

The Naval Dockyards Society

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1 Naval Bases of Sweden – a Strategic Choice

In 2022, the Swedish Navy celebrates its 500th birthday. From its inception, it was based in the capital, Stockholm, where also its main shipyard was located from 1618. Stockholm had a central position in the old Sweden but the navigation from Stockholm to the open sea was long and difficult for the sailing ships of the day and was also frozen longer than the bases of Sweden's main rival, Denmark. During the 17th century Sweden became a great power and, from 1658, possessor of the southern parts of the Scandinavian peninsula and master of most of the Baltic coastline. A base located in southern Sweden was needed and, in 1680, Karlskrona was founded.

Since the 17th century, there has also been a military organisation in the present city of Gothenburg, the most important commercial port of Sweden, but with a less important naval role than Stockholm and Karlskrona. This paper will analyse the shift in strategic emphasis between Stockholm and Karlskrona as a function of geopolitical and technological developments, and why the western façade of Sweden has not been given priority. It will also discuss how a unique base system developed during the 20th century in the archipelagos covering most of Sweden's coastline.

Captain Lars Wedin, Royal Swedish Navy (retd), was commissioned in the Navy in 1969. A surface officer, he served on destroyers and fast-patrol boats and commanded several times at sea. He is a graduate from the Swedish and French naval war colleges. Wedin later served as a military advisor in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and as Chief of Concepts Branch in the EU Military Staff. Since retiring in 2004, he has worked as an independent researcher specialising in general and maritime strategy. He has written several books, among them Maritime Strategies for the 21st Century. The Contribution by Admiral Castex (Paris 2016) and From Sun Tzu to Hyperwar. A Strategic Encyclopaedia (Stockholm 2019). Wedin is a member of the Royal Swedish Society of Naval Sciences, the Royal Academy of War Sciences, and an associate member of the French Académie de marine.

2 Nordstiernen (1703-1785) – The Danish Navy's Grand Old Lady

In 1715, during the Great Northern War, the Danish Navy captured the Swedish 70-gun ship, *Nordstjärnan*. Renamed *Nordstiernen*, she was already over a decade old when she was captured and then served for an unprecedented seventy years in Danish service. *Nordstiernen* was built in Karlskrona, a Swedish dockyard established to address the Danish enemies, while the dockyard in Stockholm could keep an eye on the Russians. She later underwent a rebuild in Copenhagen, the only Danish dockyard, which was strategically placed by the entrance to the Baltic.

During her rebuild in 1746, *Nordstiernen* was thoroughly measured and a ship plan produced: aspects of her design served as inspiration for Danish 50- and 60-gun ships in the 1750s, and thus she is an example of technology transfer in the Danish navy in the eighteenth century. Through comparative analyses of Danish ship plans from this period, certain aspects of *Nordstiernen*'s design are revealed. That the prize served in the Danish navy for seven decades

surely was a signal to the Swedish – as well as reminding the Danes of their victory in 1715, and her long life has puzzled naval historians and maritime archaeologists. This paper will argue that she deserves the title of ‘the Danish Navy’s Grand Old Lady’.

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3 The Great Yarmouth Naval Support Base and the Baltic Campaigns of 1801 and 1807 to 1814

In 1793 a significant naval support base was established at Great Yarmouth to sustain the naval cruisers pursuing the war on trade in the North Sea and Baltic. It included naval, ordnance, and victualling stores, facilities for the care of the sick and wounded, accommodation for prisoners of war and a rendezvous for raising seamen. With the Dutch entering the war on the side of the French in 1795 a naval squadron was based in the Yarmouth Roads. After Camperdown, in 1797, the service provision at Yarmouth was greatly improved thereby enabling the Roads to act as the assembly point in 1801 for Hyde Parker/Nelson's fleet, which was tasked with breaking up the Baltic based League of Armed Neutrality.

During the peace of 1802/3 the base was dismantled, but when hostilities resumed it was recommissioned and in 1807 the Treaty of Tilsit brought the Baltic back into focus as a major theatre of war, and the facilities at Yarmouth were greatly augmented. Gambier's fleet assembled there before the assault on Copenhagen that year and the warships of Saumarez were serviced there from 1808. The paper will explore the role and development of the Yarmouth Naval Support Base with emphasis on its involvement in the Baltic campaigns.

David Higgins was born and educated in great Yarmouth before graduating in town and country planning at Nottingham Trent. After working in the Midlands he was for many years Assistant Borough Planning Officer at King's Lynn and West Norfolk before becoming the Director of the town's building preservation trust. Having had an interest in the past from an early age he has written a number of books, mainly on the subjects of maritime history and the historic built environment. In relation to these works he has appeared on national and local television and radio. He has also contributed articles to newspapers, magazines and learned journals. His latest book, Springboard to Victory, highlights the role of Great Yarmouth in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.

4 Suomenlinna – a New Community Enjoying a Long Term, Sustainable Reuse

Situated on a group of islands off Helsinki, Suomenlinna dockyard has been the property of three sovereign states. In the late 18th century Sweden constructed Sveaborg as a maritime fortress and base for their Archipelago Fleet. From the early C19 to the early C20, then known as Viapori, it was part of Russia, along with the rest of Finland, and was a lively garrison town. After Finland gained her independence, Suomenlinna became home to a coastal artillery regiment, a submarine base and the Valmet shipyard.

In 1973 the fortress was handed over to the civilian Governing Body of Suomenlinna, which manages the defence heritage, covering more than 200 buildings (many of which are still in

everyday use) and over 80 hectares of land on seven islands. The 18th-century dry dock on Susisaari island is still used as a winter storage and repair facility for historic wooden sailing vessels. Museums there tell the story of the history of the fortress and its military tradition. One of the most important cultural heritage sites in Finland, Suomenlinna is an exemplar of state-owned restoration, also impressive for the creation of a new community and district of the city.

In 2008 Dr Celia Clark, of the Naval Dockyards Society was invited to speak about Vintage Ports: a Future for Historic Dockyards around the World at the Suomenlinna Dockyard In the Future? Learning From Each Other's Experience Round Table organised by the Governing Body of Suomenlinna which was given responsibility for this group of naval and fortress islands in 1973. Staying with Deane in a converted barrack block, she learnt much about the achievements of this government appointed body, responsible for over 200 buildings including the historic dry dock. Suomenlinna is now a new district of Helsinki with over 800 residents and 350 permanent jobs.

5 Kronstadt: Peter the Great's Dockyard

In 1703-4, during the Great Northern War, Russia regained from Sweden land at the head of the Gulf of Finland. Here Peter the Great established St Petersburg, in part fulfilment of his vision to make Russia more Europe facing. He took great interest in naval affairs and shipbuilding, and during his Grand Embassy tour of Europe he worked incognito for four months as an apprentice shipwright in the shipyard of the Dutch East Asiatic Company, and at Deptford he studied ship design.

To guard the approaches to St Petersburg he fortified Kotlin Island which twice stood up to Swedish squadrons. There he founded a dockyard and naval base, Kronstadt, and embarked on the construction of a dry dock. Catherine the Great complemented this with a circular canal and a range of workshops, a ropery, sail lofts and other dockyard facilities. In the second half of the nineteenth century the dockyard was greatly extended to serve the new steam navy. Kronstadt also became famous for its part in the 1917 revolution and the 1921 rebellion against the Bolshevik regime. This paper explores these developments within the context of the place of Russia as the new dominant power in the Baltic.

Dr Paul Brown is Secretary of the Naval Dockyards Society. He was formerly a lecturer and dean of the Business School at Northampton University and its predecessor organisations. He now devotes time to naval history and dockyards research, and has published six books on these subjects including, recently, The Portsmouth Dockyard Story and Abandon Ship – the Real Story of the Sinkings in the Falklands War.

6 The British Navy Role in the Baltic States' War of Liberation (1918-1919)

At the end of the First World War, the situation in the Baltic States was chaotic. Though they had been granted nominal independence by the treaty of Brest -Litovsk after the fall of the Russian empire in 1917, Lenin declared that the Baltic Sea had to remain Russian and unleashed his forces across the region. However, the German garrisons held many of the major cities, few of them inclined to obey their government's order to return home. In Latvia and Estonia, White Russian forces were gathering, bent on retaking the Bolshevik stronghold of Petrograd and rebuilding the Russian Empire. The British government was uncertain how to handle the situation but agreed with the principle of supporting the newborn states. Spurred by First Sea Lord, Admiral Rosslyn Wemyss, on 22 November 1918 the British Sixth Light Cruiser Squadron- five light cruisers and

nine destroyers plus supporting vessels- sailed for the Baltic under the command of Rear-Admiral Edwin Alexander-Sinclair. The paper sheds light on the significant role that the Royal Navy played alongside the allies in securing the independence and the establishment of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. It also highlights Rosyth Dockyard, founded in 1916 to become the key naval base on the North Sea.

Dr Fatima Chorfi is Assistant Professor in the Department of English, Faculty of Foreign Languages at the University of Mohamed Ben Ahmed, Oran 2, Algeria. Her PhD, British Civilization and History, University of Oran 2, Algeria, was awarded in 2017. She was awarded an M.A. in British Civilization and History, University of Senia, Oran, Algeria, in 2006. She has fourteen years experience of researching and teaching English and British Civilization and History at the University of Mohamed Ben Ahmed, Oran 2.

7 The Rebirth of Tallinn Seaplane Hangars

The roof of Tallinn seaplane hangars is among the first, remaining, and still preserved early large reinforced concrete shells in the world. The hangars were constructed in 1916 to 1917 by the Danish company Christiani & Nielsen for Tsarist Russian military purposes. The roof consists of three 36.4 m x 36.4 m spherical thin reinforced concrete shells and seven 36.4 m x 6.8 m short cylindrical shells attached to them. This extraordinary roof structure has remained largely unknown among construction historians, and only in recent decades has it received considerable attention.

In 2003, an idea and opportunity arose to develop the Seaplanes harbour and hangars into the Estonian Maritime Museum. From 2010 to 2012, the seaplane hangars were completely renovated. The high-quality conservation works received the Europa Nostra *Grand Prix* award in 2013. This paper presents an overview of design and construction process of the seaplane hangars and describes their complicated conservation process. It discusses the conservation techniques and methods used, and explains why and how such approaches were selected.

Dr. Maris Mändel is an architectural conservationist, with a special interest in 20th century constructions and construction materials. Oliver Orro is an art historian who has written on various topics of the history of Estonian architecture, mainly concentrating on the late 19th and early 20th century.