



DOCKYARDS

The Naval Dockyards Society

Exploring the civil branches of navies and their material culture

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navaldockyards.org



Northeast Martello Tower (1851), Pembroke Dock. Courtesy Rita Singer

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Notes from the Editor

As you know, our longstanding and attentive *Dockyards* editor Richard Holme retired in April this year. Despite appeals, no one new came forward, so yours truly took on this issue *pro tem*. I requested members to volunteer newsletter articles and dockyard pictures in July, and they started to trickle in, so this edition is thanks to you! Good news: Richard is coming back! He kindly offered to return in 2023, and we gratefully accepted. We look forward to normal service being resumed.

The obituary of Audrey Read (p. 35) gives rare insight into earlier times and Peter Webberley's death after a period of illness lost NDS a loyal conference delegate and founder member.

We also honour the superb seventeenth-century research of Frank L. Fox. He wrote the definitive 'The *London* of 1656: Her History and Armament', in Ray Riley, ed., *Pepys and Chips: Dockyards, Naval Administration & Warfare in the 17th Century, Transactions*, 8 (2012), 57–95. He also provided detailed provenance of missing *London* guns, enabling them to be legally recovered (Royal Armouries 17th Century Marine salvage project, <https://bit.ly/3NeQAhm>; 'The "London" Wreck – Excavation and Analysis of Material at Risk', 12 May 2020 <https://bit.ly/3gSqDYD>). We quote his obituary by Richard Endorsor:

Frank was a connoisseur of seventeenth-century maritime art and was a great friend of Michael Robinson [author of *The Paintings of the Willem Van De Veldes: Catalogue Raisonné*, 1990]. His encyclopaedic knowledge helped Michael identify many of the ships drawn by the Dutch artists, the Van de Veldes. He also advised some of the great auction houses when their work came up for sale. His research into naval history led him to Europe many times and resulted in his first book, *Great Ships: The battlefleet of King Charles II*, published in 1980. A book that has not dated, and is still the leading work on the subject. This was followed by *A Distant Storm* in 1996, a vivid account of the Four Days battle of 1666, a book republished in 2009 as *The Four Days' Battle of 1666*. Frank also published many articles in *The Mariner's Mirror* and refereed the works of others. His contribution to maritime history was appropriately rewarded by his election to a Fellowship of the Society of Nautical Research in 2017. (Richard Endorsor, 'Frank Fox (1945–2022)', *Mariner's Mirror*, August 2022, 260–1, <https://bit.ly/3SE4UKE>)

Articles describe the regretted proposed damage at Pembroke Dock by Adrian James, but Claire Nolan's article provides some consolation that stories can keep buildings alive. Charlie Fraser-Fleming's description of conservation of Sheerness Dockyard Church, my review of two successful Sheerness Dockyard projects, Beverley Ward's account of Isla del Rey's Europa Nostra Award and Celia Clark's encouraging report of the refurbishment of Portsmouth Dockyard No. 1 The Parade represent positive progress at some dockyards.

The long-planned Naval Dockyards Society 26th Annual Conference, 'Dockyards as nodes of naval architecture, maritime traditions and cultural heritage', 9–11 June 2022, delivered expectations in terms of content and interpretation, although sound was a problem. Varied tours complemented words and pictures.

Historical articles cover MoD small ship disposal in 1978 and dockyard connections to Mulberry Harbours, and finally, Mark Barton reviews a book on Arctic convoys.

Writing now as Chair, NDS activities in the past year have increased our membership to 175 (8 gained from the conference) and our work expands in many exciting and rewarding ways, but our committee is at its lowest level at seven officers, down from twelve in 2018. Recruiting Roger Bendall as Social Media and Marketing Officer has been a huge success. As well as redefining this role and taking on Richard's mantle as Facebook Manager, he proposes working with the NDS and the National Museum of Bermuda to deliver a Commemorative Exhibition in Bermuda and/or Portsmouth in June 2025. Marking the 75th anniversary of Bermuda Dockyard's closure, this will illustrate the life and times of the dockyard workers and their families.

However, no further volunteers have come forward to take on some committee roles. The Committee strives to deliver the Society's aims and tasks, and encourages innovative dockyard organizations, but existing officers are all carrying out two roles – we need new blood and new ideas! Any volunteers will be fully supported to induct them into their new roles.

- We have run no tours (Objective 4) since Buckler's Hard & the Beaulieu River in 2018 and Antigua in 2019 because there is no Tour Organizer.
- We need a support conference organizer.
- We need more personnel to respond to planning applications (Objective 8).
- We need volunteer Oral History Interviewers.
- The Bibliography has not been revised since 2015 and needs updating (Objective 9).
- The website needs regular new material and checking to keep it up to date.
- We lack competence to evaluate and set up a dockyards database, so we are not addressing Objective 11.

The NDS needs to recruit from those who are discovering us and our assets, for succession planning. While our officers are currently well and happy to carry on, anything could happen at any time, and we should be prepared. To act responsibly, we need to have people 'ready and trained' who have already proved their worth, from whom to select replacement officers.

The proposed NDS Associate Officer Scheme is intended to give potential candidates 'on-the-job' practice of officer tasks. SIGMA advises that 'This process will also drive delivery of objectives, save money, prevent time delays and improve existing processes.'

More students are now taking undergraduate and master's degrees in naval history, architecture, the built environment, business, and IT, and could provide fruitful ground for recruitment. We cannot offer funding as we are all volunteers, but the experience gained would improve skills (thus good for CVs) and build capacity in the NDS. We shall be helping to pass on our passion and commitment by giving less experienced but interested people a vital boost.

All will be given manageable tasks and trained. Please consider volunteering . . .

Ann Coats

Dockyards at Risk: Gibraltar and Deptford

Victualling Yard, Rosia Bay, Gibraltar planning tenders invited by 14 October 2022

Member Alan Nash alerted the committee to this invitation to tender for the Victualling Yard Storehouse: Victualling Yard, 36 Rosia Road, Gibraltar: <https://www.lps.gi/tenders/182>.

Extensive historical information conveys the site's unique character and significance to Gibraltar, British, naval and dockyard history. NDS supported the Rosia Bay community in their opposition to the demolition of the Rosia Bay Water Tanks in 2006, visiting, making media appeals, and writing letters to the Gibraltar Government and the British Governor and many other authorities, to no avail. The Tanks were demolished in August 2006 and a bland block of so-called affordable housing was built. A History of the Rosia Water Tanks, Gibraltar, was published in *Transactions 2, Gibraltar as a Naval Base and Dockyard* (NDS, 2006, £7.00 plus p&p). A video shows some of the Victualling Storehouse (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJPu9yI5akw>). Unfortunately, only the gateway is listed, which doubtless accounts for its tidier condition compared with the rest of the building. The Victualling Storehouse is in a poor state of maintenance, with rusted pipes, flaking paint and a profusion of vegetation growing along the cornices and roof.

The invitation concerns just the first floor, with access from the ground floor via an existing lift shaft. Applicants submit 'the premium sum offered to Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar' and propose 'basic details of any concepts, preliminary layout plans and sketches.' The Gibraltar Government reserves the right to negotiate the amount of the premium and will consult parties who submit favourable ideas or concepts. Applicants also need to prove sufficient financial resources for the works and premium. There is no indication of a maintenance schedule being required.

The Historical Summary describes the storehouse as '190 by 160 feet, with eleven vaulted rooms in each of the two floors. The walls are of stone and the vaults of brick. The walls and ceilings are so thick that they . . . provide a dry temperature controlled environment for provisions'. This a large space, but activities would be limited by the lack of a large ground floor entrance and no onsite parking facilities. The road outside is quite narrow and bends at the gateway, therefore lacks easy

un/loading capability. It is therefore a constrained proposition, so it will be interesting to see what tenders are submitted.

Divided ownership of an historic site is rarely beneficial for conservation, with no overall management plan, but little recent care is evident and historically government actions were destructive.

Deptford Royal Dockyard

NDS has made many submissions to planning applications for Deptford Dockyard (designated Convoys Wharf, its last commercial name) since 2004 (<https://navaldockyards.org/deptford/>).

Residents were invited to the owner Hutchison Whampoa's consultation at the 2000 Community Action Centre on 28/29 June 2022. This included the next development plots to be considered under Reserved Matters applications: Plots 01, 07, 12 and 14, and the Outline Masterplan planning application for Plot 21. Their suggestions were not reported. <https://convoys-wharf.com/positive-response-to-progress-at-convoys-wharf/>.

Voice 4 Deptford (<https://voice4deptford.org/>), however, is campaigning for a development that aligns with the heritage of site and reflects the needs of the local community. They held a public meeting on 21 September 2022 to share their new vision with members of the Deptford community and hear their ideas. The audience was enthusiastic and put forward many ideas for developing the vision. Voice 4 Deptford are meeting local politicians and planners to seek support in persuading the developers, particularly the Hong Kong decision-makers, to adopt their vision of Convoys Wharf as a Centre for Innovation, Education and Research. That means reducing the number and density of housing, increasing green space, more emphasis on sustainability and most of all, building on Deptford's history of innovation and creativity. Marion Briggs reported: 'Heritage needs to inform the way that that Convoys Wharf is developed for the future. We are encouraged by the support we've received so far. You can see details of the re-vision here: <https://voice4deptford.org/re-vision/>'

Meanwhile, the Lenox Project aims to build and launch a full-size replica of the *Lenox*, a state-of-the-art naval ship built in 1678 in Deptford Dockyard for Charles II. The project, to be based in the former Royal Deptford Dockyard, will 'promote educational, teaching and employment opportunities through a maritime and manufacturing skills and training programme and apprenticeship programmes' (<http://www.buildthelenox.org/>).

Convoys Wharf's most recent PR firm, The Terrapin Group, is 'required to put together a heritage strategy which outlines the heritage vision for the site.' They have completed their draft and will hold a "workshop of experts". This workshop will allow experts within their field to contribute to the development of the strategy and have an opportunity to partake in the development of the strategy for this unique piece of history.' It will be observed how much notice they take of the experts . . .

Ann Coats

Sheerness Dockyard Church Tour 20 June 2022

Well, to say that this tour was special would be an understatement. Lovely June weather, excellent guide and well organised. On a personal basis it was a trip down Memory Lane, having spent most summer holidays on the Isle of Sheppey in the 1950s.

The tour was organized by the Chartered Institute of Building, guided by contractor Coniston's site manager in conjunction with Sheerness Dockyard Preservation Trust, and was an opportunity not to be missed.

This historic naval dockyard holds many fascinating stories, but the Church itself and associated residential buildings are quintessential to the architectural ambience, and representative of this period of naval operations at Sheerness.

The tour commenced with an opportunity for a quick chat with NDS colleagues, including Ann Coats, Celia and Deane Clark and Richard Holmes. This was followed by registration, and the formal statutory site safety instructions, as the site was still very much a working environment and full of structural objects and building materials, so suitable shoes, hard hats and hi-vis were mandatory.

The tour of this highly camouflaged in scaffolding Grade 2* Dockyard Church started, as you would expect, on the ground floor. The most notable impression was the immediate impact of the



Above left: Church interior looking west. Above right: Church interior with cast-iron columns. (Charles Fraser-Fleming)

scale and task required in restoring and preserving the remains of this 1828 church, following two fires in 1881 and 2001 which caused so much damage to the interior. The impressive cast-iron columns were a powerful reminder of what a congregation would have witnessed in its heyday. The restoration and conservation of the exposed brickwork and plaster will provide the new generation of users a sense of its functional beauty and history. Whilst the site was clearly still work-in-progress, much of the heavy-lift work has been completed and it was possible to visually experience the extent and nature of the restoration work that had been undertaken at the time of the tour. The photographs demonstrate the scale of the operation and craftsmanship that has been applied.

The second phase of the tour went straight to the newly installed roof which was reaching completion, as were the tower and clock. This required the climbing of many steps, so a head for heights and good leg muscles were essential. However, the effort was well worth it. Our guide answered many questions relating to the material selection and sourcing processes and the workmanship methods applied during the restoration tasks. Not only was the visual landscape interesting, but the relationship of the church to the residential buildings which sit in close proximity was clearly demonstrated from this bird's-eye view. For example, the late Georgian grey-brick Superintendent's House, its garden and pond looked magnificent, as did the beautiful row of Regency Close terraced houses with their long narrow back gardens, all enclosed by grey brick walls. There was a feeling of harmony.

Below left: Clocktower – new stairs. Below right: Restored clocktower. (Ann Coats)





Sheerness Church: blending old and new sandstone in the entrance portico (above) and in the clocktower (right). (Ann Coats)



A revisit to the church, once the project has been completed and the famous 1820s scaled model of Sheerness Dockyard* is installed and on display to the public, will be an opportunity to witness this historic building, its repurposing as a community asset, its enhancement of the contextual setting of the site and its place in Sheerness (Blue Town) history. That will be an event not to be missed.

Charles Fraser-Fleming (Member)

* Funds awarded by NDS in 2021 contributed to the model's conservation. (Ed.)

Two Successful Sheerness Dockyard Projects

On the day of the Sheerness Dockyard Church Tour (20 June 2022), I visited Jenny Burkett, manager of the Sheerness Blue Town Heritage Centre and Criterion Music Hall, following their successful application for the 2020 NDS Award, 'Blue Town Remembered'.

The building lies within the row of houses, pubs and shops facing the dockyard wall, which runs westwards from Naval Terrace and Sheerness Dockyard Church. Along with the Criterion music hall and cinema (1841) which shows classic and historic dockyard films, Jenny told me that the site includes the Sun Inn used by the Nore mutineers in 1797.

The Centre 'preserves and promotes this heritage through education, entertainment, and enthusiasm . . . so we can use all the facilities available to raise the profile of Sheerness Dockyard and its amazing and relatively unknown history.' In their application Jenny wrote:

We realise that we have such a huge story to tell and that we need to find creative ways to tell this story. We have amassed so much over the years that we now have a research room with a dedicated area to Sheerness Dockyard. Our archive room has been extended to accommodate over 10,000 items linked to Blue Town and the Dockyard. Everything has been donated our centre by locals and visitors from all over the world who find us mainly through word of mouth.

Following a successful school pilot, the Centre proposed that every Year-4 Sheppey child visit the Sheerness Dockyard exhibition within an island tour, leading to schools creating their own cross-curricular exhibitions. The NDS supported this by awarding £1,000 to produce a Sheerness Dockyard booklet for visiting children. It is hoped that the children will then return with their parents and grandparents. The Centre is also part of two Kent-wide schemes, Wheels of Time and the Children's University, which bring in families. Their award included presenting a series of lectures by outside speakers and funding a month's licence to produce a film about Blue Town.

Jenny sees the Centre's role as projecting a sense of pride in this 'special area' of Blue Town and the Dockyard. Volunteers enthusiastically present stories to 20,000-plus visitors a year. They also lead walks (including the scorpions living in the dockyard wall, featured recently on the BBC), show

films, help people research, and promote the island to tourism guides, the latest being *England and Wales Island Bagging* by Lisa Drewe.

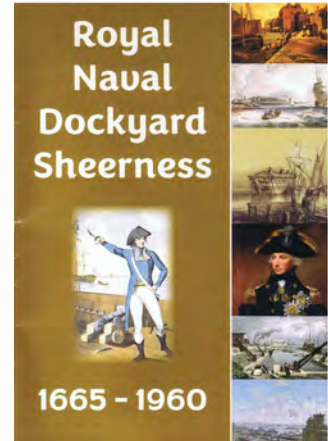
Jenny stressed that ‘working with the community takes time and effort.’ After striving for thirteen years to raise income from teas and events, they now average sixty coaches a year, but ‘the coach park for the Isle of Sheppey is Faversham’ (16 miles and nearly an hour from Sheerness). They have campaigned for brown tourist signs on the main roads for many years, now working with Swale Borough Council: ‘We just want parity with Faversham with appropriate signage.’

‘We work in partnership with nearly every organisation on Sheppey from care homes to schools and colleges, and disability groups, as well as hosting a wide range of community clubs.’

In a in mid-October week ‘we hosted nearly 300 pupils from local schools and they all received the booklet the NDS funded. Now all the schools use us. The local college is also working with us, and we had 55 students who all want to help.’



Above left: Blue Town sign. Above right: Sheerness Dockyard Wall. Left: Blue Town Heritage Centre and Criterion Music Hall. Below left and right: Blue Town Research Room. Right: Sheerness Dockyard booklet (2021).





Above left: Naval Terrace and the Dockyard Church. Above centre: Dockyard Church south elevation, October 2022. Above right: Dockyard Church interior looking south, October 2022. (SDPT)

The Sheerness Dockyard Preservation Trust (SDPT) also won an NDS award, to conserve John Rennie's Dockyard model within the Dockyard Church refurbishment. Both organizations are deeply committed to conserving Sheerness Dockyard's history and heritage through community engagement, education and furthering the attainment of personal potential. SDPT is undertaking the meticulous conservation and reuse of the Grade II* former Dockyard Church, with the award of a substantial National Lottery grant of £4.2 million in 2019. It seeks 'a profound impact on the community in and around Sheerness, particularly for young budding entrepreneurs in the district' and intends local volunteers to interpret the newly renovated church. Its targets are:

- The repair, conservation and reinstatement of the structure and envelope of the building.
- Creating a high-quality business and skills incubator unit for young people creating 75 new business and 225 new jobs over a 3-year period.
- Providing café facilities and flexible event spaces to serve the community of Sheerness and the surrounding borough.
- Providing a permanent display gallery for at least part of the great Dockyard Model which will be conserved and displayed in a rolling display with accompanying interpretation (NDS award application 2020).

These two heritage enhancement threads are complementary, successful and first class. Recent SDPT pictures (mid-October) show significant construction progress since June. Will Palin, SDPT Chair, writes: 'Our landmark rescue and restoration project at Dockyard Church has been underway since 2020 and is due for completion in early 2023. As a preservation trust we have been focused on the repair and rebuilding works, but we look forward to working with Jenny and the Heritage Centre once we reopen, and to welcoming visitors to Blue Town.'

(Sheerness Blue Town Heritage Centre and Criterion Music Hall, 69 High Street, Blue Town, Sheerness on Sea, Isle of Sheppey, Kent, ME12 1RW <https://www.thecriterionbluetown.co.uk/>; <https://historicswale.org.uk/blue-town-heritage-centre>; <https://www.visit-swale.co.uk/attractions/blue-town-heritage-centre-1883/>; Scorpions living in Sheerness Docks glow in the brickwork at Blue Town, Sheppey 05 July 2021, <https://www.kentonline.co.uk/sheerness/news/we-track-down-the-uks-biggest-scorpion-colony-250024/>; The Sheerness Dockyard Preservation Trust Dockyard Church Project, <https://sdpt.org.uk/>)

Ann Coats

Pictures by the author and SDPT.

Sheerness Dockyard Quadrangular Store Video

Created with Heritage Lottery funding by Andrew Byrne and the Sheerness Dockyard Preservation Trust, an iconic building is demolished in this 6-minute film:

<https://sdpt.org.uk/the-dockyard-story-quadrangle-store/>

The video uses archive quality photographs taken in 1978 by architecture students Mary Weguelin and David Allsop and displayed in an album which Mary kindly gave Dr Celia Clark because she knew that she was interested in dockyards. Celia generously loaned this album to the Sheerness Dockyard Preservation Trust and allowed it to be copied.

We are very grateful to Mary, David, Celia, Andrew and the Sheerness Dockyard Preservation Trust for this valuable resource.

Naval Dockyards Society 26th Annual Conference & Tours Report: Dockyards as nodes of naval architecture, maritime traditions and cultural heritage, 9–11 June 2022

Day 1 Building a warship

Clare Hunt: HMS *Trincomalee*: Design, Construction and Modification, 1812–1900

Prof. Emeritus David Bradley: HMS *Unicorn*: Sir Robert Seppings, the Industrial Revolution and Developments in Warship Design

Dr Ian Buxton MBE: Supplying Machinery for Dockyard-built Warships

Brian Lavery: Shipbuilding in Shoreham in the 1690s: Benjamin Furzer – a One-Man Naval Base
Commander Martin R. Marks OBE, BSc (Eng): Design, Deploy, Decline and Dwindling – the story of the VIC (WW2 Victualling Inshore Craft)

David Griffiths: Building a Coastal Motor Boat for the 21st Century

KEYNOTE Speaker Dr Antony Firth MCIfA: Placing Warships: Reconnecting vessels and dockyards

Day 2 Dockyards as heritage

Dr Federico Camerin: The 2022 draft agreement for the regeneration of the Venice's *Arsenale*.
What if the *Arsenale* dies?

Dr Jonathan Greenland: Port Royal Jamaica Project: Progress and Tourism

Karoline-Sofie Hennem: Museum Collection Storage Conditions in Historical Dockyard Buildings –
A Threat to The Long-Term Preservation of Maritime Collections?

Dr Katarzyna Jarosz: Abandoned ships. Exploring aging dockyards in the post-Soviet space

Dr Celia Clark: Doing things differently: how do countries dispose of their surplus defence land?
Do these differences offer losses or gains to ex-defence communities and sustainable reuse of historic structures?

KEYNOTE Speaker Sir Neil Cossons OBE FSA: Conservation Planning: Creative framework or strait-jacket?

Day 3 Dockyards as global hubs and regional centres of maritime culture

Dr Philip MacDougall: A Russian Monopoly: Britain's Naval Stores Import Trade

Dr Catherine Scheybeler: Draining Cartagena Dry Docks: Meeting the Challenge with Steam Technology

Dr Roger Morriss: What motivated Samuel Bentham, Inspector General of Naval Works, 1796–1807?

Dr Mark Ericson: Samurai at Royal Dockyards

Dr Jakob Seerup: Dockyards as Reflections of Societies – A Franco-English diplomat's perspective on the Copenhagen Royal Dockyards in 1702

Dr Ann Coats: Royal Dockyard communities and cultures – Portsmouth and overseas

KEYNOTE Speaker Professor Andrew Lambert FKC: Dockyards, Fleets and Global Power: 1815–56



Above: Celia Clark and Paul Brown, with Edward Sargent (facing) and Ian Buxton behind.



Above left to right: Brian Lavery and Chris Donnithorne.

All photos: A. Coats

Below, left to right: Andrew Lambert, David Davies and Roger Morriss.



Left: Judith Webberley and Richard Bateman.

Below, left to right: Sir Neil Cossons and Stephen Payne on board HMS *Victory*.



These papers gave a marvellous range of detail and perspective which will be evident when they are published in spring 2023. Ship carpenters' rase marks recurred in papers and the *Victory* tour.

In-person and online delegates averaged 71 a day. These numbers have been exceeded only by 'Portsmouth Dockyard in the Age of Nelson' (2005: 82); 'Naval Surgeons' (2008: 105) and 'Building Victory' (2009: 75) The total number of individuals attending was 91. We reduced prices to SNR, PRDHT, SNR(S), HBPT, Portsmouth Society, 1805 Club, Nelson Society and Hornet Sailing Club members, and full-time students.

Hybrid facilities allowed overseas speakers and delegates to participate:

- Last minute delegates who missed the in-person deadline joined online
- One in-person delegate who caught Covid at the last minute and another who had urgent business at home on the third day switched to online
- One in-person delegate in a wheelchair joined online when the lift broke, and she was left on the ground floor.

Treasurer David Jenkins argued that Eventbrite's professional plan of multiple ticket prices would reduce our income by nearly 50%, and professionally and courteously handled all the bookings himself. We are very grateful for his hard work and that of David Baynes, Judith Webberley and Stephen Payne in preparing accommodation lists, delegate packs, notifying members, and welcoming delegates on the day (also helped by Jill Bewsher-Humphries).

Unfortunately, the sound quality of NMRN facilities was not as anticipated. In our pre-conference check on 6 June, we found that the cinema sound system, zoom and two laptops (NMRN and mine) were conflicting. Using the lapel mic and the roving mic set up an unacceptable echo. We arrived at one workable system: a handheld mic (not a lapel mic). There was no podium mic. The system was left at optimal settings but another conference on 8 June changed them. After the first two speakers on Day 1 the NMRN Head of IT restored the best level, acceptable to some, but the majority continued to find difficult because many speakers did not hold the microphone close enough.

On Day 1, 42% of in-person and 36% of online feedback for Quality of sound and visuals were 'very poor' and 'poor'. One online delegate left the conference. SyncSkills endeavoured to rectify the situation, employing extra people, and cannot be faulted in their efforts. We thank SyncSkills' Gaëlle Delmas-Watson, Sue White and Lucile Mongiatti, and University of Portsmouth student Oliver Langton for their hard work. The alternative would have been a standalone AV system, but quotes



**Photographs of HMS Victory
with QEII and HMS Warrior
1860 by Ian Buxton.**

began at £5,000 which NDS could not afford, delegates would not have paid, and SNR would not have sponsored.

Ticket sales totalled £10,835. Together with £3,800 sponsorship from SNR, for which we are extremely grateful, that gave a combined income of £14,635 for the conference, plus a further £200 from 8 new members. Speakers' expenses totalled £1,329.10 and we donated £182.50 to PRDHT for their archive tours. We spent £12,474.31 and ended with a surplus of £1,160.69 after repaying SNR £1,000, plus new members' subscriptions and Jim Humberstone's kind donation of £100. The NDS was happy to gain 8 new members.

A senior SNR in-person delegate feedback:

While the facilities for visuals were excellent, the audio facilities fell well short of what was required. From where I was sitting, initially speakers ranged from inaudible, to muffled or indistinct. Due to the acoustics, questions and answers were difficult to hear initially but the introduction of the roving microphone later helped.

The Conference convenors are to be congratulated on such an inspired and balanced programme and one that allowed afternoon tours in which we were spoilt for choice, given the Conference location.

. . . it was clear from the discussion during the above events and over lunch and the other breaks that the Conference was stimulating and being enjoyed overall, especially given the paucity of such events in recent years. All of us who attended owe a debt of gratitude to everyone who made this one possible. A big thank you!

The committee echoes this thanks to all the speakers and to Matthew Sheldon, NMRN Executive Director of Museum Operations, who reduced the NDS fee, Mel Crook-Kent, Assistant Events Manager, who gave the greatest possible assistance, and George Wilson, Head of IT, and Beth Harkham-Edwards, Events Assistant. The catering was superb value for money.

We ran three daily sessions, two evening functions and eleven tours. We believe that this succeeded as a conference, despite sound impairment.

For the tours, we thank the Admiralty Library, Boathouse 4 Volunteers, Hornet Sailing Club, PRDHT, HMS *Victory* (NMRN), and Jonathan Coad. A total of 81 delegates attended tours (some 2 or 3) and 2 took up discounted NMRN tickets:

Two: Admiralty Library Royal Navy Naval Historical Branch Thurs 9 June (17)

Two: Boathouse 4 Boatbuilding & Restoration Centre, Thurs 9 June/Fri 10 June (15)

Two: Former Police Barracks, Haslar, Gosport, Thurs 9 June/Fri 10 June (15)

Two Archaeological HMS *Victory*: Thurs 9 June/ Fri 10 June (13)

Two: Portsmouth Royal Dockyard Historical Trust Archive Collection. Storehouse No.10
Thurs 9 June 2022 (8)

One: Georgian Heritage Area Fri 10 June (13)

Ann Coats

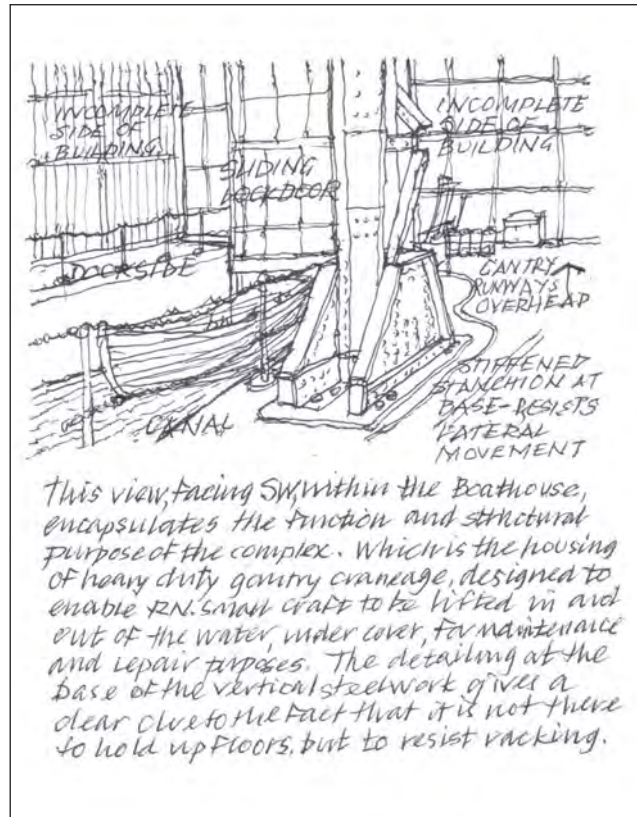
Naval Dockyards Society 26th Annual Conference Report: Guided Tour of Boathouse No. 4, Portsmouth

I last was acquainted with Boathouse No. 4 during a period of tenure with the Historic Buildings Bureau of Hampshire County Council some years ago. At that time the building was at risk from demolition to provide a site for an extensive Dockyard Visitor Centre. At that time the building was at risk from demolition to provide a site for an extensive Dockyard Visitor Centre. Due to successful resistance by Hampshire County Council's Historic Buildings Bureau, the Historic Buildings Section in the Hampshire County Planning Department and other agencies, this tragedy was averted. Not always the case when attempting to stave off threats to important heritage features, especially when they lack the protection of Listing.

Sketch: Boathouse No. 4, facing southwest towards Portsmouth Harbour.
(Jim Humberstone)

I last surveyed the building in the early '90s, so the Conference Tour presented a not to be missed opportunity to see the interior of No. 4 Boathouse once again. I was especially interested to see the re-use to which it is nowadays being put, that is returning to be a live and 'thriving' centre for boatwright activity. Which it clearly now is.

I have always believed that referring to Boathouse No. 4 as a building reflects a misunderstanding of its nature as a structure. In short, its *raison d'être*. Looking to its main function, the boathouse was primarily intended to provide an all-weather cover for a complex of heavy-duty gantry cranes tasked with lifting the RN's smaller craft out of the water for maintenance and repair. Unaltered in any major respect, craft are still enabled to enter via canals which lead directly from the harbour's high-water mark (see accompanying sketch).



The most intriguing aspect of the boathouse's design for me I think is that two of its elevations could be looked on as a kind of 'masquerade'. When these were completed, they were detailed in a way which gives the impression of a solidly built, framed structure, with floors behind its frontages. Its exterior strikes an architectural pose, in style terms a bit like a pastiche of modernism. In reality, in down to earth language, what I believe we are talking about with Boathouse No. 4 is a large but highly dressed up shed.

Jim Humberstone

Portsmouth Dockyard: MoD Restorations

In July 2021, Ann Coats, Paul Brown and Celia Clark were guests of Commodore Jeremy Bailey (former Naval Base Commander (NBC)) and Captain Iain Greenlees, Head of Infrastructure at HM Naval Base Portsmouth. Together, they showed us MoD's extensive restorative work on several key historic buildings at the heart of the Operational Dockyard.

The Portsmouth Estates Management Plan (EMP) has brought with it several major Naval Base investments, specifically as Homebase for the Queen Elizabeth Class (QEC) vessels and to support Generation of the UK's Carrier Strike Group (CSG). The MoD's major change of heart – from leaving the surviving historic infrastructure to decay, to valuing the Estate as a resource for restoration and reuse – is very welcome. Both 14 and 15 Dock(s) have been refurbished and enhanced, £18m spent to modernize the adjacent central workshops, and construction completed on a Combined Heat and Power (CHP) Plant that provides energy supply to the carriers when alongside.

On last year's visit, we were introduced to newly refurbished offices, drill-hall, and training facilities at Semaphore Tower in support of HMS King Alfred Reservists, which are understood to have played a key role in preparations for the recent State Funeral. Major works had commenced on two listed buildings, the Old Iron Foundry and Storehouse 25, and we also saw the beginnings of major restoration at The Parade – a row of former officers' terraced houses and one of the oldest Dockyard structures, built 1715. Together, this collection of restored buildings will provide a mix of naval residences, offices and conferencing facilities, to form a Maritime Command and Innovation Hub.



Holly Emerson, Portsmouth Naval Base Deputy Head of Infrastructure, receives the Portsmouth Society Best Restoration Award for the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth. Left to right: Lady Mayoress Marie Costa, Holly Emerson, Lord Mayor Hugh Mason, Emma Hammond and Andy Meacham.



Below: The exterior of the parade.



Above: The dining room restoration in progress, and completed (above centre).

Right: Extensive piling was undertaken in the basement of No. 1 which necessitated the removal and relaying of all the stone slabs.

Far right: The refurbished sitting room.





The rear of No. 1 showing the ablution block supported by steel columns.



The Parade Re-stabilisation

This September, the Portsmouth Society's Design Awards judges, Celia Clark, architect John Bate-man, photographer Carl Dearing, and Society Chairman Graham Newcombe, were shown the progress made at The Parade including the now complete residence at No. 1. This specific terrace had been occupied until 2005 but suffered significant damage from a collapsed ceiling and subsistence at the gable end. Whilst an unfortunate occurrence, this presented the Naval Base with an opportunity to stabilize the entire structure. Works started in 2019 and at the time of our first visit, The Parade had been fully scaffolded. Today, 220 sash windows have been replaced, downpipes removed, repaired and reinstalled, and the roof structure repaired and insulated to enhance sustainability performance. Due to budget requirements, the roof was repaired using Spanish slate rather than Cornish, however the restoration team led by Project Manager Emma Hammond ensured existing materials were salvaged and reused at every opportunity. For example, there were sufficient salvaged tiles from this roof to completely replace those on King Alfred's drill shed. New services were laid in a trench along the rebuilt access road in front, the trees were trimmed back to prevent blockage by leaves to the terrace's gutters, and the historic paving was repaired using lime mortar (rather than cement). Lead was re-smelted in the Midlands and re-laid to a high quality. The Naval Base's resident historical expert, Rick Bolger, provided advice and support throughout restoration in accordance with direction from Louise Forsyth (Historic England).

No. 1 Restoration

No. 1 underwent substantial stabilization works including lifting all the basement slabs to insert mini-piles, a necessary cost met by contingency, following its discovery mid-restoration. The ablution block to the rear of the terrace was a precarious Victorian addition and is now supported by two substantial steel columns. The interior has been remodelled in keeping with the building's origins, with original fireplaces nicely restored, nautical furniture sourced from Navy Stores, good quality plain carpet throughout and several newly sourced (but complementary) rugs included. The white and cream decor throughout ensures a light and airy feel. Towards the back of the building, the out-buildings displayed examples of windows, timbers, brick and lead works that are yet to be restored and this gave clear indication of the extent of work and effort to restore The Parade (inclusive of No. 1). To date, the Naval Base has invested c. £8m in heritage roof repairs and c. £7m in refurbishment of The Parade, securing a downgrade from Category A to Category F on the Heritage at Risk Register (HARR).

During this latest visit, we were delighted to hear and see the progress of restorative works to the Iron and Brass Foundries that sit alongside The Parade. Specifically, the Old Iron Foundry which was recognized by the Portsmouth Society Best Restoration award in 2003 and is now operationally occupied, following its recent £15m investment. The judges were equally delighted to hear the Brass Foundry (now Category C) and Storehouse 25 (now Category F) had been downgraded on the Heritage at Risk Register (HARR).

Celia Clark

Photos by Carl Dearing, Emma Hammond, Celia Clark and Ann Coats.



Images (Michael Williams)

Steam-driven capstans in HM Dockyard Portsmouth

Everyone in this Society will know that machinery was driven by steam, thanks to Samuel Bentham. I recently had the opportunity to see under the plates of the capstan adjacent to HMS *Victory*. Unfortunately, I was in a hurry and failed to capture a picture of the cylinder. In the average steam engine, everything is contained within an 'engine', except munition sites where the pressure is built up offsite and the pressurized boiler gets taken to places like Priddy's Hard.

It was clear from what I saw that the steam pipes are circulated throughout the yard and arrive at a cylinder adjacent to the capstan. A counter-weight handle and gears can release pressure to get the capstan rotating.

Michael Williams

Courageous, the Cold War Centre and the NMRN

HMS *Courageous* was the final Valiant class nuclear submarine, built by Vickers at Barrow-in-Furness. The keel was laid down in 1968 and the boat was launched in 1970 as S50 (SSN06) and commissioned into the Royal Navy Submarine Flotilla in 1971.

Based at Faslane Submarine Base in Western Scotland, *Courageous* conducted many Cold War patrols, four patrols during the 1982 Falklands Conflict and Spearfish Torpedo Trials from 1987 to 1992, then paid off at Devonport. The boat was refurbished in 2002 and 2020 as a visitor attraction before and after Covid (NDS visited in 2014). It is hoped that the submarine will re-open while plans proceed.

From 2020, crowdfunding raised £20,345 for a feasibility study and discussions were conducted with the National Museum Royal Navy (NMRN). Ian Whitehouse, who led the fundraising, reports:

In October 2021 the NMRN decided to formally adopt and lead Phase 1 of a programme to place *Courageous* in a permanent dry dock – No.1 Historic Dock, South Yard, Devonport. This phase could last 3–5 years and will provide time for NMRN to work with the *Courageous* Management Group and Naval Base Commander to develop and market *Courageous* as a public visitor attraction.

Ian describes current plans. Phase 1 began in May 2022. Phase 2 will develop a business case for funding dock and museum infrastructure, estimated at c. £15m. About a third will refurbish No. 1 Dock to hold *Courageous*, with the remainder creating a Cold War Centre (CWC) in the renovated Bonaventure and Flotilla Houses.

The CWC will digitally link a new Virtual Reality & Augmented Reality version of the *Courageous* experience to other NMRN museums, the Scotland Submarine Museum, STEM initiatives and Plymouth City Council. The Project Team and NMRN will host a dinner in March 2023 for industry supporters and others for fundraising to complete Phases 1 and 2.

This project has the potential to raise the heritage profile of South Yard, where Edmund Dummer's 1690s innovatory dockyard is dominated by commercial developments such as Princess Yachts and Oceansgate's marine enterprise zone. Plymouth Dock was the first designed as an integrated dock-

yard on a virgin site. Dummer situated administrative offices and storehouses around the drydock and basin to maximize time, workforce and *matériel* efficiency.

South Yard suffered extensive bomb damage in March and April 1941 and most of the officers' terrace was destroyed. The Grade II* Bonaventure House is the surviving western end and 'the oldest surviving building in a Royal Dockyard.' (Historic England) The Grade II* Dock is 303 feet long, 65 feet wide and 27 feet deep. The submarine is 285 feet long, 33 feet wide, with a draught of 27 feet. As Ian comments, 'A minor, but important, "by product" of our plans is that visitors would be able to see the full design and masonry work on No. 1 Dock.'

Would Dummer have approved? He might have appreciated his dock being given a new lease of life.

Ann Coats and Ian Whitehouse

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Historic England, Officers' Terrace, South Yard, Devonport Royal Naval Dockyard, Plymouth

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1378525?section=official-list-entry>

Historic England, No 1 Basin and No 1 Dock, South Yard, Devonport, Plymouth,

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Twyford, H. P. and Robinson, C. (2005). *It Came to Our Door: Plymouth in World War II – a Journalist's Eye Witness Account*.

HMS Courageous Association <http://www.hmscourageous.co.uk/The-Boat/the-boat.html>

Royal Navy Forum (11 September 2020), Ambitious Cold War museum plan unveiled for Plymouth, <https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/news-and-latest-activity/news/2020/september/11/200911-ambitious-cold-war-museum-plan-unveiled-for-plymouth>

Pembroke Dock Marine Project Update

As many readers will know, outline planning permission has been granted for Pembroke Dockyard to be utilized as a centre for the development, deployment and maintenance of a range of marine energy devices. The planning permission granted by Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC) allows, in principle, for the filling-in of the Graving Dock (Listed Grade II*) and the Timber Pond (Listed Grade II), the part demolition of Slips 1 and 2 (Listed Grade II) and the clearance of many, if not most, of the old structures associated with the ship-building activities that took place before the yard closed in 1926. Many of the last-mentioned structures are very interesting in their own right, yet they have no statutory protection.

Here we have two conflicting issues – the preservation of important heritage monuments versus the need to build a fabrication and deployment centre for the burgeoning marine energy industry. The latter cause is an effort by the Milford Haven Port Authority to establish a 'raison d'être' in the face of the knowledge that the fossil-fuel-based economy of Milford Haven has a limited life expectancy. The first issue is the desire to preserve some visible remnants of the industry that gave rise to Pembroke Dock – the Royal Dockyard Pembroke.

The range of interests that have brought their views to the discussions about this project are diverse and, in many cases, in direct opposition. There is a need for more well-paid job opportunities in Pembrokeshire like those brought to the county by the oil industry in the 1960s. Pembrokeshire County Council is in severe need of increased revenue from business rates to replace those that have reduced inexorably over the last twenty years as the oil industry has abandoned the banks of The Haven. However, this far outpost of Wales suffers from chronic shortages of medical staff and other skilled service workers – encouraging more families to move to this beautiful area to work in the marine industry will place even more strain on local resources.

An alternative solution might be to utilize what is left of Pembroke Dockyard to provide a visitor attraction that would boost the economy of the region and, in parallel, establish an alternative home for new marine energy projects at other locations away from the 'The Yard'. It is worth noting that some of the suggestions made have clearly not fallen on deaf ears as PCC is about to set out on the investigation of East Lanyon as a possible site for the construction of improved slip facilities. This is an interesting initiative as the area is adjacent to sites already used by heavy engineering companies with experience of the marine energy sector. It is also in very close proximity to one of the Marine Energy Test Areas (METAs) within Milford Haven. For more information about the East Lanyon site see my blog at <https://pdboynsuffolk.blogspot.com/2021/02/pembroke-dock-infrastructure-project-at.html>.

Milford Haven Port Authority (MHPA), who have submitted the plans, have commenced some of this work, most notably the addition of office accommodation to one of the large flying-boat hangars that dominate the eastern part of the yard. MHPA have also announced that they have started work on the removal of the ground between Slips 1 and 2 with a view to building a wide Mega Slip for the launching of large marine devices.

The Timber Pond at Pembroke is unique in Wales and a rare monument across the whole UK. It is in good condition with some sediment in the base of the pond. The base of the pond itself is of puddled clay with a limestone paved and ramped eastern margin. The pond was connected to the graving dock in such a way that the contents of the pond could be used to fill the dock if required. The pond was also connected to the tidal waters of Milford Haven by sluices and tunnels so that the contents could be flushed out and replenished by the tide.

The accompanying map shows the dockyard as it appeared in about 1925 (Figure 1). The area subject to this scheme approximates the area marked out in red hatching on the western side of the plan. This is the former Marine Salvage Depot relinquished by the Ministry of Defence in 2008.

Figure 1. Pembroke Dockyard, 1925, which appears to have been produced for the Admiralty in 1880. There are similar copies at TNA. It has been corrected to 1925 so it was probably produced in preparation for the closing and subsequent sale of the dockyard in 1926.

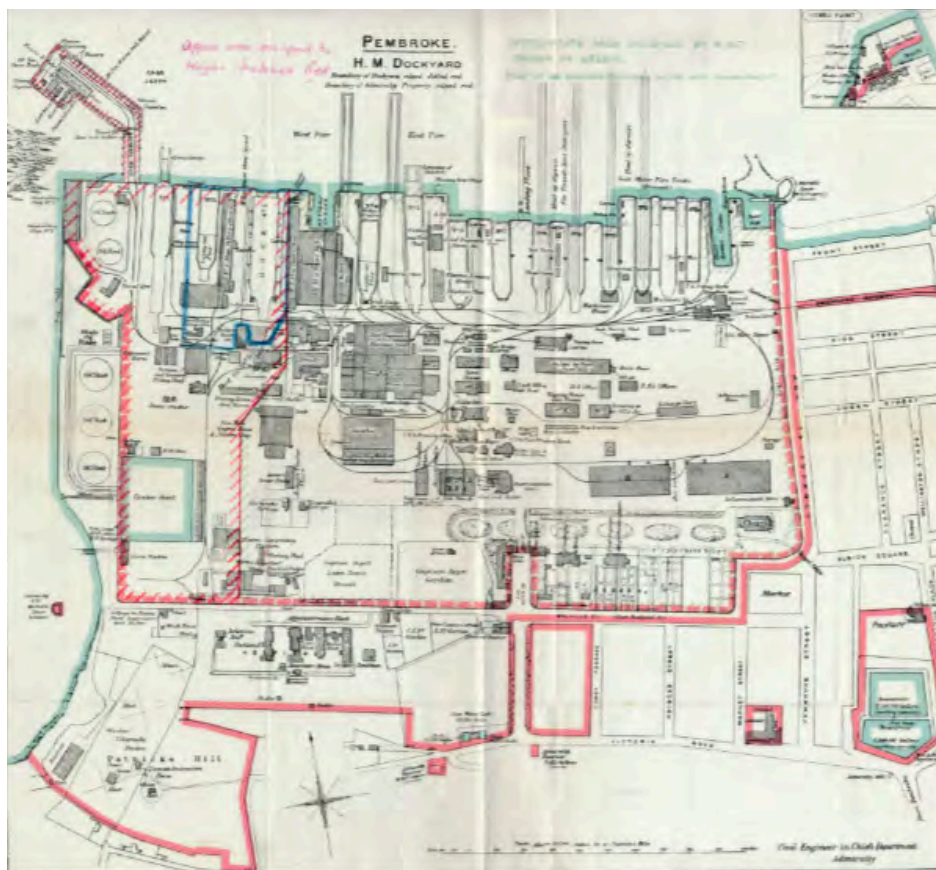
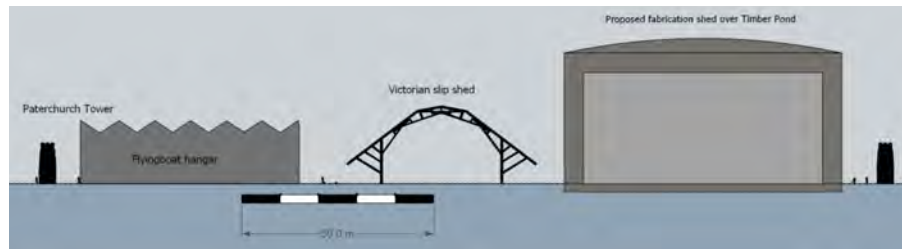


Figure 2. Comparative heights of the proposed Fabrication Shed to be erected over the Timber Pond and Paterchurch tower.



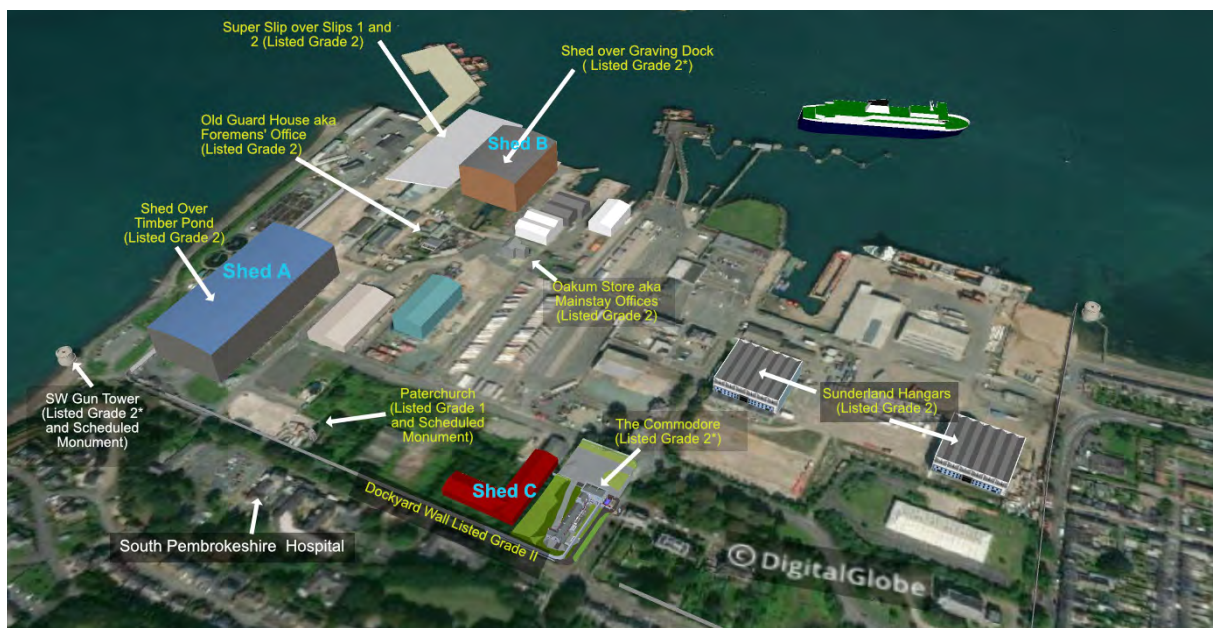
As indicated earlier, the scheme will reduce most of the former western dockyard to a huge slab of concrete, upon which, as mentioned before, at least three large fabrication sheds are to be erected. Many of the buildings shown on the 1925 plan have been demolished, partly by the RAF when they took over the eastern part of the dockyard as flying-boat base in the early 1930s. Of course, Pembroke Dock (known by the RAF as 'PD') played a vital role in the Battle of the Atlantic in the Second World War and the two large hangars that housed the Sunderland flying boats still stand and have been used latterly as fabrication sheds and a store for animal foodstuffs.

The filling-in of the Graving Dock is to enable a large fabrication shed of up to 40 metres tall to be built on the resultant slab of concrete. Similarly, over the filled-in Timber Pond, MHPA propose erecting another 40-metre-high shed with a length of 160 metres.

The scale of the buildings that are to be erected on the buried Timber Pond and Graving Dock far exceeds anything that has been built in the yard to date and they will undoubtedly dominate the site and the surrounding settlement. The setting of Paterchurch Tower, a Grade I listed building and scheduled monument, is particularly affected. Figure 2 gives some idea of the relative sizes of these buildings.

The developer's argument is that burying the Graving Dock and Timber Pond will preserve them *in situ* for future generations, however this is clearly a spurious line of reasoning because the cost of any uncovering of the monuments in the future would be prohibitive. In addition, the load of the machinery and devices on the monuments would almost certainly damage the structures beneath.

Figure 3. A view of Pembroke Dockyard from the south-east showing the relative size of the proposed Fabrication Sheds to be built over the Timber Pond and Graving Dock and at the rear of the Captain Superintendent's Residence. A Google Earth image has been overlaid with 3D labelled models of the proposed structures for the Pembroke Dock marine project, with labels for key surviving buildings affected by the project. The image was produced as part of an objection letter submitted to Pembrokeshire County Council to show the size of the proposed fabrication sheds in comparison with current standing buildings.



Another concern, relating to the construction of the Mega Slip (apart from the demolition, digging up and burying of the old Slips 1 and 2), is the possible damage that might be caused to the foundations of the Carr Jetty (Listed Grade II), which lies to the immediate west of Slips 1 and 2. The proximity of the Carr Jetty to the works on the site of Slips 1 and 2 is apparent from Figure 3.

The latest series of applications have covered the reserved matters for the successive phases of the development. The erection of the sheds is part of the final phase of the development. The size and form of the sheds is the one reserved matter decision that has not been delegated to the Pembrokeshire County Council planning officers.

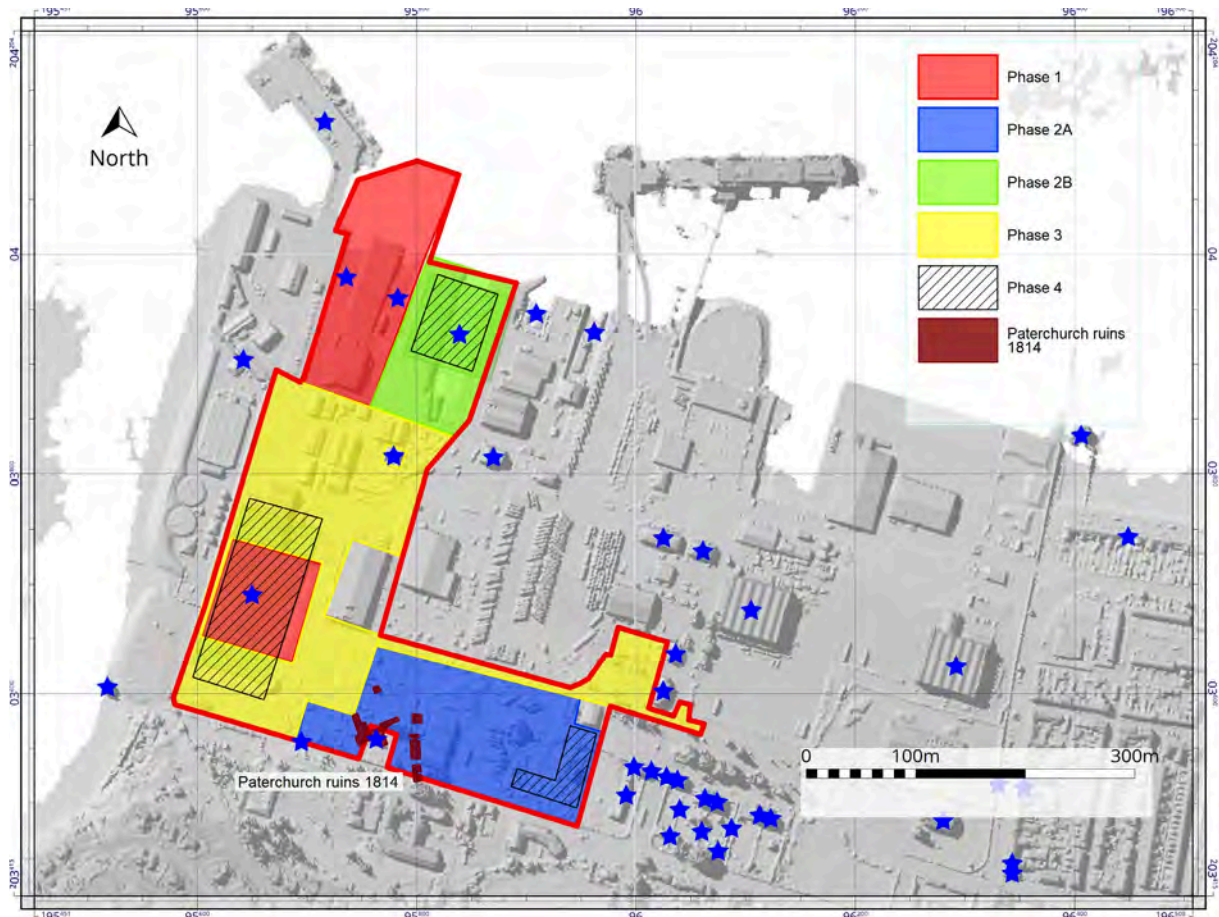
The identified phases are:

Phase 1 – Filling-in of the Timber Pond and Construction of the Mega Slip. Planning Applications 20/0893/LB and 20/0896/LB.

Phase 2A – Clearance of the paddock to the west of the Captain Superintendent’s Residence and laying load bearing surfaces. See Planning Application 22/0117/DC.

Phase 2B – Filling in of the Graving Dock and removal of the bollards and caisson for later display. Planning Application 20/0897/LB.

Figure 4. Phase 4 of construction for the Pembroke Dock Marine Project. The Fabrication Sheds’ construction is the only phase subjected to a decision by the Planning Committee at Pembrokeshire County Council. Phases 1 and 2A have been started, but notably steering clear, for the time being, of the listed buildings. The full height sheds (40 metres) could be refused by the planning committee, making the filling in of the Graving Dock and Timber Pond unnecessary. The ruins of Paterchurch, from an 1814 map, show the extent of these potentially very significant ruins, the remains of which probably lie belowground. The blue stars show the locations of listed buildings. The image was produced using LIDAR data with overlays drawn by the author from information on Milford Haven Port Authority’s planning applications.



Phase 3 – Clearance of all other buildings within the yellow area (see Figure 4) and laying of a concrete load bearing surface. Planning Application 20/0901/CA.

Phase 4 – Construction of two fabrication sheds up to 40 metres tall and one workshop shed. Planning Application (in outline only) 20/0732/PA.

A live (but perhaps not exhaustive) listing of all relevant planning applications can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/mpk5kda8>.

The listing above gives references for Pembrokeshire County Council's planning website at: <https://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control>.

It must be said that the applications contain some very interesting documents regarding the history of Pembroke Dockyard. There are also some good plans and elevations. However for copyright reasons they cannot be reproduced here.

I fear that Pembroke Dockyard will not have many industrial monuments surviving once this project, now that outline planning applications have been passed, gets underway. This will be despite the best efforts of the Naval Dockyards Society, SPAB, SAVE Britain's Heritage, The Ancient Monuments Society, The Georgian Society and The Victorian Society as well as many individuals.

I understand that requests were made some time ago to ask for the scheduling of several of the monuments now under threat. Cadw is still considering these applications, but whether they will prevent the wholesale loss of what is a unique collection of structures that portray the industry which gave rise to Pembroke Dock, remains to be seen.

For more information about Pembroke Dockyard please see my blog at PDboyinSuffolk.blogspot.com

Please look for earlier posts in the archive section on the right-hand side of the page.

Adrian James

All images are by the author or copyright expired.

The New Scapa Flow Museum

After a major refurbishment and partial new build lasting two years, the museum at Lyness, Hoy, Orkney, opened to the public at the beginning of July. An official opening by Olympic gold medalist Sir Chris Hoy, due to take place in September (as part of a larger event inevitably titled 'Hoy on Hoy'), was unfortunately cancelled due to the death of HM the Queen.

The museum is easily accessible from Mainland, the main island of the Orkney archipelago, being literally a few yards from the ferry berth at Lyness. This proximity caused some problems for the local ferry company in the immediate aftermath of the museum's opening; it proved so popular that many ferry sailings were sold out!

I had the good fortune to visit the museum in the week after its opening and to be guided around by Nick Hewitt, formerly Head of Collections and Research at the National Museum of the Royal Navy and now Team Leader (Culture) for Orkney Islands Council. The principal building of the museum is the oil fuel pumping house built in 1937. In its previous incarnation, all of the museum's exhibits were crammed into this building, co-existing uneasily with the surviving and largely intact machinery and pipework. The construction of a new extension, which also incorporates a splendid cafe and the obligatory gift shop, has allowed both the building and the collection more room to breathe, making it easier to appreciate the scale and complexity of the 1930s mechanisms. The gallery in the extension is spacious and clearly organized, giving over several display cases each to the most iconic events in the naval history of Scapa Flow and Orkney: the sinking of HMS *Hampshire* en route from the Flow to Russia in 1916 carrying Lord Kitchener, who perished along with the vast majority of the crew when she struck a mine off Marwick Head; the scuttling of the German High Seas Fleet in the Flow in 1919, with many substantial artefacts from the sunken ships on display; and the sinking of HMS *Royal Oak* in the Flow in 1939, a daring exploit carried out famously by U-boat captain Gunther Prien and the crew of U-47. But space is also given over to some lesser-known episodes in the history of the Flow, such as the first German aircraft to be shot down over British soil during the

Second World War (17 October 1939) and the first British civilian death by bombing during the war (again in Orkney, on 16 March 1940).

The new museum is a splendid development that does full justice to the illustrious history of the islands and the great natural harbour at their heart. It is also the centrepiece of the substantial amount of naval heritage from both world wars that still survives on Hoy, undoubtedly the most evocative and poignant being the naval cemetery on the edge of Lyness and within easy walking distance of the museum. Orkney is not as difficult to get to as many people often assume it is – one



Left: The pump house of 1937, the original part of the Scapa Flow Museum. (David Davies)

Below: Gun from HMS *Iron Duke*, flagship of the Grand Fleet based at Scapa Flow in the First World War and a base and accommodation ship at Lyness during the Second. (David Davies)



Left: Artefacts from the wreck of HMS *Hampshire*, sunk off Marwick Head on 5 June 1916. (David Davies)



Above: Naval ensign from the German High Seas Fleet, one of the largest exhibits in the new museum. (David Davies)



Left: Newspapers from 1939–40 reporting air raids on Orkney. (David Davies)



Display board showing the extent of the naval facilities at Lyness in the latter stages of the Second World War. Several of the jetties, along with a number of ruined buildings and one of the oil storage tanks, survive. (David Davies)



The author outside the new museum, standing alongside a propeller recovered from HMS Hampshire. The new extension can be seen in the background, while behind the old pump house building is the last survivor of the original fifteen oil-storage tanks at Lyness. (Wendy Berliner)

change of flight from London and major provincial airports, for example, or a ferry from Aberdeen or Scrabster (Thurso) – and, unlikely though it may seem, it has become the UK's most visited destination for cruise ships, with 190 due to call in 2022. The possibility of bringing cruise ships into the Flow itself, to a new terminal immediately adjacent to the museum, is a long-term aspiration. Get there before the crowds arrive!

David Davies, Chairman, the Society for Nautical Research

Ports, Past and Present

There has been a movement of people between Ireland and Britain for thousands of years. Journeys were motivated by war, trade, work, religion and family connections and routinely experienced as a part of everyday life on our neighbouring islands. The ports on both sides of the Irish Sea know this history well. They were often places of exchange between people, cultures and languages and share a history of absorbing migrant labour. Political borders have shifted over the centuries but the legacy of sea travel for the ports in the Irish Sea basin endures. The **Ports, Past and Present** project explores and share these stories in a way that encourages cross-coastal exchange, socially, culturally and economically

Ports, Past and Present (funded by the European Regional Development Fund through the Ireland Wales Cooperation programme) is a collaborative cultural heritage project led by University College Cork in partnership with Aberystwyth University, the University of Wales Trinity St. David and Wexford County Council. Recognizing the social and economic challenges faced by the port communities of Dublin, Rosslare, Pembroke Dock, Fishguard, and Holyhead, the project was created in 2019 to support these communities to highlight their shared cross-coastal heritage and establish it as resource for community development and tourism.

A large part of the project's work has involved the collection of heritage stories and poems from a range of contributors, including port community members, academics and celebrated authors. Covering topics as diverse as prehistoric harbours, historic seafood recipes and naval history, these stories provide a window into the rich tapestry of heritage that gives the Irish sea zone its unique character. In addition to this wonderful collection, the project has commissioned promotional films for each of the port towns and their crossings, and heritage-themed artworks by local artists. It has also developed a heritage app replete with local sites of interest and sea-crossing experiences, and a podcast full of fascinating port stories.



Left: Sea of Stories Mural by Robert Jakes at Pembroke Dock Ferry Terminal. Courtesy Martin Crampin

Below: View of Neyland from Hobb's Point. Courtesy Martin Crampin



Left: Northeast Martello Tower (1851), Pembroke Dock. Courtesy Rita Singer

The project outputs are the focal point of a Ports, Past and Present 'festival' that is currently touring each of the port towns, with the last of the events taking place in Holyhead in October 2022. Ultimately, the outputs will be made freely available for each of the port communities to draw upon for the promotion of heritage awareness and tourism in their areas. They also form the foundation for two heritage tourism networks which the project has created to bring the port communities together socially, culturally and economically. These networks take the form of a monthly online cross-coastal coffee morning where various speakers are invited to present on different aspects of port heritage, and a business tourism network where we provide free advice and training to port businesses on how to use their local heritage to promote their work.

Ports, Past and Present brings attention to the longstanding links that exist between the ports of Dublin, Rosslare, Pembroke Dock, Fishguard and Holyhead and the rich histories that underpin them. However, it also provides a glimpse of the rich and sustainable future that these communities are building together. Although the project will formally come to an end in summer 2023, its legacy will continue to support communities through its outputs and networks, as well as the conversations and connections it has encouraged.

If you would like to find out more about or get involved with Ports, Past and Present, please contact: clairenolan@ucc.ie.

Claire Nolan, Postdoctoral Researcher – Ports, Past and Present

Isla del Rey & Menorca Naval Hospital, September 2022

Summer

Menorca, like many other areas in Europe, has experienced a particularly hot summer this year with temperatures soaring over 30° for weeks, but it certainly hasn't deterred the tourists from coming here. On the contrary, Menorca has had one of the busiest seasons ever. Of course, Isla del Rey, in the harbour of the capital town of Mahón, has benefited directly with a steady flow of Spanish and international visitors every day of the week.

Thanks to a big effort from our guides, we've been able to offer guided tours in Spanish every day to the hospital and in English on Thursdays and Sundays. Many British visitors have in fact turned up on other days and been well looked after by Marta, for the first time we have been able to use a professional multilingual guide funded by the Menorca Tourist Office.

The preparation of the Interpretation Centre for the history of the harbour is well advanced and we have just started to open this to the public on Thursday evenings. Before too long it will be open every day for visitors to wander freely around.

Awards

Some exciting news is that we have recently won a Europa Nostra Award, details of which can be seen here: <https://www.europeanheritageawards.eu/winners/illa-del-rei/>.

Some fifteen members of the Foundation and Hauser & Wirth will travel to Prague in September to receive this very encouraging and prestigious award.

Hauser & Wirth

The art gallery in the beautifully restored separate building on the island has exhibited the contemporary art of Rashid Johnson this summer, and apart from the sculptures also on display in the now mature and colourful gardens, there have been a number of cultural and educational events taking place all summer. These varied from weekly family workshops to concerts, screenings or live dance and music shows which have brought over some 38,000 people to Isla del Rey since mid-June, sometimes more than 500 people in one day! For the autumn months the activities include a demonstration of traditional lateen sailing and a creative learning programme for primary and secondary schools as well as a celebration of seaside cuisine in their restaurant, La Cantina.

A further delightful surprise has been that one of our valued volunteers, Mario Cappa, at a magnificent eighty-nine years old, has been awarded the medal of Commander of the Italian Republic. It was given to him for his many years of work as a volunteer, responsible for the two rooms in the hospital telling the story of the ship *Roma*, sunk in September 1943 during WWII, and in recent years for working on the Interpretation Centre to show the naval construction work in the harbour of Mahón. In fact, we're about to welcome back another very special guest who at a hundred and one years old is travelling to us from Italy as a survivor of the *Roma* and was brought to safety in Mahón harbour. Despite his advanced years, he comes back every year to pay homage to all his comrades who lost their lives.

Plans

However, not such good news on our long wait for permissions, the ramp (designed and sponsored) still awaits a licence, despite every effort by our President and team, and the obligatory lift to the first floor (waiting for installation and paid for) is in the same situation.

Perhaps as a result of the long lockdown with Covid, there has been an increasing number of requests for weddings and baptisms. These can all be considered, and the reconsecrated Anglican Chapel from 1711 has celebrated several wedding blessings and baptisms this year. It's really a stunning location for that very special day. St George's Chapel is in the centre of the hospital, beneath the tower, and was a vital part of the original hospital from its first opening in 1711. After the last British occupation in 1802, it was used for other purposes since the Catholic Church was the one then in service. However, for the celebrations of 2011 it was completely restored and reconsecrated (thanks for a donation from George Anson), and now provides a beautiful setting for weddings, baptisms



St George's Anglican Chapel, the colonnade in front of the wards (now exhibition rooms) and a composite of images of how it was when we started in 2004.

or religious ceremonies. On Sunday 11 September we held a special service for the Queen. Close beside it is the Church Hall, funded by Libor funds from the UK, obtained via the 1805 Club.

The Isla del Rey is nowadays a curious marriage of a three-hundred-year-old British hospital restored with loving care by volunteers who have been struggling since 2004 to find funds to pay for it, and we now share our home with arguably the most famous and prestigious international art gallery of Hauser & Wirth. Yet despite the disparity of our circumstances, there has formed a bond between us of mutual support and cooperation. Long may it last!

Beverley Ward

(A far cry from the dereliction Jonathan Coad saw in 1971, confirmation of the remarkable work carried out by volunteers for two decades. Ed.)

MoD small ship disposal in 1978 – and some of the papers involved

A story not yet fully told or appreciated is how the disposal of small vessels built during and after WWII for naval support acted as a huge boost for both leisure use of small craft and also the commercial sector in the post-war period. In the early years after the war surplus government craft were the primary resource. However, by the late 1970s numbers were declining rapidly as defence budgets swept away subsidiary and supply sections of MoD operations (and their vessels) with increasing privatization of remaining services. The full story of many of these civilian manned, but under naval control, sections such as the Port Auxiliary Service (PAS) is also conspicuously awaiting a record. This note sets out observations based on one such disposal.

Readers who attended the June 2022 NDS Conference will recall the paper by Commander Martin Marks, 'Design, Deploy, Decline and Dwindling', which gave a short history of the VIC craft, including their evolution from the classic Scottish puffer. In 1978 I successfully tendered to MoD Directorate of Navy Contracts (Supplies) for purchase (for preservation) of the last dry cargo steam puffer at Rosyth – VIC 56. The paperwork that ensued casts an interesting light on the operations of

**MoD Small craft disposals advert,
Motor Boat and Yachting (Sept 1978), p. 183
(title now defunct).**

the Port Auxiliary Service, which through merger had become the Royal Maritime Auxiliary Service and was to be fully privatized in 1996, since when Serco have provided many of its roles.

In common with a wide variety of other surplus small vessels and boats, MoD Navy Contracts at this time advertised disposal in a full-page advert in *Motor Boat and Yachting*, a yachting monthly. Inspection was allowed and then a bid was required based on 'as and where lying' for which I used my estimate of the scrap value (financed with loans from family and friends!). Success. After receiving the MoD certificate of ownership (a signed photocopy, as MoD seemed to like keeping the top copy of correspondence for the file) I found the vessel lying at Rosyth. It still had many of its navigation and engine room logs on board, together with copies of the obligatory naval reports on boiler, chain and cable survey, defect lists (ahead of docking) and so on.

Alongside this was unused naval stationery, engineer's books and even a supply of crockery as well as heaps of stored items in the hold – some more useful than others – although anything antique looking such as a lamp had already been removed. Very gratifying was a willingness by the Rosyth Dockyard PAS staff to dig out other items of interest including photos and donate them – there was a good deal of affection for 'puffers' in Rosyth and a desire to help in trying to preserve one of them (rather than the usual disposal to one of the scrapyards at Inverkeithing, just along the Forth) and over time this also enabled contact with former crew.

Some eighteen logs survived on board, being a mixture of ship's, engine room and deck logs. One suspects that the vessel's long serving Mechanician (Chief Engineer), Dick Drury (unusually for PAS a certificated engineer), who took great care of the machinery, did not fully trust the sailors to keep a proper record and therefore kept his own log. Dick nobly turned out from retirement to give a full tutorial on how to raise steam and manage the engine and several letters from him also survive.

For the most part these logs record a pretty routine existence of a Naval Armaments Vessel running up and down the Forth between Rosyth and the munitions stores at Crombie and, formerly, at Bandedeath (near Stirling) and occasionally to Leith and Port Edgar, but accidents were fully recorded (e.g. breaking adrift from moorings in gales) together with (in red) fire drills and occasional injuries to crew. The logs record the warships being supplied and often the cargo – mines, torpedoes and squids (projectiles for an anti-submarine mortar) and occasions when the overnight stoker/ship-keeper failed to show up and there was no steam.

The log for 13 October 1959 records the Captain of the Port being onboard – pretty unusual for such a humble vessel – and this seems to have been a timed trial, perhaps to see how quickly a warship at Rosyth could be restored from Crombie and Bandedeath. However, it appears that on passage upriver the *VIC 56* ran aground near Alloa, before refloating after twenty-five minutes; there must have been some red faces in the wheelhouse that day.

Although the ship's log does not survive, later clearing out and refurbishing of the after cabin found a faded copy of a naval signal from April 1961 referencing the most interesting naval task allotted to *VIC 56* and this was to carry stores, a jeep and a sectioned out to the island of South Rona in the Inner Hebrides (between Skye, Raasay and the mainland) to support a pilot exercise for the Minches Noise Range. Other than lighthouse keepers, the island was by then uninhabited, owned by MoD and had no water supply. Further detail of the voyage was filled in by subsequent letters from the crew.

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
SMALL CRAFT DISPOSALS

Offers should be sent in properly sealed envelopes, the envelope being clearly marked TENDER NO 87/478/2008 in 1978 or 2008 thereafter and must reach the following address on or before 12 o'clock noon on Friday 29 September 1978 or 2008.

DIRECTOR OF NAVY CONTRACTS (SUPPLIES), MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (NAVY), TENDERS-YELLOW, ROOM 83A, BLOCK 4, ENSLIEGH, BATH BA1 5AD.

Offers should not include VAT which will be added by this Department at the rate of 15% on all craft appearing in this advertisement except those indicated.

TENDER OFFERS ONLY

The following craft are offered for sale by competitive tender subject to Conditions of Sale - Form SCD/117A

<p>1. 10M Naval Boat, Chatham. May only be viewed by prior arrangement with Lt J. Evans, Telephone Falkland 1225 Ext 11 Office</p> <p>128 Sailing Cutter No 173/34, 228/33 and 224/34 May - Fair Condition - Fair</p> <p>188 Sloop No 17/46 May - Fair Condition - Fair</p> <p>198 Albatross Lifeboat No 2120/36 May - Fair Condition - Fair</p> <p>2. 10M Naval Boat, Chatham. May only be viewed by prior arrangement with Lt J. Evans, Telephone Falkland 1225 Ext 11 Office</p> <p>128 Sailing Cutter No 173/34, 228/33 and 224/34 May - Fair Condition - Fair</p> <p>188 Sloop No 17/46 May - Fair Condition - Fair</p> <p>198 Albatross Lifeboat No 2120/36 May - Fair Condition - Fair</p> <p>3. 10M Naval Boat, Chatham. May only be viewed by prior arrangement with Lt J. 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H.M.S.		day of												
Time	Log (relating type)	Station (Miles)	Mean (Miles)	True (Miles)	Gyro (Miles)	Standard (Miles)	Deviation	Velocity	Direction (True)	Force (10/17)	Weather and Visibility	Waves	Corrected Barometric Pressure in Millibars	Temperature
0700														
0730	<p>Thursday the 16th April 59.</p> <p>Day commences with very overcast light NW wind Boro 29.1</p> <p>0630 Vessel lying at Rosyth. Vessel weighed up.</p> <p>0730 Cast off and underway to Rosyth</p> <p>Ship on board in company of H.V. 56. Commence 15 ton</p> <p>Ship on board of Rosyth</p> <p>0750 Passed into Ellen Park Bay. 60° NW</p> <p>0800 Arrive Rosyth</p> <p>0820 Signalled to blocks on shore of Rosyth</p> <p>0830 Passed through Rosyth Harbour</p> <p>0850 Arrived Rosyth</p>													
1200														

Above: Typical ship's log extract for Thursday 16 April 1959.

DAILY STATE		HM NAVAL BASE, ROSYTH, 0001 TUESDAY 25 MARCH 1975	
TELEPHONE ENQUIRIES - DIAL 3333		PORT COLON - 2183/2229	
TIDAL		DOCKS, BASIN, LOCKS, ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES	
M J	LOCK (S)	REVERE-3806/2031	
D E	N(E)	VIC 65/PAS 1405	
L T	S(E)	LOCK (N)	
E Y	A	DUNGAN MEB 2907/Skor 2908	
	B	KORROCH/MV 231/RMALL 52	
	C	S CAISSON	
	D	WALRUS OM 3012/Beit 0.2033	
	E	MAD 1008	
	F	OTTER 3739	
	G	GRINDLINE 2551	
	H	GORG 2241	
	I	LOPOTON QI 3119	
	J	STALKER OM 3050/Ship 0.4110	
	K	R LIDLETON 2065	
	L	YARBOURD OD 3022/Q. 3059	
	M	PO 3581	
	N	S H LYNX OM 3061/Beit 0.3684	
	O	TO 3499	
	P	J(N) JURA 3168	
	Q	J(S)	
	R	K(N) GUNTON 2571/2706	
	S	ASHCOB 3785	
	T	K CLIDE 2673	
	U	K(S) CL 13/LOYAL PROCTOR-3733	
	V	VIC 50/STV 01	
	W	L	
	X	M(W) CHAUNTON 3153	
	Y	M(S) WILKINSON	
	Z	NO. 1	
		INSER STV	
		NO. 1	
		OUTER	
		NO. 2	
		NO. 3	
		AFD 21 LAYBOOR 2765	
		ENDELEIGH 3370	
		AFD 22 LAYBURN-3389/MARFOOT-3069	
		AFD 26 MANTON 3402/3781	
		TUGS ETC	
		ARRIVALS	
		DEPARTURES	
		ANCHORAGE	
		EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS	
		OP DUTY OFFICER DEAL 0 2211 OP DUTY MASTER/JOY TUG 2707	
		YARD SERVICES 2164/2148 FIRE/AMBULANCE 2222	
		MEDICAL GUARD 2164/2148 NUCLEAR ACCIDENT CONTROL BR 3302	

Right: Rosyth naval base daily state list for 25 March 1975.

Skipped by Len Williams (who joined the service as a cabin boy in 1934, reached master by 1945 and retired as Rosyth Shipping Master in 1982), *VIC 56* sailed via the Caledonian Canal and loaded more stores and naval personnel at Kyle of Lochalsh and Aultbea/Loch Ewe. Len Williams tells how he entered the small bay close to the lighthouse on Rona at high water with navigation marks painted on rocks by a small boat naval party. Unlike the larger accompanying *PAS Moorsman*, *VIC 56* got its stores, jeep and hut ashore quickly whereas the larger vessel had to wait for posts to be drilled in the jetty to help get her cargo ashore. This successful expedition was a forerunner of establishing the British Underwater Testing and Evaluation Centre (BUTEC) on Rona, now run by QinetiQ.

Once away from Rosyth, *Para Handy* was surely involved – an email from the mate's son, Ron Smith (now in Canada), tells how he came along for a holiday as a schoolboy, sleeping on the wheelhouse floor, while the engineer, Dick Drury, had his car on the hatchboards so he could drive home at weekends (*Para Handy* was a west coast puffer skipper immortalized in the stories by Neil Munro).

Also surviving (and still mounted on board) is a copy of the original load line certificate surveyed by Lloyd's. Vessels commissioned by the Ministry of War Transport in the Second World War were not directly managed by Government but placed with suitable shipping companies – in the case of *VIC 56* this was J. Hay & Sons Ltd, a well-established Scottish puffer operator. A later letter from the ship's first skipper, D. C. Blofield, describes the delivery voyage from the builder's yard at Faversham, Kent to Rosyth and operations on the Forth, including how it took him a good deal of campaigning to get windows and roof for the wheelhouse to replace the open navigating platform.

Another document found on board is a copy of Rosyth port movements and daily state for 25 March 1975 which makes for an interesting record of the variety of vessels still in use. In addition to tugs and tenders there are over ten self-propelled specialist craft operated by PAS/RMAS and used to provide mooring and salvage, armament, fuel and water transport and other services. Several were steam-propelled such as *Skomer*, one of a class trawlers converted to tank cleaning, able to use the tank cleaning residues as fuel. Many specialist PAS vessels of this type had only a few years to go, often being replaced by specialized dumb lighters, moved around by tug, to reduce personnel numbers.

Steam hms survived far longer in naval marine services than commercial use as it was relatively simple to maintain and could be retained to provide capability as and when required. In its last years *VIC 56* was used as a relief and only steamed occasionally or towed as a lighter, before final lay up in 1974. It was also clear that the time and motion men had been aboard – all the brass work in the wheelhouse had been painted over.

Letters from former crew illustrate how a career could be built up on the PAS/RMAS naval support vessels. The entry requirements were minimal for a fifteen-year-old but by taking the internal tests and assessments of the service, and by being prepared to move around between the main UK naval bases, it was possible to gain regular promotion and have considerable responsibility – PAS/RMAS provided the Admiralty pilots for even the largest warships.

The full story of PAS/RMAS is waiting to be told and deserves attention now to capture surviving crew memories. While some vessels survive in commercial service many of the more specialist have been scrapped (for VIC puffers – see Martin Marks’s paper, forthcoming Spring 2023). A rare exception is the inspiring *Freshspring* project, a steam water carrier preserved at Bideford, Devon <https://ssfreshspring.co.uk/>, and a number of the Harbour Service Launches, tugs and tenders have also survived.

In Easter 1979 it was time for *VIC 56* to set off for her next life – forty years of enthusiast support and family operations, mainly around the Thames Estuary and, on one trip, across the North Sea. Some highlights can be seen on www.vic56.co.uk and <https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=steamship%20vic%2056>.

By 2019 it became clear that with the ageing of the volunteer team another change of home was required and after discussions I gifted *VIC 56* to Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust where thanks to their support and the Boathouse 4 volunteers she can be seen (and is occasionally in steam) as part of the PNBPT collection of naval support craft: <https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=boats%20afloat%20boathouse%204> <https://www.pnbpropertytrust.org/the-collection/25/>; <https://www.pnbpropertytrust.org/historic-boats/4/>.



Left: *VIC 56* towing another VIC – note the open navigating platform. (Photo provided by former crew – likely to be 1950s.)

Below: PAS vessels at Rosyth in 1979. (Photo by the late John Allen.)



Left: Whitby postcard showing *VIC 56* in 1979 shortly after leaving Rosyth after purchase. (Salmon postcard manufacturer, closed 2017.)

A collection of *VIC 56* papers relating to Rosyth, including correspondence with former crew and PAS material, and some representative logs, is deposited, with grateful thanks, as part of the Local Studies Collection at Carnegie Library and Gallery, Dunfermline <https://www.onfife.com/venues/dunfermline-carnegie-library-galleries/>.

More recent operational papers for *VIC 56* and some fifteen PAS logs are held by Portsmouth Royal Dockyard Historical Trust, Portsmouth Historic Dockyard <https://portsmouthdockyard.org.uk/>.

Henry Cleary

Mulberry Harbours: Operation Neptune's Artificial Ports

Introduction

Due in no small part to successive commemorations over the years, the published material on the D-Day Invasion is legion. However, and despite its comparative age as a narrative, having been published first in 1952, Chester Wilmot's extensive account of the fortunes of the Allies from D-Day to Victory in Europe, *The Struggle for Europe*, gives both context and a wealth of detail. In particular is the quoted famous memo sent by Winston Churchill on floating piers. This was evidence of his abiding interest in amphibious operations, embedded in his memory of course by his painful experience as First Lord of the Admiralty of the failure at Gallipoli in the First World War.

The accounts of the Normandy invasion are reinforced in their authenticity by inputs of other military figures involved in D-Day. In particular Chester Wilmot provides a good account of the assembly of the two temporary harbours and focuses on their dismemberment which took place during the storms of 19 June 1944. The dramatic effects of this in logistic terms are also given due weight.

No account of D-Day and the Mulberry Harbours is complete without reference to contemporary accounts by those in charge. Volume VI of Churchill's memoirs, *Triumph and Tragedy* (1954), and Arthur Bryant's quotes from Chief of the Imperial General Staff Lord Alanbrooke's diaries and memoirs in *Triumph in The West 1943–1946* (1959) give clear indications of how the Mulberries were both promoted and assessed in operation by these two key Allied decision-makers.

Although strictly not part of the apparatus of the Mulberry Harbour, I have devoted some space to the DUKW with its important role in support of the Harbour functions. For the short account of its origins, I have turned to the *Military Vehicles Guide* by Pat Ware, published in 2014.

Of all the spirited and heroic utterances of Winston Spencer Churchill, written and spoken during the Second World War, one stands out that represents the epitome of positivity in management:

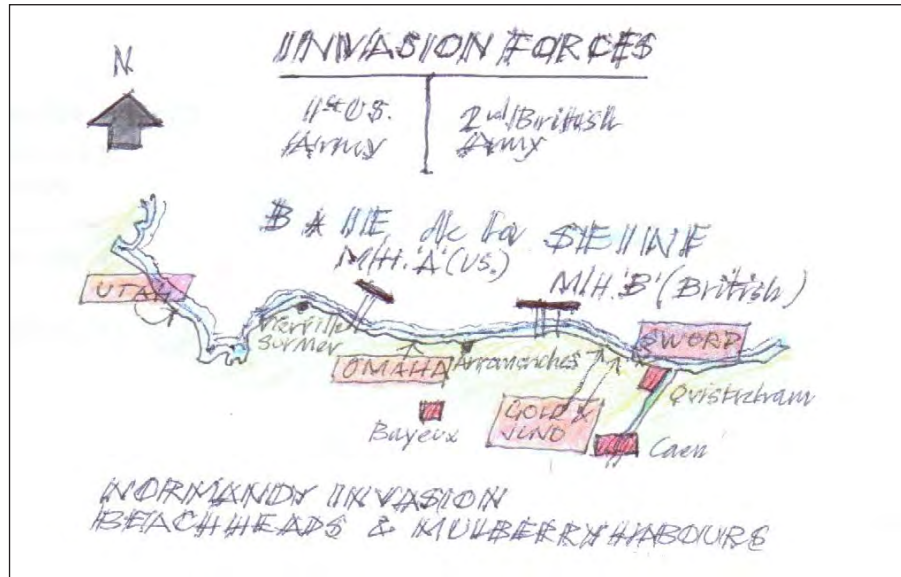
Piers for use on beaches: They must float up and down with the tide. The anchor problem must be mastered. Let us have the best solution worked out. Don't argue the matter. The difficulties will argue for themselves. W.S.C. 30 May 1942. (Chester Wilmot, *The Struggle for Europe*)

In the event anchoring the piers was ruled out. Instead, movement induced by the tide was accommodated by four steel legs telescoped down to stand on the seabed. It is noteworthy that this innovative approach led post-war to the effective positioning of oil rigs. An example of beating 'swords into ploughshares'.

The decision to effect the landings on the open beaches of France rather than through a captured port was due in part to the desire to avoid another horrific experience like Dieppe in 1942. This catastrophic raid lost the Canadians over 60 per cent of their raiding force of 5,000 men, together with the destruction and loss of landing craft, tanks and equipment. On that occasion concentrated fire from the town, complementing that from adjoining cliffs, raked the steeply sloping beach and promenade, destroying and disabling both landing craft and tanks as well as slaughtering the attacking infantry. This experience showed that capturing a working port would be far too costly in terms of personnel and materiel, not to mention the time factor.

In addition to the costs in materiel and casualties, it was expected that when captured, the operation of the ports would have been seriously handicapped for some time by the wholesale destruction of their facilities. This prediction proved to be fully justified when Cherbourg fell to the Americans on 26 June 1944.

Right: Normandy Invasion Beachheads & Mulberry Harbours.
(J. Humberstone)

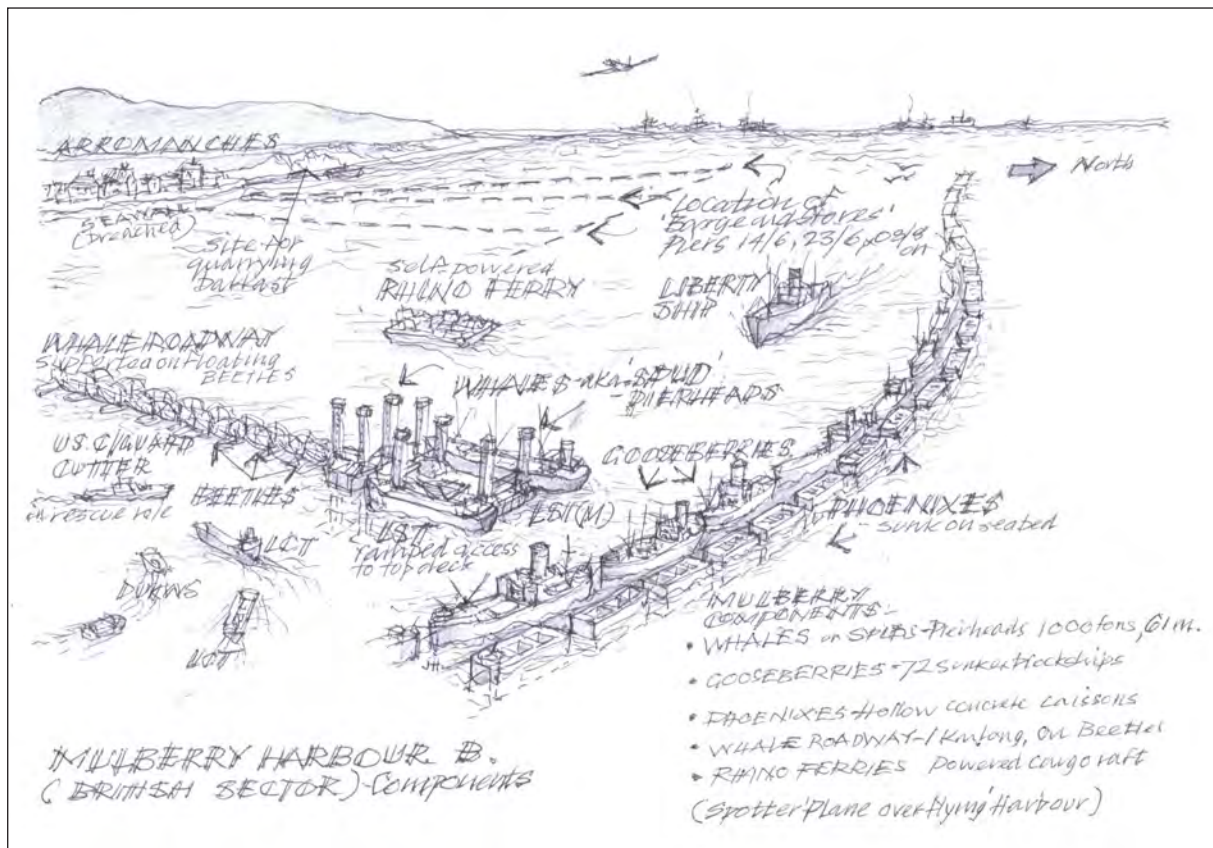


Below: Mulberry Harbour B British Sector Components.
(J. Humberstone)

The Allies advanced from five beachheads: two US, codenamed Omaha and Utah, and three British/Canadian, at Sword, Juno and Gold. A vitally important objective in the invasion plan to overcome resistance at the coast and secure sufficient penetration inland to eliminate possible bombardment of the beaches and especially the two Allied artificial harbours.

As has so often been pointed out, as with the massing of the land forces in southern England, the construction of the Mulberry Harbour elements for Operations Neptune and Overlord appears not to have been noticed by the Germans with the significance this merited.

In explaining the Mulberry Harbours, brief descriptions are best given under the two heads of Floating and Sunken Components. As the sunken elements would be the first encounter for ships arriving at the Mulberry Harbours from Channel ports, these are dealt with first.



Sunken components

The function of harbours, whether natural or man-made, is to provide protection and give calm stable conditions for unloading cargoes. The challenge with the two Mulberries was to create artificial harbours from 6 June onwards, sufficiently protected to provide safe anchorage for the berthing and unloading of ships carrying troops, armour, vehicles and supplies.

Gooseberries

The first instalment of the Mulberry Harbour enterprise was the establishment of outer breakwaters. Over seventy redundant merchantmen were deployed in this role, at each harbour. Their positioning reflected considerations of tidal range and the characteristics of the seabed to which they were anchored. In the latter case, this had been ascertained through clandestine surveys in the period leading up to 6 June, undertaken with no little hazard, by RN 'X' craft or two-man midget submarines. Various models were constructed in Hull, Devonport, and Boathouse No. 4 at Portsmouth:

George VI inspected the three-man submarine (X4) being constructed on 30 September 1942. The king wrote: 'In the Dockyard I saw a 3 man submarine in sections. One is already in commn. & has a range of 1000 miles. One man and Two man S/MS are also being constructed.' (J. Coad, A. Coats, D. Davies, D. Evans and R. Riley, *Twentieth Century Naval Dockyards*, Historic England, 2015, <http://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/twentieth-century-naval-dockyards-devonport-portsmouth-characterisation-report/>, p. 114–15 citing Royal Archives, GVI/Priv/Diary: 30.9.1942; Barrie-Smith, pers. comm. 16.2.15).

Phoenixes

These were box-like cellular caissons of hollow concrete construction. They were designed to be of sufficient height when resting on the seabed to provide a supplement to the harbour breakwater contributed by the Gooseberries. Mammoth quantities of concrete and steel reinforcement were used in their construction, ironically using similar techniques to their masonry equivalents in Hitler's Atlantic Wall. In addition to their harbour function, Phoenixes provided convenient positions for batteries of light anti-aircraft guns such as the 40mm Bofors.

Built at many waterside locations along the coast and rivers, two places illustrate the wide range of construction sites of the Phoenixes: the Solent, along the Gosport shore and in Portsmouth Harbour at the high watermark; and in West London, at dry gravel pits at Ham on the River Thames, where the sites were flooded on completion and the caissons floated out to be towed around the south-east coast of England to embarkation points. Wilmot recorded that Chatham Dockyard had to intervene when the London Fire Brigade failed to pump out caissons effectively before their movement to their south coast assembly points. (**Mulberry Harbours, 2022**, <https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/museum/history-and-stories/d-day-top-secret-mission/>)

One Phoenix can be seen being constructed in 1944 (*Twentieth Century Naval Dockyards*, p. 168: Fig. 5. [opp. p. 76], citing: Photograph showing a Phoenix Caisson for the Mulberry Harbour under construction in C Lock, the Royal Naval Dockyard Portsmouth (27.1.1944) IWM Image H 35374 (2003/583 PMRS).

Corelli Barnett in *Engage the Enemy More Closely* (1991) confirms British shipyard involvement insofar as he states they were unable to contribute to the desperate need for more landing craft because they were fully taken up with Mulberry component production. I myself recall, having been evacuated from West London, seeing an LCT launched sideways into the River Wye at Chepstow in mid-1944. A tiny shipyard: only possible to have perhaps two LCTs on the stocks at a time.

Floating components

Whales

This codename was coined for the so-called Spud Piers at which landing craft, ships and conventional transports discharged their cargoes. Brigadier Sir Bruce White, I/C Port Construction and Repairs in the early 1940s, utilized the long columns of the Lobnitz Dipper Dredge, which rested on the seabed, for his floating piers (Lobnitz shipyard, <https://www.theurbanhistorian.co.uk/lobnitz-at-war/>; Garlieston, Mulberry harbour remains, <https://ancientmonuments.uk/127900-garlieston-mulberry-harbour-remains->

2070m-ene-1035m-east-and-1860m-south-of-mid-galloway-and-wigtown-west-ward#.YOKWrkzMKUk; William Jordan, *The Normandy Mulberry Harbours*, 2005). Their establishment offshore was the subject of Churchill's terse order. As mentioned above, the solution came in the form of extendable legs at each of their four corners that were dropped down to a firm location on the seabed. Assembly took place at several sites including Selsey in Sussex from where the rigs could be towed directly across the English Channel.

They were some 200 feet in length and weighed 1,000 tons each. Acting as pierheads, they connected directly to the floating roadway leading to the shore. Their design permitted coupling in pairs. As well as facilitating alongside berthing, drawbridges could connect at higher level to the upper decks of such vessels as LSTs (*Landing Ship, Tank*) for them to discharge their cargoes down ramped exits onto the pierheads. Less than a fortnight saw half the required number of Whales already at work. When fully in operation the Landing Ships could discharge sixty vehicles onto them in around half an hour.

Rhino ferries

Operating within the sheltered waters of the Mulberry Harbours, these large powered pontoons provided alternative transport from ship or landing craft/ship to the beach. The ferries supplemented the trucks and other vehicles using the Whale causeways and thereby could be expected to increase the delivered tonnage of vehicles and stores to shore. In the event some Rhinos experienced problems. This with other difficulties led to a decision to beach and dry-out freighters and landing craft, leading to progress being delayed by six hours, constrained by tidal times, until they could be floated off.

THE D.U.K.W.

The legendary 'DUCK', an amphibious truck, officially the GMC DUKW-353, played a very important part in the D-Day landings and subsequent activities. The initials DUKW represent the code letters employed by the manufacturers GMC's Yellow Truck and Coach Division. It was based on the equally famous Two and a Half ton General Motors Corporation military truck, the 'deuce-and-a-half' as it was known. The vehicle was designed by Sparkman and Stephens, New York naval architects, famous for their America's Cup yachts, who worked to a brief drawn up by the US National Defense Research Council. Initial experience was gained in the Pacific and in the invasion of Sicily in 1943.

Ducks acted as temporary links between ship and shore while the Mulberry Harbours were being assembled. They continued to augment vehicular movements along the piers, after these were fully in place. Six-wheel drive and engines of nearly 100 hp, giving a top speed of 50 mph, assisted prompt movement of personnel, stores and ammunition to beyond the beaches in the early stages of the campaign. It is believed well over 20,000 of the type had been built by the time production ceased in 1945.

Shoreline activity

While Whale Causeways could normally rely on easy going beach gradients when they reached land, this was not always the case. In at least one instance, vehicles were confronted with too steep a slope to negotiate. On this occasion, a cutting had to be formed to facilitate movement of vehicles off the beach. Fortunately, the invasion forces had brought heavy earth-moving plant with them so that bulldozers, later instrumental in carving out emergency airstrips, were first employed to create a negotiable slope for vehicles when they gained the shoreline.

Once ashore, traffic direction was vital. Learning from Mediterranean experience, command posts with beach-masters and specialized naval and military personnel were set up. These had ship to shore communications and helped to smooth the flow off the beaches.

Storms

During the continuing construction of the harbours off the Normandy coast, in the early hours of 19 June, when 2.5 miles of pier roadway was on its way across the English Channel to be emplaced, a violent storm blew up. All sections of the roadway were lost as it neared the coast. It caused ships and landing craft to drag anchors and be blown ashore and vital convoys to be returned to port. Pressure mines were activated by the storm's violence, increasing the chaos.

After a couple of days of the June storms, only the blockships had managed to remain in position with most other elements adrift, damaged or destroyed. In two days, the discharge of stores and ammunition was reduced by 80 per cent.

The American harbour was virtually inoperable after the storms with additionally a substantial reduction in the operation of its British counterpart. Such was the effect on the plans for attack from both British and US bridgeheads that their thrusts inland had to be delayed and Rommel was given a short breathing space to regroup his depleted forces inland.

Despite this, the violent weather had brought home the true value and significance of the Mulberry Harbours to the Allied High Commands with greater emphasis than before. Even allowing for the major setbacks, six thousand tons was being handled daily after 8 July from the Avranches site of the British Mulberry. No less an authority than Albert Speer in his published memoirs, *Inside the Third Reich* (1970), stated that through the Mulberries by-passing ports, the whole German plan of defence along the Atlantic coast was rendered 'irrelevant'.

J. Humberstone

(This is 'work in progress' regarding connections between Mulberry components and dockyards/shipyards. Does anyone have any further information? Ed.)

BOOK REVIEW

***Churchill's Arctic Convoys, Strength Triumphs Over Adversity* by William Smith**

**Pen and Sword Maritime, 2022. HB, 152 x 229mm, 256pp. 45 ill.
ISBN 978-1-3990722-9-8. £25.00**

In this book the author gives a well written and comprehensive account of the individual Atlantic convoys to and from Russia in World War Two. It starts with the early largely unopposed sailings following Germany's invasion of Russia in June 1941 and then follows events through 1942 when German naval and air operations inflicted heavy losses on both the merchantmen and their escorts. Next, he looks at the period when the programme was nearly terminated in 1943 due to the mounting losses and competing priorities for operational resources as the British started to go on the offensive in the Mediterranean, and the convoys were replaced with independent sailings. Lastly, he explores the return to the active convoys and tells the story all the way to the end of the war.

Grouping the convoys into five phases and using the introduction to each phase to explain what led to that stage of the campaign, the author provides the overall account of the phases succinctly enabling the focus of the book to be very much on the events and character of each convoy. In effect, he treats the convoys as individuals creating a prosopography from which he then draws conclusions particularly about the overall scale of sailings. He uses this technique very effectively and updates the official figures regarding the number of sailings to reflect the number of merchant vessels involved and thus draws out the true vessel casualty rate bringing it from the 7.8% and 3.8%, for the two directions, quoted in the *London Gazette* of 13 October 1950 to a figure of nearly 19% and shows that while 94% of shipments arrived safely this campaign had a far greater human cost particularly for the merchant marine involved and this is well illustrated throughout with the accounts of the drama within vessels subsequent to being hit.

By using this approach William Smith lays out his evidence before you and demonstrates his conclusions. It is clearly well researched with considerable effort over what would appear to be a range of sources. Overall, the book is good quality but there are two limitations. First the book sadly is largely unreferenced and thus restricts the ability to delve into any specific areas that stem from the work. Judging by the bibliography, it would appear to be largely from various websites that have transcribed and collated details from official records. The second is purely a limitation in its scope and takes nothing away from the work, it does limit itself to the details from the convoys and thus does not examine how vessels were prepared or the logistics involved or examine the decision processes that surrounded them, leaving those all open as areas for others to investigate. While the convoy descriptions are well written and engaging, it is quite hard to read as a whole book in one go. There

are forty convoys and some individual sailings from the suspension of the convoys for three months at the end of 1942, and all have a similar style.

While not on naval dockyards and not covering the work done by those to support the convoys, if you have a wider naval history interest the value of the work is absolutely clear and if you want to be able to draw on what occurred on a particular convoy then this is a good, easy to use, reference book that can be dipped in and out of.

Mark Barton

OBITUARY

Audrey Eunice Mar-Gerrison

Audrey Eunice Mar-Gerrison was born in Simon's Town in 1929. Her father was captain of the Admiralty salvage tug *Saint Dogmael* and her mother's family, the Bruyns, were descendants of Andries Bruijns, who arrived at the Cape aboard the VOC (Dutch East India Company) ship *Noordbeek* in 1712. Bruijns was a 'soldier', the lowest rank in the Company, and became the patriarch of a wide-spread South African family of Bruijns, Bruyns, Bruins and Broens.

Between 1979 and 1985 Audrey, with the help of relatives, researched her maternal family's history, a task begun by her late mother, Isobella Mar-Gerrison, and published it privately for the benefit of family members and local historians.

Audrey attended Star of the Sea Convent, in St James, and matriculated, aged fifteen, in 1945. She undertook a secretarial/bookkeeping course as she had to wait before she could start a course in radiography at the University of Cape Town and Groote Schuur Hospital in 1947. There were many ex-servicemen in the queue and as she was so young, she, like many others, had to wait her turn. She then discovered that without further study she could obtain a very reasonable salary, and being never too keen on studying, worked for an estate agent for about four years.

Audrey then spent a year working in London and Edinburgh as well as travelling the length and breadth of the British Isles to visit friends and relations. On her return to South Africa, she started to save for her next trip and left for England again in 1953.

She worked for a while at South Africa House, in Trafalgar Square, and then answered an advertisement for a job with an oil company which had an office in Oxford Circus. She discovered that even in 1953 the building had not been repaired after sustaining bomb damage during World War II and where there should have been walls on the upper storeys, there were huge holes covered by canvas awnings. That was tolerable in summer but by the autumn she began to freeze. She had to take dictation wearing mittens, which made the task very difficult, and secretaries and their bosses wore overcoats in certain parts of the building.



**G. B. Read OBE,
CBE and Audrey
at Buckingham
Palace on
30 July 1980.**

She decided that she had to get to warmer climes and went to the personnel department and was interviewed for and given a job in Tripoli in Lebanon. Tripoli, north of Beirut, was a lovely place in those days where one could sail in the mornings and ski in the mountains in the afternoon. The life was most enjoyable but then came the Suez Crisis in 1957 and the women were all sent back to the safety of the London office.

Audrey was then appointed to a post in Qatar in the Persian Gulf, where in those days there was a little communication with the outside world. Her job was secretary and personal assistant to the managing director of the oil company, who was also the managing director of several smaller oil companies situated in the Trucial States and Oman. She was the only female allowed to travel and each month a good period was spent travelling with her boss or even alone to do work for the general managers of these companies.

While working in the Middle East she met her future husband, Gerry Read, who was working for a different oil company in the Persian Gulf. Gerry was born in Jinja, in Uganda, but spent much of his early life in the Isle of Man.

When he was to be transferred to Southern Rhodesia she resigned from her job and took a month to travel to England via Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan. Audrey and Gerry were married in Southwark Cathedral, in London, in 1959 and sailed for Cape Town via Saint Helena Island. Gerry was introduced to Audrey's parents and the couple set off via the Garden Route and Kruger National Park for Salisbury, in what was then Southern Rhodesia, from where they travelled throughout Central Africa during the next few years.

They retired in 1979 and decided to settle in Simon's Town and bought Chimney Cottage, in Seaford. Gerry, who had received an OBE in 1969, was honoured with a CBE at Buckingham Palace on 30 July 1980 for services to the oil industry.

Both became active members of Simon's Town Historical Society and ardent supporters of the local museum. Audrey edited the *Historical Society Bulletin*, to which she contributed many valuable articles over the years. Following the death of Gerry, Audrey moved to a smaller cottage. She remained an active member of the Historical Society, chairing the Committee, and becoming President, a position she held at the time of her death.

Audrey Eunice Read, President of the Simon's Town Historical Society, died in her ninety-third year at Simon's Town on 16 June 2022.

Bill Rice, Simon's Town Historical Society



Editor's note: Audrey was a former NDS member and took part in our 2009 Chatham Dockyard Tour, seen here with former NDS Chair the late Peter Dawson.

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