is the issue of security. With the best

will in the world items do get lost in the post. Thirdly there is an audit issue. I am very conscious that I am handling your money and that I need to be very careful with it. If you pay electronically then your name and the amount you have paid to the NDS is printed on the bank statement or PayPal statement. Therefore, every transaction made by BACS or standing order or PayPal automatically comes with a full audit trail making it very easy for me to keep track of all the money which we receive and spend and to account for that money to our accounts examiner and to the committee.

Of course, I realize that some people do not have access to the Internet but if you currently pay your subs by cheque or pay for an event or one of our publications using a cheque please will you consider changing to Bacs or PayPal or use the Standing Orders that our membership secretary, Judith Webberley, sends out. If you would prefer to continue using cheques then of course we will continue to accept them. In order to pay by BACS all you need to do is log into your bank account on the Internet and send a payment to Naval Dockyards Society. The sort code is 60-09-16. The account number is 51358719.

To pay by PayPal you need a PayPal account. You log into it and send a payment to **ndstreasurer@hotmail.co.uk**. Within a minute or so I get an email telling me that you have paid and how much you have paid. In both cases if you accidentally pay too much money I can have a refund in your account on the same day.

Thank you for reading this. The picture shows me on duty with the navy at HMS *Osprey* about twenty years ago!



**David Jenkins**

## Call for papers

**Conference: Saturday 4 April 2020**

**National Maritime Museum, Greenwich**

**Where Empires Collide: Dockyards and Naval Bases in and Around the Indian Ocean**

This one-day conference will examine the role of naval bases and other naval support facilities in the Indian Ocean and its inlets, the Red Sea and Persian Gulf. Some suggested themes follow but applications are invited on new research or a new interpretation of any related topic.

Were bases built to defend colonies, to control colonies, or to act as springboards for attacking the enemy? Were they for the suppression of local forces, the engagement of opposing commercial companies in the days of the EIC etc or were they adjusts to the European struggles? How useful were these bases in the 17th to the 20th centuries? What facilities existed and how were they resourced? What were the main influences on ship construction and the design of naval facilities?

How did national bases differ? How developed were they? How were they organized? What was the financial burden to the states that established them? How dependent upon their hinterland were they? To what extent did they develop their own operating practices? How have their heritage opportunities been developed?

In no way is it intended to restrict this to the colonizing powers of France, Great Britain, Denmark, Portugal and the Netherlands, although it is expected that several presentations will be given on the facilities that they created, fully recognising the role of the British East India Company, Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (the Dutch United East India



**Omani sailors in Portsmouth, early nineteenth century (author's collection).**

Company), Compagnie française pour le commerce des Indes orientales (the French East India Company) and the Portuguese Estado. However, it is hoped that submissions will also cover naval facilities established by Persia, Oman, the Ottoman Empire, Qawāsim, and the independent naval states of India including the Maratha and Mughal Empires.

If your proposal is accepted, the NDS will pay standard UK travel expenses (not international flights), your conference fee and lunch, publish it in our Transactions and give you a complimentary copy. Your talk will be 20–40 minutes. The published paper will be 6–10K words long, required three months after the Conference for editing. Please send your title and 300-word synopsis (and any queries) by 30 October 2019 to: Dr Philip MacDougall, [philip.macdougall@btinternet.com](mailto:philip.macdougall@btinternet.com)

### **DATES FOR THE DIARY**

#### **4 April 2020**

Annual Conference at Greenwich – Where Empires Collide (see call for papers above)

#### **May 2020**

Possible behind the scenes tour of Sheerness

#### **2021 (date to be agreed)**

Portsmouth based international conference – ‘Building A Sailing Ship’ as working title.

### **‘All the world in 1,019 boxes’: ADM 106 and the Navy Board Project**

An event to celebrate the completion of the volunteer Project to list ADM 106 will take place in The National Archives, Kew.

Speakers will demonstrate and reflect upon the value of this unique repository of Navy Board Miscellaneous In-letters dating from 1673 to 1789 (318,459 records and around half a million letters). It comprises correspondence to the Navy Board from naval captains and dockyard commissioners, officers, contractors and workers from around the world.

The project, started by Sue Lumas in 1998 and supported by the Naval Dockyards Society since 1999, foliated letters from class number ADM 106, up to twenty volunteers from the Friends of the National Archives listing and indexing their contents. These were uploaded onto an online database which researchers access by inputting keywords into The National Archives’ Discovery catalogue <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>. The project was completed on 28 March 2019.

Also available on Discovery are ADM 354 and ADM 359, created class numbers relating to catalogued Navy Board Bound Out-letters to the Admiralty at the **National Maritime Museum: The Caird Library, Manuscripts Section**, which complement the Kew letters. The original documents are at the Caird Library and not available at The National Archives. These were listed by a parallel volunteer project of the Naval Dockyards Society, Friends of the National Archives and Friends of the National Maritime Museum, coordinated by Sue Lumas.

ADM 354 concerns ADM B, catalogued Navy Board Unbound Out-letters 1738–1809. ADM 359 concerns ADM BP, catalogued Navy Board Unbound Out-letters 1780–1832.

This event will celebrate and recognise the work of Sue Lumas and the volunteers of the Friends of the National Archives and the Friends of the National Maritime Museum. See NDS website, News, <https://navaldockyards.org/news/> and scroll down to Navy Board Project at The National Archives for an example of its use. Further details and prices will be announced on the website.

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