



# DOCKYARDS

## The Naval Dockyards Society

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

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**The Keroman 111 U-boat pens at Lorient, France.**

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## Welcome from the editor

I trust you are all keeping well and had a good summer.

Recently, while on holiday in France, I was lucky to visit the U boat pens at Lorient, very impressive but sinister structures. Our cover image shows one of them, Keroman 111. In early 1943 the Allies dropped over 60,000 bombs on Lorient with a view to cutting supply lines to the virtually indestructible pens. After the war, the French navy used them as a submarine base until 1997. Most have now been adapted for commercial use. One houses the former French sub *Flore*. Also on the holiday, I looked down on the naval dockyard on the River Penfeld in Brest. This is best done from two road bridges from which the two images below were taken. The views are spectacular.

Largely coastal forces here with the Château du Brest behind. And further upstream in Brest, the destroyer *Latouche-Treville*, decommissioned in July 2022. On the far bank the stone structure formerly housed a dockyard crane.





Our last issue led on the disappointing news of the withdrawal of funding for Devonport, so it was heartening to hear that the Heritage Centre there reopened in mid-August 2023 and is no longer situated in a secure area, making public access easier.

Good news also from Sheerness where our Chair Ann Coats attended the opening of the former dockyard church in June 2023. A wonderful achievement and the former church is now styled 'IslandWorks', usefully offering 'coworking and event space and meeting rooms as well as a public coffee shop.' A full report in the next issue.

Interesting news from Woolwich comes from Ian Bull, who reports that a proposal for the Woolwich dry docks was put forward perhaps two years ago. It envisaged a slim twenty-two-storey residential tower between them. Derided locally, the project was abandoned as it would not have received planning permission. Ian is not aware of any subsequent proposals and walked around the dockyard recently, noting nothing has changed since the NDS 2016 visit although the westernmost parts of the site is now overlooked by new blocks of flats.

Good news from the Falkland Islands Dockyard Museum: negotiations are continuing with a contractor to construct the £2m Lookout Gallery and Exhibition Hall (LGEF). If successful, it is hoped the LGEF will be open by the end of next year. Commander of Amphibious Forces in 1982, Commodore Michael Clapp, has kindly agreed to perform the opening ceremony.

I have been glad to get along to Smallhythe, near Tenterden in Kent, for two events recently. The first in June 2023 was a talk by the renowned archaeologist Gustav Milne and the excellent Nathalie Cohen, National Trust archaeologist for the South East. In excellent presentations, they covered the history of Smallhythe as a shipbuilding, shipbreaking, and repair centre in the Middle Ages. Inter alia ships were built there for Henry V, maybe a bit hard to believe at first sight as the sea is now ten kilometres away. The second was a tour on the last day of the archaeological dig (28 August) of the various excavations that have unearthed startling new discoveries on how medieval ships were built and of various dock structures. More in a future issue of *Dockyards*. We were able to leave with some Roman tiles and pottery, about a quarter of a ton of this has been found.

On the White Cliffs of Dover, the National Trust have been excavating a six-inch no. 3 gun battery at Fan Bay, dating from the 1939–45 war. Remarkably interesting, as was a tour underground led by Richard Ellwood of the (very) sparse living accommodation for those manning the guns.

Clive Holden (below right) was working at Fan Bay and is Chair of the Kent Defence Research Group (of the Kent Archaeology Society) as well as writing in this and other issues of *Dockyards*. Professor Alice Roberts was there filming on the day I visited Fan Bay and had been at Smallhythe also for the 'Digging Britain' series.





At the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, on 22 May 2023 NDS member and former secretary Paul Brown was presented with the Society of Nautical Research's Anderson Medal for maritime research, for his book *Abandon Ship: The Real Story of the Sinkings in the Falklands War*, by SNR chairperson David Davies. (Image courtesy of Society for Nautical Research)

I recently finished cataloguing the ship-breaking files at the Marine Technology Collection (MTSC) at Newcastle University. This was a great privilege. The MTSC was largely assembled by NDS member Dr Ian Buxton and among other things comprises the records of many of the UK's leading shipbuilders as well as breakers. There is

also the British Shipbuilding database and a substantial library. There is a wide variety of material even in the shipbreakers' files; an example, a T. W. Ward file reveals details of a covert mission by the Admiralty to acquire and investigate the wreck of the German pocket battleship *Graf Spee* in 1939 and 1940.

Please note all photos are by the respective authors unless otherwise stated.

**Richard Holme (editor)**

## **CMB 4R (Coastal Motor Boat) Commissioning Ceremony, 8 September 2023 at Portsmouth**

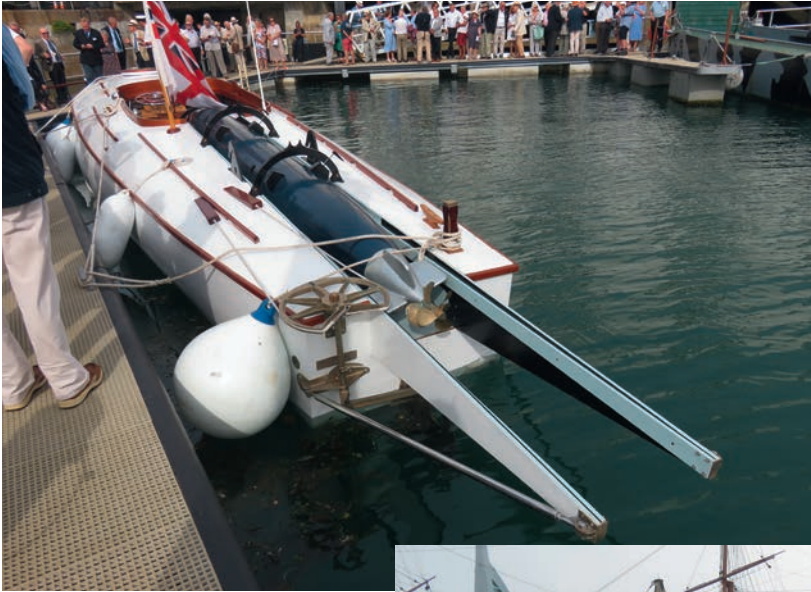
It was a perfect day for a commissioning ceremony of CMB 4R! Members of the Agar and Thornycroft families and naval and maritime enthusiasts joined the blessing of the boat by the naval chaplain and readings by Commander Rodney Agar and David Griffiths, CMB project manager. Commander John Bingeman, who had served with Commander Agar in his career, represented the Society for Nautical Research as vice president. I represented the Naval Dockyards Society.

The fame of the original CMB 4 derived from a raid on 17 June 1919, when Lieutenant Augustus Agar RN sank the Bolshevik cruiser *Oleg* outside Kronstadt harbour during the Russian War of Independence. Agar was awarded the Victoria Cross for this action. In August 1919, in the same boat, Agar led seven larger CMBs in another raid inside Kronstadt harbour. As a result, the Russian Baltic fleet remained largely confined to the harbour for the remaining campaign. The original CMB 4 has been loaned to the Memorial Flotilla of Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust by the Imperial War Museum and will be on display in Boathouse 4 in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard until June 2024.

Delegates to the NDS 2022 Conference had experienced David Griffiths of Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust presenting 'Building a Coastal Motor Boat for the 21st Century'. He described building a full-size, working replica of a First World War Thornycroft Coastal Motor Boat, a fast, forty-foot torpedo boat, very effective in the North Sea and in Russian waters. However, one had not been built for over a hundred years. As David wrote in his abstract, 'there is no book out there entitled *How to Build a CMB*.' Delegates were amazed that no one had been killed firing the torpedoes. The whole story will be published in the next *Transactions* volume.

David traced the inspiration for the original boats and the Admiralty contract awarded to Thornycroft for forty such craft. Then, in 2015, after watching CMB 9, believed to be the only operational survivor of the first group, cruise in the Thames, the concept of recreating one was voiced by Digory Rose, Director of Marine Operations with Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust, and Fred Attwood, Senior Volunteer. This chimed with the thinking of the late John Margetson (grandson of John I. Thornycroft), John Askham and John Jefferies (archivists with the Isle of Wight Classic





**CMB 4R at the pontoon.**

**The Naval Chaplain  
reading the Naval Prayer.**



**CMB 4R doing 37 knots  
on 6 September during  
a successful sea trial  
in the Solent, with Ryde  
in the background.  
(Courtesy The Portsmouth  
Naval Base Property Trust)**

Boat Museum) and retired Royal Navy Commander Rodney Agar, nephew of Augustus Agar VC, who commanded CMB 4 in the Kronstadt raid in 1919. With the support of the Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust and an application to LIBOR funds, this became a feasible project.

Theoretical data derived from almost sixty plans held at the National Maritime Museum and many photographs of the construction and testing of the early boats in the Isle of Wight Classic Boat Museum. The CMB team was also permitted to measure and photograph CMB 4 thoroughly at the

Imperial War Museum at Duxford. Copies of the plans were printed full size using a plotter printer, then 'scaled off' from the plans to draw the constituent parts of the hull at full size on the lofting floor, following shipwright mould loft practice in making each part. From 2017, CMB 4R was constructed by volunteers. Progress was halted by Covid but restarted in a limited manner in autumn 2020. By September 2022, the boat was complete and ready for trials.

At the ceremony, CMB 4R glittered like a jewel, its iconic hull design having influenced subsequent high-speed boats. The new boat represents a landmark achievement for Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust's heritage. David said: 'It has been an honour to work with the volunteers. We have been part of history.'

**Dr Ann Coats**

## **Block Mills Tour, Portsmouth, 9 October 2023**

This rare opportunity was arranged through the Naval Base Visits Manager and Portsmouth Royal Dockyard Historical Trust. We were not allowed to take pictures. Our fees, less expenses, were donated to the Trust.

Twenty-one guests plus four Trust volunteers enjoyed a tour of this iconic building, led by Jonathan Coad and Dennis Miles. To reach the Block Mills we walked past the Ropery, South Office Block, No. 24 Store, and Docks Nos 3–5. Jonathan illustrated the pride of the dockyard officers who designed the buildings by insisting that later additions to South Office Block should match the earliest wing.

Jonathan described the physical evolution of the building and how it fitted within the Admiralty's plans to modernise dockyard technology and operational capacity from the mid-eighteenth century to the early 1800s. The Block Mills represented the culmination of this modernisation and made the navy self-sufficient in pulley block production. It was the perfect scheme to mass-produce a large quantity of items needed by the navy and became the first industrial site to use steam-powered machine tools in a production line. It was made clear that the Block Mills innovations were a synergy between commercial machine toolmakers and engineers such as Marc Isambard Brunel and Henry Maudslay, and the skills and ingenuity of Samuel Bentham, Inspector General of Naval Works, and Simon Goodrich, the resident mechanical engineer. Goodrich recorded frequent visits by VIPs which interrupted the work, including Admiral Nelson on his last day ashore before embarking for the voyage culminating in the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. HMS *Victory* was most probably supplied with blocks from the Block Mills. Jonathan concluded: 'This is a seminal building of the Industrial Revolution!' The inside did not seem to have changed much since a previous visit. Outside, it was concerning to see recent crude mortar additions, compared with the neat and minimal historic mortar joints.

Afterwards we walked through The Parade, viewing the handsomely renovated outside of Long Row. Only the first house has been renovated of the eight in the terrace needing refurbishment. A discussion opposite the corrugated iron clad Fire Station revealed the earliest use of corrugated iron in the London Docks (1830s) and the Admiralty innovation of galvanising cast iron to make it more durable. We then proceeded through the archway cut through the Ropery after it ceased operations in 1866, past Admiralty House and the Old Naval Academy, then back past the former School of Naval Architecture. The Old Naval Academy continues to deteriorate since its closure in 2005, with no plan in place for its re-use.

**Dr Ann Coats, organiser.**

## **Good news from Grimsby**

Exciting news brings the latest chapter in the history of Grimsby Ice Factory with planning permission applied for to convert the building into a conference and business centre.

Abandoned since it ceased production in 1990, Grimsby Ice Factory was listed Grade II\* by English Heritage on account of being the last surviving Victorian ice factory with its ice making equipment intact, in its original setting of the historic Grimsby fish dock.

In 2009 a public meeting at Grimsby Town Hall was held by the Grimsby, Cleethorpes and District Civic Society. The Society was split between members who wanted to preserve the Ice Factory and members who thought it should be demolished. This split was reflected in the show of hands at the end of the public meeting and the conclusion was that a standalone group should be set up to champion the Ice Factory. The Great Grimsby Ice Factory Trust was set up in 2010 to secure the future not just of the Ice Factory but also of the historic Victorian docks which provide its setting (now the Kasbah Conservation Area within Grimsby's Heritage Action Zone).

Despite an early sprint of success with public donations funding an Options Appraisal, and public consultation in 2013, a formal bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2014 fell at the final stage.

Since then, Great GIFT has continued to raise the profile of the Ice Factory, and in order to preserve the context of its listing, entered into a partnership with NELC and ABP to renovate buildings in the historic docks, including Peterson's Smokehouse on Henderson Street and Fred's Fish on Wharncliffe Road.

The Ice Factory is now in the hands of a new owner, Tom Shutes, who through his company KH 1900 Ltd. has applied for planning permission to begin repairs and conversion of the space to accommodate offices, meeting rooms, and conferencing facilities. Working closely with Historic England, the architects have proposed a scheme that retains the gigantic 1930s J&E Hall ammonia compressors, and a representative section of the ice-making machinery, so that the process can still be understood by visitors to the building. Full details can be seen here:

**DM/0864/23/FUL I Restoration, extensions, alterations and conversion of the Ice Factory North and South buildings to provide office, conference, events and leisure floorspace, food and beverage floorspace, construction of a new internal access road with servicing and delivery provision and public realm works, car, coach and cycle parking facilities and associated and ancillary works I Grimsby Ice Factory Fish Dock Road Grimsby Docks Grimsby North East Lincolnshire (nelincs.gov.uk)**

This development is not being undertaken in isolation, however. Permission to build a 160-room hotel next to the Factory, linking the Ice Factory to the Kasbah beyond, has also been sought, and further plans for the surrounding area will emerge in due course.

**DM/0769/23/FUL I Erect 5 storey hotel (Use Class C1) with associated public realm works, car parking and various associated works I Land At Auckland Road Grimsby Docks Grimsby North East Lincolnshire (nelincs.gov.uk)**

This project is a prime example of 'heritage led regeneration', whereby the rescue of a unique and important building also brings economic benefit to the town.

**Graeme Bassett and Vicky Hartung**

Editor – my visit to Grimsby in January 2023 and tour with Vicky were covered in the last issue of *Dockyards*. The websites [www.ggift.co.uk](http://www.ggift.co.uk) and [www.thekasbah.co.uk](http://www.thekasbah.co.uk) are most informative.

## **Isla del Rey at the end of summer 2023**

What a long hot summer it has been, and still continues even as I write in October! Visitors to Isla del Rey have been abundant, more than sixty thousand people have been recorded, indicating that the numbers have remained constant since the opening of the Hauser & Wirth Art Gallery. Not all these visitors have passed through the hospital of course; we're trying hard to offer guided visits every day and in French or English on certain days, but we're only volunteers and with limitations on our free time. There is one professional guide paid by the tourist office who has been a big help to us and we may plead for another for next year. However, as a guide myself, it is increasingly difficult to get around everywhere in the time allowed, there is so much to see and so many anecdotes and stories to tell our visitors. Inevitably some find certain rooms fascinating and tend to lag behind or want to take the opportunity to talk more to the volunteers specialising in their particular field of interest, so now we have incorporated an extra volunteer who does the 'shooing' along behind the group. It does help! On a Sunday morning tour our visitors have the opportunity to see all the volunteers at work,





numbers vary but possibly sixty to seventy people may be working around the building and gardens and the atmosphere is so much more interesting. After the tour we always invite the visitors to join the volunteers for a glass of beer or wine and a snack so everyone has the chance to talk together. It's a moment that proves very encouraging for the volunteers as they get so much positive feedback and moral support (sometimes even economic support as well).

We are now offering the upstairs of the old hospital for viewing. It's close to completion and now has plenty to see about the history of the harbour of Mahon. Starting from Roman times when the Menorcans became famous for their 'slingers', and were incorporated into the Roman army thanks to their skills with the sling, the stories progress through to the present day including the British, French and American rooms and stories of the emigrations to Florida, to Algeria and to Argentina.

And talking of emigrations, it was a lovely surprise to receive an unexpected visit one day from Clyde Moneyhun, an American university professor and a direct descendant of a Menorcan family who emigrated to Florida in 1768, during possibly the first mass migration from the Mediterranean to the New World. He was so happy to come back to his roots and to our surprise speaks an old-fashioned Menorcan dialect, absolutely delightful! So now Clyde is planning to spend part of every year here in Menorca after his imminent retirement, he will be made very welcome!

In September we had a special memorial for the eightieth anniversary of the sinking of the battleship *Roma* in 1943 during WWII. The 600-plus survivors were brought to the harbour of Mahon to be treated for their injuries and burns in the old British hospital, at that time in the hands of the Spanish military medical services and with nuns working as nurses. The ships that brought them in then had to sit out some fourteen more months of the war in the harbour as Spain was a neutral country. That might sound like an easy life but they became very dependent on local goodwill for food and clothing and general welfare. The only remaining survivor of *Roma* (at one hundred and two years) old watched the live proceedings from an Italian ship located at the point of the sinking. The Italian ambassador and defence attaché from Madrid as well as an Italian navy ship took part in the proceedings in Mahon and on the Isla del Rey.

Another important event which takes place every year on the island is the 'Forum'. It is an important open debate about matters concerning Menorca, and these occasions fill all the patio in the centre to overflowing. It's become an important date in the Menorcan calendar, when feelings can



be freely aired and discussed about important topics. This year the theme was how the island of Menorca is exporting talent and the four main speakers (all young Menorcans of course) were an ambassador, a doctor in biomedicine, an actor and a paralympic athlete. A great mixture of talent and ideas! As always, it was very well attended and proved inspirational.

To continue the stories of different events, we also have a very high standard of talent in the many and varied shows arranged by Hauser & Wirth. Apart from the art gallery and children's workshops which are regularly offered, they provide shows of modern music, baroque music or ancient music and even 'dance with sculpture' which is a spectacle of light and music in a background of sculptures amongst the gardens and olive trees. What a magical setting underneath the stars in the middle of one of the largest natural harbours of the world!

To finish with, there was one very big disappointment in September. We had planned for months and worked hard to have the amazing Red Arrows back with us for a show over the south coast, with the Foundation Hospital Isla del Rey being the hosts for the event. All was prepared, catering arranged and expenses paid, visitors flew in especially from the UK, the weather perfect, but the unthinkable happened: at 20.30h the evening before the show was cancelled for diplomatic reasons. You can probably imagine our feelings; it left a large part of the population in Menorca gutted, and especially the British who couldn't believe it, and we were left without any clear explanation from the government, which seemed to make it worse. However, it's now in the past and we must move forward with new plans and events for the future. Anyone want a half-price Red Arrows T-shirt?

**Beverley Ward**



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Catamaran 10€ for adults and 3€ for children from  
3 years to 18 years old.

Further details can be obtained from:  
<https://www.islahospitalmenorca.org/>  
<https://www.yellowcatamarans.com/en/kings-island>



**Aerial view of Isla del Rey (page 8), the Forum (above right) and visitors arriving (right). Poster by the Isla del Rey team.**

## HMS *Pembroke* – Royal Naval Barracks, Chatham (Part 2)

At 11.00 p.m. on 4 August 1914, Great Britain declared war on Germany. Earlier that day German forces had swept into Belgium in breach of that country's neutrality, which had been guaranteed by the 1839 Treaty of London, signed by Britain, France, and Prussia. At 11.02 p.m., the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, sent the following signal to all HM ships and naval establishments across the globe: 'COMMENCE HOSTILITIES AGAINST GERMANY'.

Thanks to Churchill's foresight, the Royal Navy was well prepared for war. The First Lord had ordered a test mobilisation of the navy's reserve Third Fleet in July which was followed by a 'Grand Review' of the whole fleet held at Spithead on 19 July. Following the Review, the Third Fleet was only partially demobilised while the Second Fleet and main Grand Fleet remained on active duty at Portland. On 2 August and acting against the wishes of the majority of the Cabinet, Churchill ordered a full mobilisation of the Royal Navy, calling up all reservists, many hundreds of whom reported for duty at HMS *Pembroke*, the RN barracks and headquarters of the Chatham Port Division.

At the outbreak of the war the Chatham Port Division of the Royal Navy was responsible for the manning of 205 ships of various types and the Medway anchorage was full of vessels on standby ready to be called into action. Many of them had been at anchor there for years in reserve including the five old *Cressy*-class cruisers of the 7th Cruiser Squadron. The day war was declared, the 7th Cruiser Squadron left Chatham and headed for the North Sea. On the morning of 22 September three of the ships, HMS's *Aboukir*, *Cressy* and *Hogue*, were sunk by a single German submarine and 1,500 of their crew perished. Rumours of a major naval defeat involving Chatham-based ships soon began to spread from the dockyard. Eventually an official confirmation was published naming the ships involved. Hundreds of women gathered outside the Chatham Town Hall seeking news of their loved ones, but it was four days before a list of survivors was published. It was Chatham's first major tragedy of the war, but sadly it was not to be the last.

This tragedy was soon followed by another when on 26 November the battleship HMS *Bulwark* was ripped apart by an internal explosion while moored in the Medway off Sheerness with many Chatham-based ratings on board. Of the crew, 741 were killed and just twelve survived. Following the Naval Board of Inquiry, the explosion was thought to have been caused by the overheating of cordite charges that had been stacked up in the cross-passages of the ship's magazines, some against a boiler-room bulkhead.

Meanwhile, the barracks at HMS *Pembroke* were rapidly nearing capacity, coping with the multitude of reservists who had been called up, so an 'overflow' camp of wooden huts was built to the east of the existing barracks, somewhat unimaginatively named 'East Camp', to accommodate the greatly increased numbers of men.

Further huddled accommodation was added in 1917 with the completion of North Camp, sited close to the barracks' North Gate, which gave direct access to the dockyard and the barracks' dedicated platform on the Chatham Dockyard Railway branch line.



The Main Gate.





**Parade Ground.**

**Drill Shed, the target  
of the 1917 bombing.**



Despite the additional buildings, the barracks continued to be overcrowded. Some alternative space was found by utilising the Drill Shed as a temporary accommodation for crews of ships that were at the dockyard for repairs or maintenance and for sailors awaiting re-assignment to other vessels.

On the night of 3 September 1917 there were over nine hundred men billeted in the Drill Shed. Many of them had been due to join the battleship HMS *Vanguard* but she had suffered a catastrophic accident back in July when an internal explosion had sunk her while she was moored at Scapa Flow. Because of this her new crew were forced to extend their stay at Chatham whilst alternative vessels were found for them. That night four German Gotha bombers attacked Gillingham and Chatham. A practice alert had been carried out earlier in the day in the towns, and when the aircraft were finally spotted and an alert sounded, many people ignored the warning believing it to be another practice drill. Forty-six bombs were dropped on the towns including two that smashed through the glass roof of the Drill Shed, shattering it into thousands of deadly shards, showering the hundreds of helpless seamen below, before exploding on the solid floor. Many of those who were not killed or injured in the explosion were cut to shreds by the flying glass. One hundred and thirty men were killed and over ninety injured; the most casualties in Britain caused by bombs on a single target during the war. Further casualties were suffered from bombs that fell on the dockyard and the Great Lines.

A funeral service for ninety-nine of the Drill Shed victims was held at Woodlands Cemetery, Gillingham on 6 September. All were buried with full military honours. The coffins, each draped in a Union Flag, were borne on eighteen lorries followed by a procession of marching soldiers and sailors with thousands lining the streets to pay their respects.

Following the end of the Great War, most of East Camp was demolished leaving just Hut 129, which became the Royal Navy's first bomb disposal school. The Detention Barracks also closed and eventually redeveloped to re-open in 1927 as HMS *Fisgard*, an artificer apprentice school. *Fisgard* provided the apprentices with their accommodation and classrooms but for their practical instruction they had to march to the Mechanical Training Establishment, situated alongside No. 2 Basin on St Mary's Island.



**Grenville Block – seamen's quarters (left) and Officers' quarters (below).**



**Left: Wardroom.**

When Hitler came to power in Germany in the 1930s clouds of war again began to gather over Europe. By 1938, Germany had already re-militarised the Rhineland and forced Austria into union with the Reich. Its eyes were now set on the Sudetenland areas of Czechoslovakia with its ethnic German population. Despite the efforts of Britain and France to mediate, a war that would drag both powers into conflict with Germany seemed inevitable. With bitter memories of the 1917 Drill Shed bombing still fresh in the minds of the Chatham naval command, the decision was taken to dig a series of tunnels into the chalk cliff-face under Cumberland Road, to the rear of the seamen's barrack blocks. The excavations were carried out by Welsh miners and on completion formed three interconnected tunnels which would serve to protect the barrack population from air raids. The tunnels were named Nelson, Anson, and Duncan, after the three barracks blocks behind which each tunnel entrance was situated. During the early years of the Second World War, when the threat of enemy bombing was at its height, anyone who was not on duty watch had to spend the night in the tunnels. They had to queue up to enter, clutching their hammocks, and then find somewhere to sling them. Officers had the 'luxury' of camp beds to sleep on but these began to sag after just a few uses



so ending up with the officers' bodies resting on the solid concrete floors. Conditions in the underground accommodation were dire, with thousands of bodies crammed into a relatively small space, with all the accompanying noise and odours.

The Women's Royal Naval Service had been re-formed in 1938 with many women assigned to serve at Chatham. The Wrens also had to sleep in the tunnels. Although they were kept segregated from the men, conditions for them became equally intolerable and it was not uncommon for a Wren to volunteer for fire-watching duty rather than spend the night underground. Despite the poor conditions, the shelters prevented a repeat of the awful events of 1917, and thanks to other improved anti-aircraft measures the barracks escaped serious damage during the war.

As in the First World War, the barrack accommodation at Chatham soon became overwhelmed with the recruits and reservists entering the service. To cope with the increased numbers, the apprentice school, HMS *Fisgard*, was closed and transferred to Torpoint. The school site was renamed HMS *Collingwood* and used for new entries. East Camp was then rebuilt to serve as overflow living quarters. Later in the war, a separate camp complete with its own dedicated air-raid shelters was constructed close to the Nore C-in-C's residence on the Lower Lines to house the Wrens, many of whom worked in the nearby underground Nore Command HQ. To create more accommodation, the Gunnery School took over St Mary's Barracks from the army in 1941.

King George VI paid a wartime visit to Chatham on 21 February 1940. His visit included a tour of inspection of the RN Barracks where stokers lit a line of braziers along Terrace Road to create a smokescreen in case of a threat from German bombers. Queen Elizabeth then came in 1941 to inspect the WRNS and Princess Marina, Duchess of Kent, visited three times during the war years in her capacity as Commandant of the WRNS.

**Sealed entrance to the  
air-raid shelter tunnels.**



**St George's  
Barrack Church.**

**Gunnery School (right)  
and Gymnasium (below).**



**Canteen (above) and  
Warrant officers' mess (left).**



Following the end of the Second World War the future of Chatham as a major naval base soon appeared under threat. Several major Admiralty contracts for dockyard work were cancelled and many hundreds of workers made redundant. Then in 1950 the closures of the Royal Marine barracks and the Gun Wharf on Dock Road were announced. The post-war reductions in the size of the fleet saw the number of naval personnel based at Chatham greatly reduced. St Mary's Barracks was demolished, and the Gunnery School moved back to its original location. The St Mary's site was later redeveloped to create new RN married accommodation and named the Mountbatten Block. The Gunnery School at Chatham then closed completely in 1958.

Following the plans contained in the 1957 Defence White Paper, the Nore Command of the Royal Navy was abolished and with it the RN Chatham Port Division. The effect on the naval infrastructure in the Medway area was dramatic. Sheerness Dockyard was closed as were the RN armaments depots at Upnor and Lodge Hill, and the fuel depot on the Isle of Grain. The Nore C-in-C's grand residence on the Lower Lines was demolished and the grounds eventually turned into a public park.

The HMS *Pembroke* RN barracks was re-classified as a supply school and the former Gunnery School buildings became the home of the Supply and Secretariat Branch, with its main block becoming the captain's office and the heavy gun battery site becoming a drill shed. East Camp continued in use and the Wrens moved into one of the former seamen's barrack blocks. *Pembroke* also provided the accommodation for Chatham's few remaining Royal Marines and the crews of ships undergoing repair at the dockyard.

Further defence cuts in 1971 saw Chatham's remaining naval establishments amalgamated into a single administrative entity as HM Naval Base, Chatham under the command of a flag officer, Medway and port admiral, the first of whom was Rear-Admiral Colin Dunlop.

On 25 June 1981, the Secretary of State for Defence, John Nott, announced in the House of Commons that the Chatham Navy Base was to close by 31 March 1984. On 3 June 1983, the Royal Naval barracks, HMS *Pembroke*, held its final ceremonial divisions. Then on 29 October its last commanding officer, Captain Paddy Sheehan, was ceremonially 'hailed out' of the Main Gate by some of his men leaving the barracks in the care of the Closure Party.

On 18 February 1984 the small RN Closure Party gathered at the mast outside the wardroom at the barracks. The 'Last Post' was sounded by a solitary Royal Marines bugler and the White Ensign was lowered. The party left in a horse-drawn brewer's dray cart and the gates of HMS *Pembroke* were finally locked. Within a month Chatham Royal Dockyard was completely vacated and its gates were locked for the last time by the Ministry of Defence police on 31 March 1984, thus ending Chatham's 450-year association with the Royal Navy.



**Programme cover for  
the Final Divisions.  
(Author's collection)**

For some years the fate of the barracks site was unclear, and its buildings were left to rot and decay. The air-raid shelter tunnels were sealed up. East Camp and North Camp were both eventually demolished as were the sick quarters and one of the three original barrack block buildings.

In 2004 a tri-partite collaboration between the University of Greenwich, the University of Kent and Canterbury Christ Church University saw the establishment of a shared campus on the old barracks site. Many of the buildings were renovated and converted to educational use. The wardroom in the palatial former officers' quarters became a venue for weddings, meetings and other events.

The former St George's Barrack Church was deconsecrated; it now serves as a centre for various community activities, but inside it still retains many memorials to its naval heritage.

The Chatham Royal Naval barracks, HMS *Pembroke*, may be no more but its name lives on in the form of the Sandown-class mine counter-measures vessel HMS *Pembroke* (M107), stationed at HMNB Clyde.

**Clive Holden**

## **HMS *Triumph* at Chatham Navy Days**

The image below shows the former light fleet aircraft carrier *Triumph* and the tug *Felicity* on 29 May 1978. *Triumph* had been converted to a heavy repair ship between 1956 and 1965. In this role she could augment dockyard facilities by having up to four destroyers and smaller escort vessels alongside for repair at any time. She could also transport and maintain helicopters. After conversion she was stationed at Singapore, but in 1972 she returned to Chatham for refit and was then consigned to the stand by squadron based there, before being sold for scrap in Spain in 1981.



Photo credit: Dennis Macey

## **Chatham Dockyard photos**

I was fortunate, following arrangements made by NDS member Clive Stanley, to visit the reading room in the Fitted Rigging House at Chatham Dockyard. Helen Brown from the Trust kindly showed me selected photos from the 27,000 or so in the archive of the Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust. These included superb aerial views as well as images of launches, ships in dry dock and dockyard workers. A large proportion of the Trust's collections can be viewed online; only a few photos have been digitised but some excellent images can be viewed on

**Highlights - Photographs - Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust ([thedockyard.co.uk](http://thedockyard.co.uk))**

At present the best course of action for researchers seeking photos is to email [collections@chdt.org.uk](mailto:collections@chdt.org.uk) giving a couple of weeks' notice at least of any visit and indicating as precisely as possible the subject area you are interested in.





The armoured frigate HMS *Royal Oak* under construction in 1862. Laid down in May 1860, she was ordered to be completed as an ironclad in May 1861. (Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust)

The nuclear submarine HMS *Dreadnought* being towed by the tug *Felicity* through the north lock of the Bull Nose locks at Chelsea. (Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust)



A couple of photos from the archive of the Trust are reproduced here.

The reading room is a spacious and very pleasant environment. I may be able to visit the photo archive of the Dockyard Historical Society in the next few months. The Society are settling into new premises in the Ropery. In the reading room, I was glad to meet for the first time NDS member John De Rose, membership secretary of the Historical Society, which has 130 members. John can be contacted on [johnderose@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:johnderose@blueyonder.co.uk) if you want details on membership. I then had a look at a superb photo exhibition in the Smithery organised by National Historic Ships UK. After Chatham, I went to nearby Gillingham pier where the old paddle steamer *Medway Queen* (looking in excellent fettle) and the former minesweeper *Tongham*, looking her sixty-six years now, are moored.

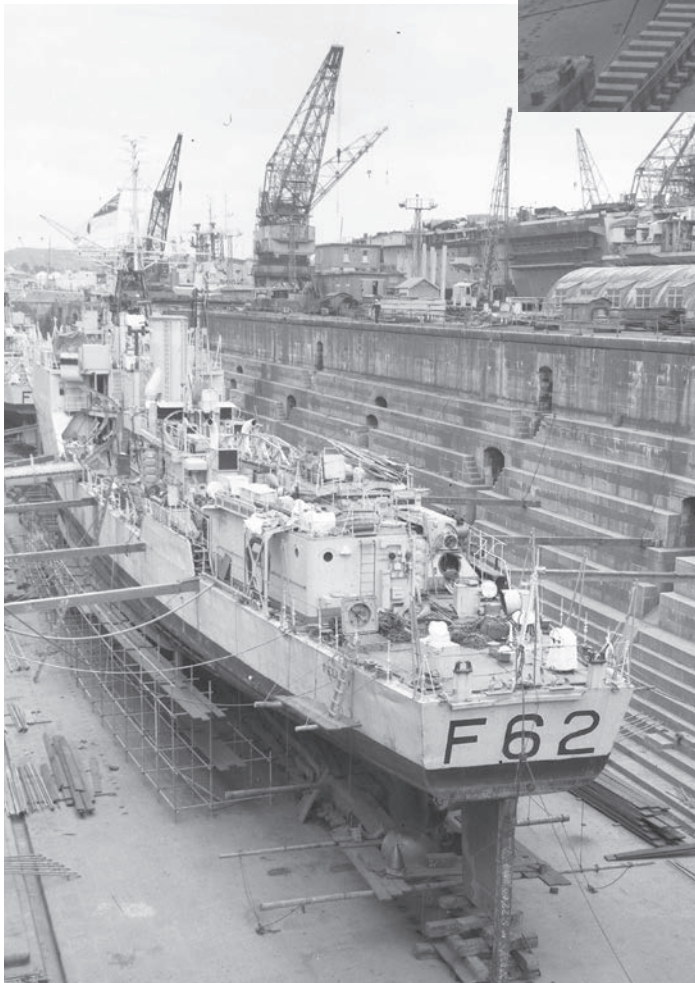
**Richard Holme**

## **Ships in dry dock at Devonport**

During Navy Days, it was often possible to pass by dry docks, so Ian Buxton took the opportunity to take photos of ships docked, which revealed the hull form and sometimes propellers.

**Dr Ian Buxton**

**Right: *Wave Baron* in North Lock at Devonport, 1 August 1959. The lock was often used as a dry dock, with internal dimensions 730ft x 95ft, 45ft draft over the blocks. A sliding caisson was fitted at each end. A 30-ton crane on the east wall.**



**Left: Type 14 frigate *Pellew* in No. 9 Dock at Devonport, 1 August 1959. Sister *Murray* was in the same dock. *Ark Royal* is partly visible in Dock No. 10. The dock is 790ft x 93ft, 32ft draft over the blocks. It could be divided by a caisson into a 462ft and a 298ft section. A 30-ton crane on the west wall.**

**Page 19: *Belfast* in No. 9 Dock at Devonport, 4 August 1962. Her bulging is just visible behind the side shores and scaffolding. Her anchors and cables are laid out on the dock floor.**



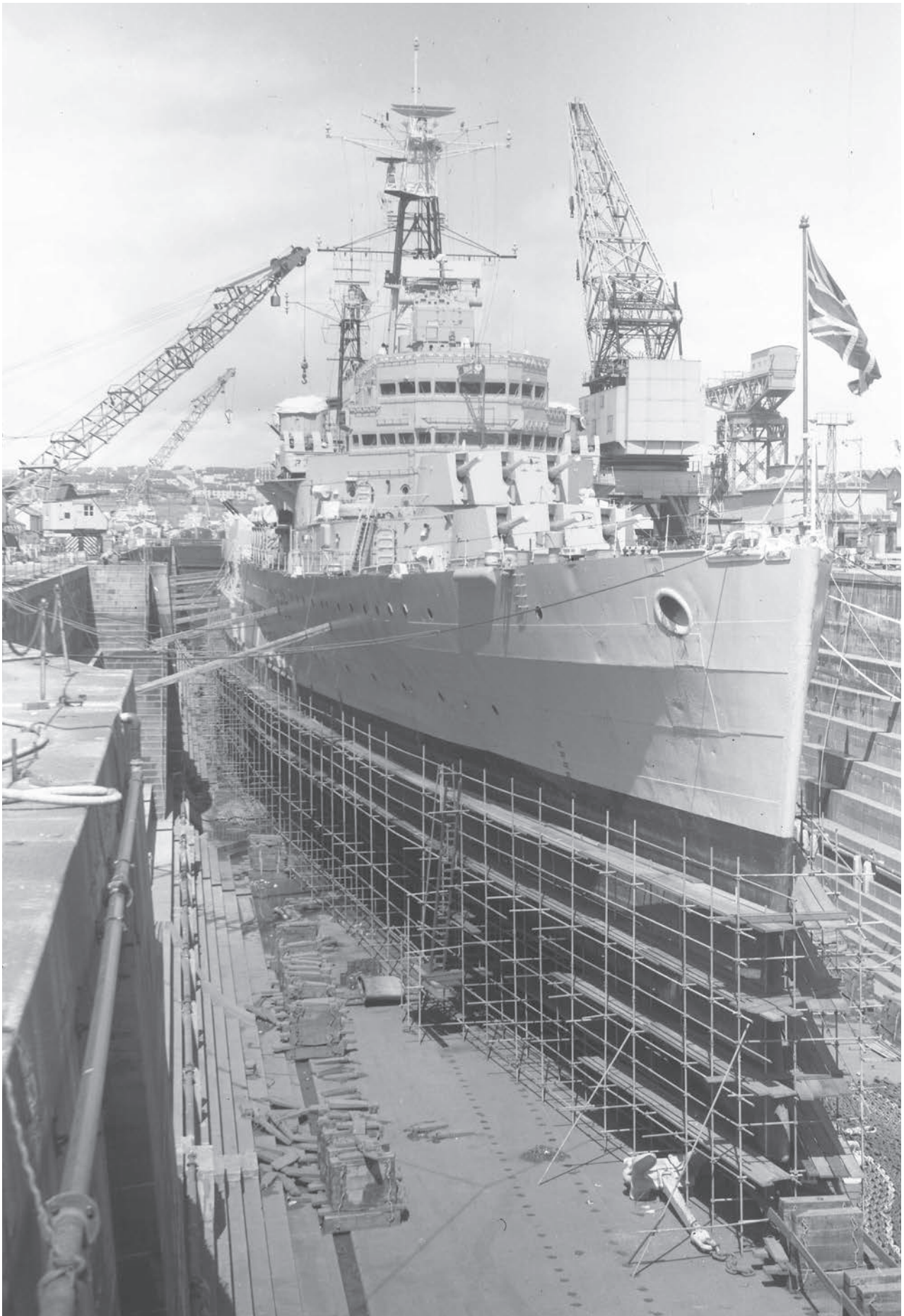




Image courtesy of MTSC Newcastle University

## Shipbreaking at Pembroke Dock

After the naval dockyard closed in 1926, leading shipbreakers TW Ward leased the western part of the yard until around 1939. This included the yard's one dry dock. Pictured here is the gunboat *Thistle* in the dock. She arrived in October 1926 and the last part of her was not sold until 1930. The total outturn from her was £5,402 and she was bought from the Admiralty for £2,650. It seems TW Ward broke up a submarine in the dry dock at the same time as *Thistle*.

Lawrie Phillips reminded me that having only one dry dock had inhibited the yard's efficiency and expansion. Moreover it had seen troubled episodes in the past such as the royal yacht *Victoria and Albert* nearly capsizing when floated out in January 1900.

**Richard Holme**



## Rosyth – an aerial view in 1960

This interesting photo (below, courtesy Ian Buxton collection) shows Rosyth when it was still very much an operational base. There are a number of ships round the main basin as well as the 250-ton cantilever crane to the left (west wall) and a 100-ton crane to the top (north wall). Both were demolished in 1991. The destroyers *Duncan* and *Chevron* are in the two long dry docks, nos 2 and 1 respectively, on the north side. Smaller vessels would typically be housed in Admiralty Floating Dock (AFD) 22 (at the bottom of the picture) and here we can see DGV 401. The dock books for the period confirm that two other small AFDs, 21 and 46, were at Rosyth at this time for a similar purpose. On the north wall can be seen the frigate *Loch Fyne* with smaller craft including a Bar class boom defence vessel and two VICs. On the west wall the destroyer HMS *Caesar* with *Corunna*, *Whirlwind* and *Matapan* behind. The dock books are very helpful and show the draught of water when the ship was docked and undocked as well as the dates of docking and the reason; usually at this time this is a very broad 'refit and docking' but sometimes more specific such as propeller repair. It can be deduced from the dates in the dock book that this image was taken between 10 and 13 May 1960.

### Rosyth – extract from the 1916 dock book

The page reproduced on page 22 shows docking from March to June 1916, a busy time with a wide variety of ships being docked. Readers may well remember that the epic battle of Jutland was on 31 May 1916. The battleship *Warspite* and battlecruiser *Tiger* were docked shortly afterwards to repair battle damage. Also it can be seen that *Warspite's* sister ship *Queen Elizabeth* missed the battle as she was in dry dock for her annual refit.

**Richard Holme**

(with acknowledgements to Ian Buxton, who kindly provided the dock book copies and data)





D. 302. (Revised August, 1909.)

Draught of Water over Sill when Docked.	No. of Dock.	SHIP	When		Draught of Water when				Description of any Special Works Performed.  Certificate that Draught Marks are Correct.	Signatures of Officers, &c., concerned. Draughtsman for Certificate of Draught Marks; Assistant Constructor or Foreman of the Yard for all other Information.
			Docked.	Undocked.	Docked.		Undocked.			
					Foreward.	Aft.	Foreward.	Aft.		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
37'-6"	1	'Zealandia' 16350	27-2-16 8 AM.	4-4-16 2-30 pm	27'-5"	27'-3"	26'-3"	27'-6"	Temporary repairs to O.P. Rating	P. Bishop.
37'-5"	1	'Dominion' 16350	6-4-16 9-30 AM.	17-4-16 11-45 AM.	28'-3"	27'-6"	28'-1"	27'-8"	Periodical examination & draught marks checked	P. Bishop. J. Blake.
37'-0"	2	'Constance' 17900	15-4-16 11-0 AM.	19-4-16 4-0 PM.	18'-3"	16'-0"	15'-3"	16'-0"	No change propeller.	A. Jones.
34'-0"	1	'Breadnought' 17900	20-4-16 10-0 AM.	27-4-16 4-0 PM.	28'-9"	28'-6"	27'-2"	27'-2"	Periodical Examination & fitting of Bow Protection.	P. Bishop. draught marks checked J. Blake.
34'-0"	2	'New Zealand' 18500	23-4-16 2-30 PM.	4-5-16 6-0 PM.	28'-6"	27'-3"	28'-5"	27'-2"	Collision damage by H.M.A.S. "Australia"	A. Jones. draught marks checked J. Blake.
34'-6"	1	'Invisible' 17250	27-4-16 18-5-16	28-0-16 3-00 PM.	28'-0"	29'-8"	28'-0"	29'-8"	Collision damage by "Gosau" yacht.	A. Jones. draught marks checked J. Blake.
33'-0"	2	'Breadnought' 17900	5-5-16 3-50 PM.	26-5-16	29'-9"	29'-6"	29'-9"	28'-9"	Periodical Examination & fitting of Bow Protection. Reels	P. Bishop.
30'-0"	1	'Queen Elizabeth' 42500	23-5-16 4 PM.	1-6-16 5 A.M.	32'-0"	33'-0"	32'-0"	33'-0"	Annual Refit	L. B. Bishop. draught marks checked J. Blake.
31'-0"	1	'Royalist' 18416	18-4-16 11 AM.	20-4-16 2 PM.	15'-0"	15'-2"	15'-1"	15'-2"	Cleaning & Coating	A. Jones.
31'-6"	1	'Wasp' 25000	2-6-16 4 PM.	4-7-16 5-0 PM.	32'-6"	34'-0"	31'-7"	32'-5"	Damaged in Action	A. Jones. draught marks checked J. Blake.
37'-8"	2	'Liger' 25000	3-6-16 6-30 AM.	2-7-16 4-30 AM.	30'-10"	30'-8"	30'-6"	31'-7"	Repairs after damage + refit	P. Bishop. draught marks checked J. Blake.



## BOOK REVIEWS

### ***Chatham Ropery in 1808: As Described in Memoranda prepared by Simon Goodrich, Mechanist to the Admiralty.***

**Transcribed and introduced by Edward Sargent FSA,  
Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust (2018)**

Edward Sargent and the Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust are to be congratulated for producing this attractive and informative monograph interpreting the 1808 Memorandum on Chatham Rope House's machinery, inspected by Admiralty/Navy Board Mechanist Simon Goodrich. It demonstrates that 'the Navy was at the forefront' of technical ropemaking developments. By 1808 it had 'modernised all four of its ropeworks, by installing sets of equipment for forming strands that took advantage of' the most relevant commercial patents' (p. 8). This account also illustrates the long-term influence of Samuel Bentham, Admiralty Inspector General of Naval Works 1796–1807, who directed Goodrich's projects and revolutionised the implementation of modern technology throughout the dockyards.

Sargent demonstrates that Bentham, Goodrich and leading dockyard officers were familiar with leading commercial ropemakers, such as Messrs Grimshaw, Webster & Co. in Sunderland. They were involved in discussions to design bespoke steam-power systems for Woolwich and Portsmouth Dockyards, to save labour and money and create a more standardised and durable product. To illustrate how the dockyards developed their mechanisation, Sargent analysed the most relevant commercial patents of the 1790s and early 1800s, showing how theories were tested and applied. This decade was crucial in stimulating improved mechanisation, to satisfy growing royal and merchant naval demand during the French Revolutionary and then Napoleonic Wars.

The most relevant were Joseph Huddart's patent processes, which could form strands and wind them together through a register plate and forcing tubes, then one which could 'close a rope from three strands and wind them onto a reel, thus dispensing with the need for a ropewalk.' (p. 5). John Daniel Belfour's ropemaking experience in Denmark led him to equalise the strain throughout the rope by controlling the forming of strands by cones and hooks and a board similar to a register plate. The ropery system of William Chapman, a civil engineer in Newcastle-on-Tyne, was similar to that of Joseph Huddart.

Sargent then describes John Daniel Belfour's experimental machines installed at Chatham in 1798, modified by dockyard officers. In 1808 they were surveyed by Goodrich, to prepare a proposal to introduce steam power to the roperies. He richly interpreted their use by sketches and notes. These are reproduced here, along with drawings by Watson Fenwick, Foreman then Master Rope-maker at Woolwich, and drawings from Belfour's patents. Sargent also identifies a machine still *in situ* at Chatham: Belfour's timber frames holding the register plates, 'probably now the oldest piece of equipment in the Chatham Ropery' (pp. 13, 19). Goodrich also noted the numbers of people required to work the machines, hence the horsepower needed to apply steam power. Steam power was not added at Chatham, so it continues to this day, powered by humans. However, new forming machines made by Maudslay were installed in 1811.

This meticulously analysed book uses Simon Goodrich's Chatham survey, enriched by extensive transcriptions of his observations of how they worked, to interpret the evolution of rope-making machines throughout the dockyard roperies. It will satisfy the most curious seeker of technical detail and knowhow and disseminates practices which would otherwise not be available to the public.

**Ann Coats**

### ***Tempest: The Royal Navy and the Age of Revolutions* by James Davey (Yale University Press, 2023)**

Far too often we concentrate on the senior officers and politicians in naval history. Several recent books have tried to examine forgotten people, on slim pickings. James Davey has used solid evidence, albeit it from external sources, to look at the perspectives and complexities of those on the

lower deck as they endeavoured to gain a voice in the 1790s. In particular he examines courts martial records as well as recorded personal reflections of the time. He does this in an engaging and highly readable book, writing in a way that would be of interest to both those who are interested in the history of politics and radicalism and workers' movements and those who are interested in naval history, showing how these two parts of history, which are usually treated as disparate, combine to offer a fresh perspective when exploring the behaviours of the sailors during the French Revolutionary War.

The book sets out the story of Britain's Royal Navy during the turbulent 1790s, when the country had been catapulted into a war with Revolutionary France not long after republican ideals had been used as a catalyst in America to win independence. As the radical ideas about liberty and rights spread, this was the Age of Revolutions and considerable political upheaval. While Britain did not suffer any such revolution, it was not immune from the spirit of revolution and equally the Royal Navy was not isolated and could not prevent this desire to fight for rights, as well as fighting the enemy, reaching its ships. This was especially the case in what were probably the largest communities of labour at that time, made up of men who were often not there of their own free will with the pressures and seizures of impressment. The author explores how sailors used petitions to seek redress using the political language of the time, in particular words such as 'delegates' and 'committees' echoing recent events in Paris. James Davey demonstrates just how this resistance and rebellion spread through the fleet in the 1790s, and while the Spithead and Nore mutinies are relatively well known, how these mutinies spread far wider and impacted on other areas has not been well captured previously.

When he sets the context, he draws attention to the Irish rebellions, the French attempted landings, and the Fishguard landing which forced Britain off the gold standard; when these were combined with the mutinies they led to real concern. The book then explores how the government, the navy and the individual sailors responded to this challenge, in particular how they used the victory at the Nile, Jack Crawford's nailing of the colours to the mast and a new Mutiny Act over the subsequent sixteen months to return themselves towards the position of giving confidence that they could defend Britain.

While any such book dealing in ideas and themes inevitably has elements that can be debated and argued over as for their relative importance and what people actually thought, the fact that it engages you such that you wish to be involved in the debate is credit to the author.

This book complements the author's look at the logistical and societal elements of the Napoleonic War in *In Nelson's Wake* (2015). While not on naval dockyards, this is likely to appeal to many NDS members, especially if interested in political upheaval or the Napoleonic Royal Navy.

**Mark Barton**

### ***The Thames Estuary's Military Heritage* by Philip MacDougall (Amberley Publishing, 2023)**

This book discusses and promotes the military heritage of the Thames Estuary over a period of two thousand years from the Roman occupation. It is by a seasoned historian who is well known to the Society and indeed one of its founders. He has a special interest in naval dockyards and their importance to the security needs of seagoing nations and in the protection of the military-industrial complex created by the navy in its dockyard infrastructure.

To quote from the author, 'The Thames Estuary is the gateway into London that had to be defended against seaborne invasion. Through proximity to the Continent, these waters were a likely passage-way for those intent upon seaborne raids or invasion, necessitating the need for a powerful naval force to be on hand when threatened. The first fortifications date back to Roman times. To support the British navy in these waters, four of the nation's royal dockyards – Chatham, Deptford, Sheerness and Woolwich – were clustered along the Thames Estuary or close by on the Medway from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for the commissioning, refitting and repair of warships. As well as being of importance for the defence of the country, the Thames Estuary fulfilled another role: that of underpinning naval activities designed to support British tactical and strategic operations in more distant parts of the world. Close to the mouth of the Thames, and near the point of confluence with



the Medway, was the Nore, a key naval anchorage where newly commissioned warships assembled, taking on crews and receiving final instructions before joining the active seagoing fleet. In the twentieth century, additional defences against attack by submarine or from the air were established, and gunpowder factories sited along the estuary.'

The dockyards, the shore batteries and forts, as well as the later air defences, are discussed as well as instances of actual seaborne raids, notably in 1379 and 1667.

An omission, however, is the development of the defences arising from the important military technological progress of the later nineteenth century. This saw the move forward from muzzle-loaders to faster-firing and longer-range breech-loaders, utilising advances in mechanical engineering, improvements in chemical science for propellants and the explosive fillings of shells, the use of electricity, for example in searchlights, and the methods of range-finding and fire control. These developments manifested in the new designs for defences, embracing the use of concrete. Examples may be seen in Gravesend Reach, at Allhallows as well as at the mouth of the Medway. Guns at the Shoeburyness range could now reach out into the estuary and were to become part of the defences. From the sea there was also the threat of new and more advanced warships, armed with very effective long-range guns to challenge the defences on land. The latter were supported by riverine minefields.

There is also a story to tell about defence during the post-war and early Cold War periods, which saw the continuation of some of the river defence batteries until 1956 and the creation of a new boom defence across the Thames from Shoeburyness (succeeding an earlier one) and which has left impressive traces. The Thames and Medway, including the naval bases at Sheerness and Chatham, were considered to be probable targets for nuclear attack.

The front cover pictures do not, unfortunately, obviously evoke the intent of this book (although the rear cover one does) and there is an absence of a bibliography. Nevertheless, this is an attractive book, generally well-illustrated and a stimulating publication which should certainly be successful in encouraging its readers to go out, see and experience the varied military heritage of the Thames.

**Victor Smith**

### ***Portsmouth's Military Heritage* by Philip MacDougall (Amberley Publishing, 2023)**

The strategic importance of Portsmouth Harbour and its naval dockyard and base led to successive waves of investment in defensive forts, batteries and lines. The earliest version of the Round Tower was built by Henry V in about 1415 and other defences to the harbour entrance were constructed around this time, including a blockhouse on the Gosport side. These defences were strengthened by Henry VII, who added the Square Tower and rebuilt the Round Tower in stone, and Henry VIII, who constructed defensive embankments and earthen bulwarks as well as Southsea Castle. The next major round of works came under Charles II, when the harbour entrance defences were again strengthened by Bernard de Gomme, who, on the Gosport side of the harbour, also added Fort Charles, Fort James and the Gosport lines. The long eighteenth century with its Spanish and French wars prompted the building in 1747 of an entirely new fort defending the only road at the point where it gave access to Portsea Island at Portsea Bridge. This followed recognition that landings elsewhere on the south coast could lead to the invaders approaching Portsmouth by way of the road from London. Similarly, Fort Cumberland was built to thwart entry via Langstone Harbour, and Fort Monckton to defend the Swashway Channel route into the harbour and Stokes Bay. Next, when the threat of a French invasion returned in the mid-nineteenth century, came the huge investment in lines of forts around Gosport and Portsdown Hill, and the sea forts which defended the Spithead anchorage. The Gosport Advanced Lines were also constructed and the Hilsea Lines rebuilt.

All of these developments, and more, are concisely chronicled by Philip MacDougall in this readable book, which is attractively illustrated with historic engravings, maps and archive photos. Many of these structures remain, albeit stripped of their former roles, allowing the author to add recent photos of them, and the reader to explore them at their leisure.

**Dr Paul Brown**

## The Life of Riley

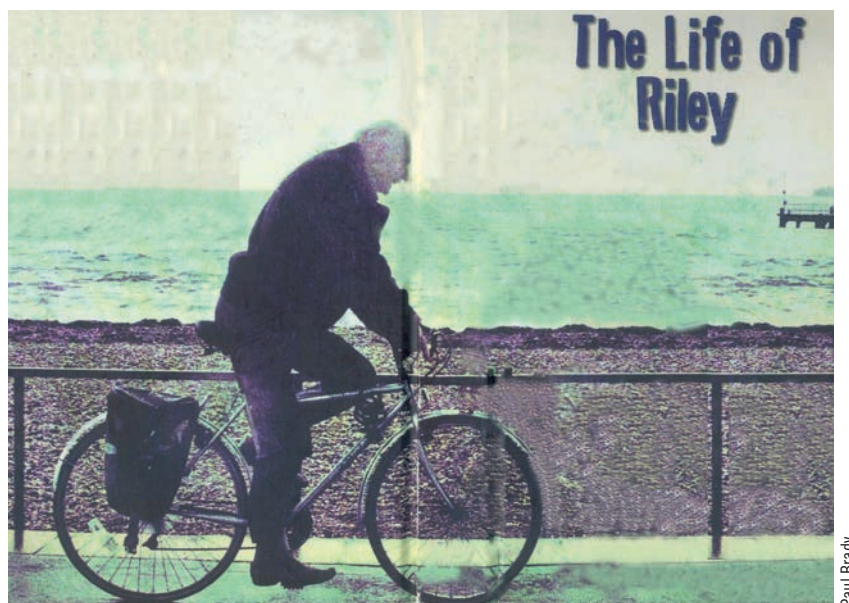
On Saturday 9 September 2023 the long-postponed day-conference to celebrate the academic life and work of Professor Ray Riley was held in St George's Building of the University of Portsmouth.

Ray Riley (RR), who died on 30 May 2019, was *inter alia* a founder-member of the Naval Dockyards Society (NDS) and the editor of the first eight volumes of the NDS 'Transactions'. But over a period of some fifty years from the mid-1960s onward his achievements – as a researcher, author and teacher – and influence in the fields of economic and industrial geography, industrial archaeology and the study of 'local history' were truly extraordinary.

His name will be familiar to anyone even half-seriously studying the history – from the mid-eighteenth century onward – of Portsmouth and south-east Hampshire, but it would be fair to say it is probably not widely known elsewhere. Virtually his entire academic career was spent in Portsmouth, where he taught successively at Portsmouth College of Technology, Portsmouth Polytechnic and finally the University of Portsmouth (UoP) for twenty-seven years (1966–93); and then after 'retiring' at the age of sixty-two was induced to return to UoP some five years later to establish, and subsequently lead, the Heritage & Museum Studies MSc course. He finally retired from the university in 2011, aged eighty – probably the oldest person ever to have taught there regularly. A 'provincial' academic, therefore – but nonetheless of considerable importance in insisting upon a rigorous approach in fields of study (e.g. 'local history') which had often been considered the business of amateurs.

The very fact that RR was invited to return to the University of Portsmouth in his late sixties, some five years after 'retiring', to organise and lead a new postgraduate course is proof positive of the high regard in which he was held as a teacher, administrator and researcher. A number of tributes to him were published in Volume 12 of our 'Transactions', and during collation of those tributes it was suggested that there should be a day-conference as a memorial of his academic work and achievements. As subsequently reported, however (*Dockyards*, vol. 25 no. 1, May 2020), the event planned in late March 2020 was postponed due to the Covid lockdown. The aspiration then was 'Autumn 2020', the reality *sine die*. In the autumn of 2022, however, at the social gathering after the funeral of a mutual acquaintance, somebody said, 'Surely we could now hold the Ray Riley commemoration.' All present agreed that would be A Good Idea, and that 'somebody' should organise the event . . . The Rest Is Hysteria!

Well, not quite – though there were 'challenges'. The first of which was that the March 2020 event was to have been organised by the Portsmouth City Council Library & Archive Service, but for various reasons that was no longer possible. As things happened the recent event was held under the







**Attendees at the conference  
including organiser Mark Brady (above).  
(Ann Coats)**



auspices of the University of Portsmouth and organised by our Chair Dr Ann Coats – formerly a UoP colleague of RR – with the assistance of NDS member Mark Brady (MB) – sometime Chairman of the Portsmouth-based Society for Nautical Research (South), and an MSc student of RR.

During his work in advance of the event MB had the rare privilege of being able to borrow a copy of RR's own autobiographical *The Life of Riley* – of which very few copies were printed, essentially for family members and close friends. Noting that the various published tributes said very little about RR's career before he arrived in Portsmouth, MB gave the following summary on the day.

### **'The Road to Portsmouth'**

Raymond Charles Riley was born in Liverpool in 1931, of 'middle-class' parents, and lived there for his first eighteen years or so. He found the war 'interesting', but despite Liverpool being heavily bombed between the autumn of 1940 and early 1942 suffered no great hardship. During and after the war he attended Quarry Bank High School – a grammar school run on traditional lines which he considered 'enjoyable . . . but not especially influential'. He was 'reasonably academically inclined, tolerable at sport, and had no difficulty fitting in, but despite passing the Higher School Certificate exams (the contemporary equivalent of A-Levels) in July 1949 made no mention in his autobiography of considering 'further education' immediately after leaving school. Instead he enlisted in December 1949 in the East Lancashire Regiment under the National Service scheme. After the initial shock – for a middle-class grammar school boy – of recruit-training he once again fitted in, and for much of his two-year service managed to work the system to his own advantage.

Fairly early on he was selected for Officer Training, but as he didn't aspire to remain in the army as an officer he was returned to his regiment – which didn't really know what to do with a smart, willing and intelligent National Serviceman who wasn't destined for a commission, so he was given a succession of congenial administrative type posts for the following eighteen months. During this

time he was able to draft himself to Trieste, in the northern Adriatic, where his final position prior to 'demob' was Regimental Dining Room Corporal.

RR wrote that he never regretted his National Service time, and thereafter was content to serve the obligatory five years in the 'Reserves' – bizarrely in the Liverpool Scottish Regiment, which meant that when his Home Office employment entailed a move to London he transferred to the 'kilted' London Scottish Regiment. (No photograph, unfortunately.) On completion of that army commitment he applied in 1956 for an RAF Volunteer Reserve commission in the Intelligence Branch – work which was related to his Home Office employment, and which he characteristically found both enjoyable and amusing.

RR's somewhat eccentric career in the armed forces thus lasted from 1949 to 1965, in which time he progressed from private to flight lieutenant RAFVR. He subsequently observed that 'the services unquestionably enriched [his] life' and that he never regretted the experience.

Meanwhile he had applied, after his 'demob' in the winter of 1951–52, for a position in the Home Office Immigration Branch – in which his work involved monitoring the comings, goings and activities in the UK of 'aliens' (principally 'East Europeans'). Both his Home Office work and his Reserve service brought Ray into contact with 'interesting' people, and provided opportunities for travel within the UK and to the Continent.

The Home Office work also allowed plenty of spare time, and while based at London Airport (1953–57) he successfully studied for a BSc (Economics) from London University. He didn't explain in his autobiography why he chose that particular subject; but thereafter he registered at the London School of Economics to gain an MSc by research, his subject being industrial change in the South Belgian coalfield.

One can infer from his very brief account that in the mid-1950s RR was already heading down the 'economic geography' road – but that his approach to his postgraduate research, influenced by his supervisors, was as much that of a historian as a geographer. And clearly his work was well-received, as he was asked whether he would consider 'an upgrade to PhD'. Which he did, gaining a doctorate ca. 1964–65 for his thesis *Some Geographical Aspects of the Evolution of Coalmining in the Borinage Since 1800*.\*

Thus far academic research had been a hobby – but with a doctorate he could seriously consider an academic career (in the 1960s many persons teaching in higher education only had a master's degree). His Home Office colleagues – even those with university degrees – thought him mad to consider abandoning the security of the Civil Service, but RR wanted the satisfaction of 'creative endeavour'. He saw little opportunity for this in the Home Office, so in 1964 he successfully applied for a post as an Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Humanities of Huddersfield College of Technology.

The move to teaching proved something of a leap into the unknown – he had no qualification in that respect, and only limited experience in the RAFVR. But he had some fifteen years of varied experience outside academia, and quickly appreciated that the key to successful teaching – whether to qualified teachers studying for an external BA or youngsters on various technical courses which included a liberal studies element – was to make the subject interesting. Which generally speaking he did, and consequently was promoted after one year to the Lecturer grade – 'to the undisguised *chagrin* of . . . others who had been in education for some years'. But after a second year at Huddersfield, wishing to concentrate solely upon degree-level teaching, he applied successfully for a post as a Lecturer in Economic Geography at Portsmouth College of Technology, where he began work in 1966.

**Mark Brady**

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\* The Belgian 'Borinage' ('mineshaft region') is a cluster of Walloon (French-speaking) mining-villages south-west of Mons, close to the border with France. Coalmining developed there rapidly from the late eighteenth century, and in the 1820s the region produced more coal than the whole of France and 'Germany' combined. RR notes (TLOR p126) that he had no particular (prior) interest in Belgium, but his first MSc supervisor pointed out that the Belgian coalfields were the scene of the first (continental-European) Industrial Revolution but had received far less scholarly attention than British mining areas.



## **Event Report – Saturday 9 September 2023**

*The NDS is grateful to Ms Kawthar Bazzoun, a PhD student in the Portsmouth School of Architecture, who attended throughout the day and prepared a report in her capacity as a Communication & Event Assistant for the UofP Culture & Heritage Hub.*

On Saturday 9 September 2023, the University of Portsmouth Culture and Heritage Hub hosted a conference day to commemorate the academic life and work of the late Professor Ray Riley. This event had been postponed from March 2020, due to the lockdown. Nevertheless, this delay did not prevent the day from running smoothly with a good attendance. Over forty family, friends, and colleagues joined to express their appreciation for Riley's person and journey. It was obvious how people attending the event shared common thoughts and feelings about Riley. Through their side chats and conversations, they recalled their time with him and how he had influenced them on various levels.

The day was planned effectively, with two main sessions divided into different presenters and rich topics. Dr Ann Coats gave an introductory speech about the event and the Culture and Heritage Week. The first session, chaired by Mark Brady, featured three topics about Riley's broad interest and contribution to military geography, Portsmouth urban history and heritage, and Portsmouth Dockyard, presented by Dr Celia Clark, Sue Pike, and Dr Philip MacDougall, respectively. The session was closed with a Q&A during which the panel answered a wide variety of questions from the audience.

The second session highlighted Professor Ray Riley's influence as a geographer, teacher, and colleague. It was chaired by Dr Celia Clark and presented by Dr Dominic Fontana, Dr Ann Coats, and Dr John Stedman. Their presentations included maps, historical records, and papers. In addition, Mark Brady narrated some of his memories with Riley, telling an interesting story of a field trip to Germany. As with the first session, the audience had the opportunity to ask the panel questions and thus get more details and information about the presented topics.

'The life of Riley' day was a real celebration of the valued life and work of Professor Ray Riley. The scene of his family, friends, and colleagues gathering and attending the entire day, fully immersed in the presentations and discussions, reflects this man's influence and significance in the life journeys of those he met and taught. Having said this, I can say that a similar event could be organised in future where a different audience, including younger students and attendees, can have the opportunity to learn more about Riley and see how he is still appreciated by everyone who encountered him in his life.

**Kawthar Bazzoun**

## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

**18 May 2024**

### **'From Yards to Hards': Preparing Allied naval forces for the 1944 Normandy Landings – Portsmouth**

Following productive talks with the D-Day Story Museum, Portsmouth, our 2024 conference will be held jointly to celebrate the enormous logistical project that organised D-Day in June 1944. How were UK and overseas dockyards, shipyards and harbours occupied in constructing, supplying and transporting troops, harbours and pipelines?

The Allied assault on German-occupied France on and after D-Day (6 June 1944) was only possible through naval support, from the largest warships and merchant vessels through to the smallest landing craft. Existing dockyards, harbours and shipyards in the UK, the USA, Canada and Bermuda played a vital role in building, preparing, maintaining and repairing the Allied fleets. Remains of these coastal installations survive as tangible heritage of this endeavour.

However, the magnitude of the projected naval and land forces required many more temporary bases and facilities, which required systematic forward planning. Over the preceding months and years, the roles of these establishments included supporting landing craft flotillas, embarking troops and supplies, building the Mulberry Harbours, and supplying fuel via the PLUTO pipeline.

See J. Humberstone, 'Mulberry Harbours: Operation Neptune's Artificial Ports', *Dockyards* 27:2, December 2022, 30–34. Workforces were dedicated to planning, victualling and furnishing all kinds of supplies. Personnel went through an equivalent period of training and preparation.

The final session will be 'The story of LCT 7074' by Andrew Whitmarsh, Curator at the D-Day Story Portsmouth, followed by an optional visit of the last surviving D-Day Landing Craft Tank LCT 7074.

The **Call for Papers** is on our website at <https://navaldockyards.org/conferences/>, deadline 15 December 2023. We are seeking original research about the *prelude* to D-Day: its planning and execution involving dockyards, shipyards and harbours.

Note: A 'hard' is a firm beach or foreshore where marine structures can be built and launched; it is also a sloping roadway at the water's edge for beaching vessels and landing materials – the Normandy beach hards were reinforced with concrete blocks.

## FUTURE CONFERENCES

Whenever the NDS organises overseas conferences, the principal conference will be held in Greenwich (or other appropriate venue) in March to May or September, with the overseas conference being complementary in topic. The following conferences are being discussed with our partners.

### **March 2025 – UK conference at the University of Greenwich.**

**Working title: 'Dockyard and Shipyard support for the Atlantic in the Second World War'.**

*Topics/themes:* Power shift in the north Atlantic from the British Empire to the US; convoys to and from the US and Russia; victualling yards and ports in Europe and North America involved in the logistics of supplying all the products necessary to support the Allies in Europe; the UK leased Bermuda air base to US; German U-boat campaigns.

### **Between April and May 2025 – Bermuda conference and tours.**

**Working title: '75th Anniversary Commemoration of the Dockyard Closure – 1950'**

Bermuda will be the host, with a joint Call for Papers and Expressions of Interest.

*Topics/themes:* Bermuda Naval Dockyard – early history; 1812 Fortifications and conflict with the USA; The North Atlantic – Second World War; Dockyard Closure – Bermuda's economic loss and recovery; Dockyard Closure – Dislocation of peoples, personal stories; Oral histories of dockyard apprentices of the 1950s; Jonathan Coad's history of dockyard architecture; National Museum of Bermuda archival material.

### **March 2026 – UK conference, venue tbc.**

**Working title: 'Dockyards of the Northwest Atlantic and Caribbean'.**

*Topics/themes:* US: Key West, Norfolk Virginia; Canada: Halifax; Barbados, Jamaica.

### **May 2026 – Antigua conference and tours.**

**Working title: 'Celebrating 300 years of the Dockyard'.**

Antigua will be the host, with a joint Call for Papers and Expressions of Interest.

*Topics/themes:* Caribbean dockyard and naval heritage, Antigua and the Dockyard, relations with the RN, enslavement, freedom, stories.

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