

The Naval Dockyards Society

Economic and Social Impact of Dockyard & Shipyard Closures & Heritage Renewal: Lessons to be Learned



1. Portsmouth Harbour: Exemplar of defence site regeneration? - Dr Celia Clark

Synopsis

Portsmouth Harbour on England's south coast has one of the densest concentrations of specialised defence establishments in the UK. Its extensive area, narrow entrance from Spithead within the shelter of the Isle of Wight and proximity to our rivals on the high seas made it ideal for development as one of the country's most important naval ports. For many centuries fleets and armies sailed from the Dockyard to defend the UK's interests and to supply and garrison the global British empire. A complex system of military, naval and air force support facilities developed: gun wharf, victualling and ordnance yards, hospitals, barracks and airfields, which were defended by successive rings of fortifications.

While Portsmouth Naval Base continues in its premier role in the country's defence, in recent years many of the harbour's support facilities have become redundant. Challenges to their reuse include long-term rundown, poorly maintained historic buildings, contamination, poor transport links, loss of skilled employment, failing local economies and their absence from local plans. Their positive and sustainable reuse requires creative vision, proactive planning authorities and financial investment. New long lasting economic, social and cultural activity to meet local needs which benefits the ex-defence community can be measured by new skilled employment, adaptive reuse of surviving structures - for housing, education and employment, new public open space and new activities.

Many former defence sites within the harbour's compass have found diverse new civilian life, including the substantial defence heritage tourism focused on the historic dockyard. This paper examines local experience – because most of the challenges to the reuse of our rich historic defence legacy are demonstrated within this one small area. Together they offer in microcosm an outstanding exemplar of how similar sites around the world can successfully be brought to sustainable new civilian life.

Biography Celia Clark PhD MSc BA PGCE

"What does one do with a historic dockyard?" Sir Neil Cossons, chair of the Heritage Education Group in 1990 asked Celia Clark this question when she was the Civic Trust's Education Officer. As a writer, academic and campaigner much of her career since has been directed towards answering it. *Sustainable Regeneration of Former Military Sites* which she edited with Samer Bagee (Routledge 2016) with examples from many countries was the first exploration of the complexity of the transition to sustainable regeneration for these very special places. Her 2020 book with Martin Marks: *Barracks, Forts and Ramparts: Regeneration Challenges for Portsmouth Harbour's Defence Heritage* (Tricorn Books 2020) explores local experience of the process. Her current work is defining the contrast between the UK's Treasury and Ministry of Defence dominated system for the disposal of surplus defence land with other countries' more locally beneficial systems.



2. The Historic Dockyard Chatham: 40 years of regeneration - Dr Nick Ball

Synopsis

On 31 March 1984, Chatham Dockyard ceased to be a working naval dockyard. 40 years on The Historic Dockyard is the best preserved dockyard from the Age of Sail. Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust has overcome enormous challenges since Dockyard closure, and what has emerged is a thriving multi-use heritage estate, with world class museum, three historic ships, working ropery, filming location, trading and residential estate, and events venue. Possibly the largest conservation project of its type, The Historic Dockyard represents a true success story for maritime and naval heritage. The philosophy of 'preservation through reuse' has driven the rational behind work to bring historically important buildings back to life, as museum and exhibition spaces, offices, and events spaces. With 100 listed buildings and 47 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, it is the greatest concentration of listed buildings in the country. This paper tells the success stories of the last 40 years of the Dockyard's history, and looks to the future at the challenges currently faced by the independent charitable trust.

Biography

Nick Ball is a graduate in History and Maritime Archaeology. He began his career at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, where he co-authored a book about the Navy Board Ship Model collection. He became Archaeological Data Manager for HMS Victory at the National Museum of the Royal Navy, where he curated the Victory Collection, and curated the new Victory Gallery. He now leads the Collections Department for the Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust, responsible for the collections, exhibitions, permanent galleries and interpretation for the Trust.



3. Memory, temporality and living with industrial decline in Sheerness since 1960 - Matt Beebee (University of Exeter)

Synopsis

The Naval Dockyard at Sheerness that dominated employment on the Isle of Sheppey in Kent since 1665 closed in 1960. This paper makes use of oral history testimony collected in 1980 and 2010 to capture the legacies of Sheppey's industrial decline at various moments across a fifty-year timespan. These interviews reveal a common lamentation centred around the loss of pride in craftsmanship and a sense of patriotism associated with Naval employment. Indeed, the paper argues that this sentiment only grew stronger in more recent oral histories as a result of the continual economic hardship, unemployment and shifts in production processes that the Isle of Sheppey experienced from the 1980s. Yet this paper also stresses that such nostalgia does not speak exclusively to the loss of stable, steady employment; rather the closure of the Dockyard acted as a conduit through which people understood broader patterns of everyday life being disrupted by industrial decline.

In particular, the paper emphasises the strong affective attachment to the Island that was articulated through the atmosphere and routines of everyday life. The paper highlights how interviewees often juxtaposed the dynamism of the everyday in the time of the Dockyard with the stillness of post-closure life. Through this, the paper explores how it is progressively over time that the social and cultural impact of major, localised industrial decline is felt in a place such as Sheppey; a process continuously reworked through the lens of nostalgia as a way of accommodating to new contexts.

Biography

Matt Beebee is completing an AHRC-funded doctoral candidate in Modern British History at the University of Exeter. His PhD project is examining the impact of deindustrialisation on meanings of self, place and belonging since the 1960s through the case studies of Tyneside and the Isle of Sheppey. His project brings together the surviving field notes and interviews from social-science research with oral history interviews to assess the social and cultural change wrought by deindustrialisation across the long *durée*.



4. German 'U-Bunkers' (U-Boat pens) built on French port cities, between reuse and oblivion. - Jean-Baptiste Blain

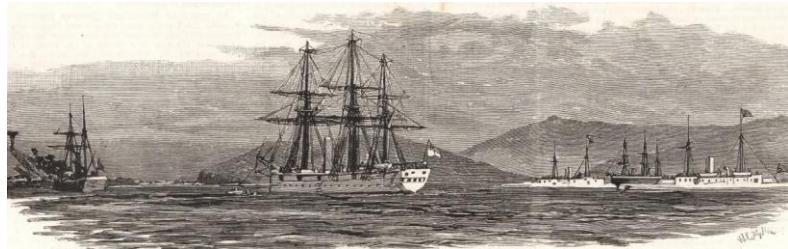
Synopsis

At the end of the Second World War, the protected pens for German submersibles (U-Boat-Bunker) were the focus of the French Navy's attention. Between August 1944 and May 1945, the French Navy decided to keep these constructions in order to reuse all or part of them. Buildings not required by the French Navy were placed at the disposal of the Ministry of Public Works, Ports and/or Chambers of Commerce for the installation of industrial enterprises. The U-Boat pens thus became integrated buildings within civilian ports and military arsenals. Within civil ports, they became elements facilitating the storage and transit of goods. They also sometimes contributed to increase the added value of products before being redeployed to the hinterland.

Despite legal concerns related to state ownership, in at least one instance, the U-Bunkers used by the Defence have a long military history that dates back to the Cold War era. However, at the end of the Cold War tensions, and after the industrial sectorial crises, we may wonder what happened to these U-Boat Bases? Have they been forgotten by the military and civil power, as in La Rochelle - Pallice or integrated into new neighbourhoods, like Bordeaux and Saint-Nazaire? Does the conversion of these U-Bunkers into cultural recreation buildings consider the plurality of their history? Through the examples of Lorient, Saint-Nazaire or Bordeaux, one might ask whether the U-Bunker transformations do not tend to rewrite or reinterpret the history of these buildings? Finally, we will see how citizens were invited (or not) to think about the conversion of the U-Bunkers, built in French cities.

Biography

Jean-Baptiste Blain is a teacher and a librarian in secondary schools (middle and high-schools) of the Academy of Nantes. His master's degree in History of the development and the environment was a comparison between the two submarine bases of Bordeaux with that of Saint-Nazaire from 1940 to 2020, (Bordeaux Montaigne University, April 2013). In October 2021, he participated in the organisation of the international conference in Lorient called: 'The submarine bases in Europe: state of knowledges, prospects & heritage issues' where he has presented two papers. He is currently preparing a book on the U-Bunkers during the Second World War in France and one on 'Betasom', which was the Italian submarine base of Bordeaux (from 1940 to 1943). His most recent paper is: 'Pignerolle. A museum of the Infrastructure at the FdU West of Pignerolle' (the German 1942–45 U-boat command centre) in *Casemate 126*, January 2023, Fortress Study Group, pp. 42-48.



5. Why do we forget some Naval Dockyards – for built-in obsolescence, economic or geopolitical reasons? - Dr Mark Barton

Synopsis

While most papers presented at this conference will look at the how and why they are preserving for their community certain naval dockyards, this paper will explore what and why we chose to forget. It will ask the question for those conducting conservation as to whether they should be also reflecting the lost dockyards and their communities, either in their broader geographical area or of a similar era. Or if not, how do we include these dockyards within that overall historical dockyard narrative?

This will identify some of the dockyards where local communities have little or no engagement with the historic dockyards formerly located there which have disappeared largely without trace and certainly without any significant remains or commemoration. Where there is commemoration, it is simply an interpretation board or plaque. It will include the challenge presented by mud docks from the medieval and Victorian eras which by their very nature were intended to be returned to nature. It will discuss the small naval dockyards in Britain that have largely disappeared, from the medieval era to the two world wars, including those where we are not even certain of their location and those that have been completely covered by other developments which are now considered historic in turn.

Finally, it will discuss why many Royal Naval Dockyards and support bases around the world have been chosen to be forgotten by their communities, in particular those deriving from the global expansion that required coaling stations. This will include the challenges of even looking for any remaining elements of some of them, including those where the features have been fully removed, such as Port Hamilton in Korea, those overtaken by other developments, such as Bonny in the Nigerian Delta, and those where access for political reasons is not achievable such as Lake Onega in Russia and those in the Caspian Sea and Hengam in Iran.

Biography

Dr Mark Barton is a recently retired Royal Navy Commander who served 35 years as a Marine Engineer Officer specialising in naval architecture and was a former Director of the Royal Naval Division at the Joint Services Command and Staff College. With a masters in Defence Studies, he completed a doctorate looking at the Patriotic Fund at Lloyd's. Having authored the Maritime Engineering element of the RN's current Fighting Instructions, he wrote two histories for the RN before he retired *Royal Navy Dockyards and Bases* and *History of the Engineering Branch* both being published internally only. He has published a large number of articles for various journals mostly on engineering/naval architecture or in the area of his first book *British Naval Swords and Swordsmanship*.



6. Innovatory rehabilitation of Hvar Arsenal and Historic Theatre to win the Europa Nostra Best European Conservation Achievement Award 2020 - Nives Lokošek and Luka Josip Erhardt

Synopsis

The island and town of Hvar have a long history of strategic navigational and naval importance in the historical period of thalassocracy until the Napoleonic Wars, although already in 1767 Venice abolished the Venetian naval arsenal and moved it to Boka Kotor. The shipbuilding approach to researching the history of the Hvar arsenal recognised the ancient roots of the Hvar arsenal as well as the four reorganisations of the naval arsenal of the Venetian thalassocracy. The last Renaissance renewal from 1610 to 1612 has been perfectly preserved until today.

The renewal of the Hvar Arsenal with its historic theatre, which began in 1996, is a renewal with a great pioneering and visionary significance that introduced the conservation profession of Croatian architectural heritage into a new scientific era, which is recognised by:

- a) Interactive formation among the professions of the entire project procedure
- b) Scientific-research project approach to renewal, restoration and anti-seismic protection of architectural heritage in Croatia
- c) European context
- d) By defining the nomenclature of the conservation profession in the field of renewal of load-bearing structures

In historical continuity, the cultural significance of the Arsenal with its historic theatre goes beyond the limits of the local community, it is the centre of some of the most important cultural manifestations in Croatia. The revitalisation project adapted a very significant building to the modern needs of the community and added a new cultural dimension to the tourism of the area.

The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia awarded the renewal of the Hvar Arsenal with the historic theatre the prestigious Vicko Andrić Award for 2018, and the renewal also received the 2020 Europa Nostra Award for the best European conservation achievement.

Biographies

Nives Lokošek, Naval Architect, Zagreb, Croatia

Nives Lokošek gained a naval architecture degree from the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture in Zagreb, Croatia. At the Brodarski Institute/Institute of Marine Research & Special Technologies in Zagreb (Department of Shipbuilding Constructions and Special Technologies) she focused on naval shipbuilding: research, ship construction: strength calculations, prototype testing (preparation, realisation and analysis of results); supervision of warship construction; approval of technical documentation, etc. Nives attained the highest scientific and professional levels: lead investigator and independent architect. In addition, the Institute prized her designs of construction for the missile gunboats *King Petar Krešimir IV* and *King Dmitar Zvonimir*, and the minesweeper *Korčula*. She also owns the Lokošek project design bureau in Zagreb. Nives has had a long interest in the history of shipbuilding and has published many works on the history of naval arsenals and dockyards.

Luka Josip Erhardt, Naval Architect, Zagreb, Croatia.

Luka Josip Erhardt gained a naval architecture degree from the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture in Zagreb, Croatia. Was a part of the Croatian Association of Students of Naval Architecture as a member and Vice-president in charge of organizing the International waterbike regatta team of Zagreb. A few months before getting his master's degree he started working as a junior design Engineer at Marine and Energy Solutions DIV Ltd. and there has taken part in many complex projects including a Multipurpose luxury tourist and research submarine, Zero-emission passenger sailing ship, Autonomous unmanned multipurpose ship and more. In his free time he enjoys participating in sailing regattas and works on the restoration of cultural heritage projects under the mentorship of Nives Lokošek.



7. The Kasbah Remade: Culture and Heritage-led regeneration on the Port of Grimsby - Dr Stella Jackson

Synopsis

Described by Historic England as a 'town within a town' and located on a small peninsular of made land built in the mid-19th century, the historic 'Kasbah' at the Port of Grimsby was once part of the largest fishing port in the world. An area of national significance due to its 19th and 20th century fishing heritage, it is considered to be the most important representation of industrial scale fishing in the UK. However, with 66% of the buildings vacant and in poor or very bad condition, the local community sees the fish docks as an emblem of decline rather than a heritage to be celebrated.

By the mid-20th century, overfishing in the previous decades and tensions with neighbouring countries had led to the decline of the fishing industry in Grimsby, culminating with the closure of the Great Grimsby Ice Factory in 1990. In the years which followed, many of the buildings on the Kasbah were left to ruin, and many were demolished. The Kasbah sits within the East Marsh ward of Grimsby, whose residents had traditionally found employment on the docks. By 2017, the East Marsh was one of the top 1% most deprived wards in the country, with long-term unemployment being significantly higher than the national average.

However, recent investment by offshore renewables companies, the designation of the Kasbah as a Conservation Area in 2017, and public investment through the Grimsby Heritage Action Zone has begun to halt this decline. Putting this in context, this paper will look at how the Kasbah is being remade through culture and heritage-led regeneration. It will consider the positive social and economic impacts of the work which has taken place over the last five years, highlighting the lessons learned and discussing some of the key problems which remain to be addressed.

Biography

Dr Stella Jackson has been the Greater Grimsby Heritage Action Zone Project Manager since January 2019, leading on the regeneration of the historic Fish Docks at the Port of Grimsby. Prior to this she was a research assistant at the University of Liverpool, a project officer with the SPAB, and has had a number of roles for Historic England, including training delivery, places of worship advice, and statutory designation. Her PhD was undertaken at the University of York from 2008–2016 and focussed on the often contested nature of heritage significance.



8. The Economic and Social Effects of a Shipyard Closure: Scott Lithgow at Greenock and Port Glasgow, Scotland, 1970–1990 - Keynote: Professor Hugh Murphy

Synopsis

This conference paper analyses the economic and social effects of the closure of the Scott Lithgow shipyards in the Lower Clyde Burghs of Greenock and Port Glasgow from 1970 when the two firms officially merged, through nationalisation under the British Shipbuilders Corporation in July 1977 and its placement in the Corporation's newly formed Offshore Division in 1980. It continues from re-privatisation in March 1984 to eventual closure. It utilises primary Scott Lithgow records, and secondary sources, including authored books on Scott Lithgow and on the British shipbuilding industry, and the remarkably well-informed local press through the Greenock Telegraph, the oldest evening newspaper in Scotland. It also uses the Parliamentary record, Scottish national statistics, including population estimates, and some published oral and private interviews.

Biography

Professor Hugh Murphy (University of Glasgow) has authored several books and numerous articles on the British shipbuilding industry. He has held Junior and Senior Caird Fellowships at the National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich and is currently (since 2005) their Visiting Reader in Maritime History. A former Hon. Editor of *The Mariner's Mirror*, the international quarterly journal of the Society for Nautical Research (2005–13), he is also Series Editor of *Research in Maritime History* at Liverpool University Press. His latest book is *Shipbuilding in the United Kingdom. A History of the British Shipbuilders Corporation* (Routledge, London, 2021).