The launch of volume 154 of the Navy Records Society’s series of publications, *Chatham Dockyard 1815-65: The Industrial Transformation* took place during the NDS symposium following our AGM on 22 April. Edited by NDS founder member Philip MacDougall (centre), this superb work reproduces many key documents of the time to trace the political, industrial and naval contexts that led to the huge expansion of the dockyard. Philip is pictured with (left) NRS general editor and former NDS chairman Roger Morriss, and (right) current NDS chairman (and also NRS vice-president) David Davies.

Contents of this issue: 2 Editorial & NDS Symposium; 3 Review of ‘Ropemakers’, NDS Conference 2009; 4 ASWE Portsdown Hill by Celia Clark; 6 Devonport Dockyard museums by Mary Wills; 8 the NDS Bibliography and Website; 9 The Naval Base in Port Mahon by Marina Lermontov; 11 Development Issues – Sheerness, Portland, Pembroke Dock; 14 Restoration of the Portsmouth Block Mills by Ann Coats; 18 Conference Reports; 19 Archives of Interest – Online Resources; 23 NMM Library update; 24 Book Reviews; 28 Neglected Naval Memorials; And Finally
THE NDS SYMPOSIUM, 22 APRIL 2009

This year’s AGM (the minutes of which are included in the mailing accompanying this issue of Dockyards) was followed by a particularly varied and interesting symposium, loosely entitled A New Perspective On Chatham Dockyard & Recollections Of Ropemaking. This began with the launch of the latest Navy Records Society volume, Chatham Dockyard 1815-65 edited by NDS founder member Philip MacDougall. Philip lectured on the subject of the book, which was then formally launched (see the cover photograph). The afternoon continued with the showing of Pru Waller’s fascinating evocation of the ‘lost world’ of Chatham Dockyard, the film Ropemakers; a review of this by Professor Roger Knight of the Greenwich Maritime Institute follows immediately after this item.

The afternoon continued with a demonstration of ropemaking by Des Pawson, MBE, which culminated in several NDS members taking to the floor to help Des in making a fifteen-foot piece of twice laid rope (see below). This generated considerable hilarity, but also provided a fascinating insight into what was for so many centuries such an important part of dockyard life.

David Davies
ROPEMAKERS

Pru Waller’s hour-long documentary has been a long time in the making. It was started over twenty years ago as a result of a National Maritime Museum initiative when Chatham Yard closed, but money problems delayed completion until recently. It was shot in the 1980s at Chatham Ropery and at Portsmouth, and ranges over a good deal more than rope making. It is altogether fortuitous that it is now finished and that those dockyard voices will not be lost.

The result is an evocative portrayal of dockyard life in the style of previous documentary film makers such as Humphrey Jennings. The atmospheric music plays, the camera lingers on shiny wood floors smoothed by newly-spun ropes passing over them for hundreds of years. Just as compelling is the commentary provided by the voices of dockyard workers who reminisce and tell us how life was, vignettes of individual experiences. They contain, for instance, valuable evidence in the academic debate about the working dynamic of the yards of the competition between the different teams in the ropewalk to be the fastest and the best: not something that survives in the documents. It is also a reminder of the valuable contribution made by women to the life and productivity of the yards.

The film will be an additional monument to the skills of an industrial, pre-computer age as much as the surviving buildings and archives, and should be carefully preserved for future generations. At the AGM the film greatly interested the NDS audience, apart from criticism from someone new to the field who was expecting an instructional video. The most telling comment was the final one which came from a retired dockyard employee: ‘There’s a lot of truth in this film’.

Roger Knight

THE NAVAL DOCKYARDS SOCIETY
CONFERENCE 2009

“Building Victory”

Mid-Eighteenth Century Naval Warfare – The Roles of Dockyards and Shipbuilding

Saturday 7 November 2009
Royal Naval Museum Portsmouth

2009 is the 250th anniversary of the British ‘Year of Victories’ - a series of military victories in North America and India and naval victories in Guadeloupe and Quiberon Bay. It was the decisive year of the Seven Years’ War and was also the year of the laying of the keel of HMS Victory in No.2 Dock, Chatham on 23 July. Victory was designed by Surveyor of the Navy Thomas Slade, the leading naval architect of his day, appointed by George Anson, First Lord of the Admiralty for most of the War.

Themes of the conference will include:

- The role of shipbuilding in determining naval warfare outcomes
- Relative merits of dockyard versus private construction
- Technological and logistical changes
- National differences in shipbuilding and warfare

Cost: £30 including Buffet Lunch
Concessions: £25 NDS, Friends of RNM, students, senior citizens

Speakers and papers confirmed to date include:

Richard Harding Large scale ship movement and its operational impact 1739-1748 in relation to ship building & maintenance

Dockyards provided the fixed points from which naval power was developed and projected. However, their ability to operate was partially determined by the burdens placed upon them by ship movements. This paper examines how the decisions to move ships globally during the war of 1739-1748 fed back into the logistical
capability of the dockyards and how that in turn influenced British naval fortunes.

**Peter Goodwin** The building of HMS Victory and her 1765 features - Slade’s design concepts

This will focus on the building of the ship and her features as built. Concentration on Thomas Slade will illuminate the origin of his thoughts and design concepts; and on constructors John Lock and Edward Allin will provide the essential dockyard context. Timber procurement and quantities will also be covered.

**Roger Morriss** Promise of power. The English maritime economy at the time of the Seven Years War

This paper maintains that even before the Seven Years War Britain had global interests which had to be defended. Their successful defence during the war simply confirmed an economic status in world affairs which was superior to that of other European powers. It argues that Britain’s maritime economy conferred commercial advantages as well as a vulnerability which both helped and forced interests to be defended throughout the world. British naval power was both a product of this maritime economy and a response to the need to protect global interests. It will look forward into the second half of the 18th century.

**Katarina Mauranen** Presenting academic research in a museum: the case of Portsmouth Block Mills

This paper explores how the history of dockyards and technological change are represented in museums. It proposes a way of enhancing the public perception of dockyards through an exhibition reinterpreting the Portsmouth Block Mills.

This exhibition aims to show the Block Mills within the context of war and industrialisation. They are portrayed as an important step in the navy’s industrialisation process and part of Samuel Bentham’s wider dockyard reforms. The perspective is that of the workforce, and the focus is on control. The free poster exhibition, supported by Portsmouth Historic Dockyard Trustees, was open to the public in Boathouse 7 from 29 June-5 July 2009.

**THE ADMIRALTY SURFACE WEAPONS ESTABLISHMENT, PORTSDOWN HILL**

On Friday 3 September 1948 Vice Admiral C B Daniel, Controller of the Navy visited the construction site of what became the Admiralty Surface Weapons Establishment. The overall cost of the monumental quadrangle building and canteen in Art Deco style on the summit of Portsdown Hill in Portsmouth was about £2.5m for the buildings and site, and about £1m for the equipment installed in it.

ASWE’s origin in the mid-1930s was the Experimental Department of HM Signal School in the Royal Naval Barracks, Portsmouth. In the year or so prior to 1939 the department moved some units to other places in Portsmouth: Eastney Fort East, the old school at Onslow Road where RDF (later known by the American term ‘Radar’) was developed and Nutbourne. Rapid expansion of the department to 26 other sites including universities and country houses including Lythe Hill House at Haslemere and King Edward’s School Witley, as well as trial sites such as Tantallon Castle - and even, for a short time, the summit cafe on Mount Snowdon.

In 1944 a committee of representatives of the Communications and Radar Laboratories, the Production Department and Test Rooms,
Workshops, Naval Stores and the Naval and Secretarial Groups was set up to plan the future ASE. This Committee produced and published for limited circulation an overall plan reconciling the needs of the many divisions and their combination on one site in October 1944 – an act of faith at such a critical stage of the war. The east and south coasts were considered too near to enemy territory as far as our radar was concerned. Proximity to the sea and to a major naval port were overriding considerations. In 1945 one major site dominated the naval war scene: Fort Southwick, which had developed as the Combined Communications Headquarters, from which the invasion of Europe had been controlled. Fort Southwick was one of a chain of forts protecting the naval port of Portsmouth in the 1870s, and the whole of the crest of Portsdown Hill, including the forts and their connecting hilltop road built by prisoners from the Napoleonic wars was War Department property. The necessity of storing large quantities of fuel for the fleet at Portsmouth in a site less vulnerable than the depot at Gosport had led to the building of a large underground oil fuel tank to the west of Fort Southwick. The grand plan envisaged that Portsdown Hill would house, from east to west, ASE, Tactical School in Fort Southwick, Signal School, AGE, and to the west ASE with its ‘Quiet’ work and a sports area. In the event, only ASE was built in about six years.

The main building, which dates from 1951 and the canteen have been empty for ten years. Others have been demolished, and rubble and spoil has been used to recreate the northern profile of Portsdown Hill. Defence Estates put the building on the market some years ago, and a Bible College expressed interest, but the building needs maintenance if it is to survive to find a new use.

Source: The story of ASWE by Norman Vidler 1969, with thanks to Dr. Tim Crowfoot

Celia Clark
DEVONPORT DOCKYARD MUSEUMS

Devonport Dockyard had a museum in the first half of the 1800s, and deposited there was the flag under which Admiral Lord Nelson fell at the Battle of Trafalgar. Other relics, including many wooden walled ships’ figureheads and numerous other ornate carvings were also housed in the museum. Unfortunately a fire occurred in 1840 - known as ‘The Great Fire of 1840’ (booklet available) and destroyed the lot. This first museum was known as the ‘Adelaide Gallery’/Adelaide Row.

Records in the Admiral Superintendent’s Office in 1968 revealed a letter dated 1914 from a former Admiral Superintendent calling for the setting up of a museum, but the Great War of 1914-1918 intervened and nothing came of the idea.

After the Second World War 1939-1945 and when life in Plymouth was starting to get back to normal, Stanley Greenwood (left), a long-time employee of the Naval Stores Department at Devonport Dockyard observed that many visitors to the dockyard - some with young children in pushchairs - who despite, in Stanley’s words, “shouldering the burden of taxation” were trudging around the dockyard with nowhere to take a comfort break or refreshment; in those days toilet facilities for females within the dockyard grounds were non-existent, incidentally it was usually a Police Officer guiding visitors around back then, as appears to have been the case since the evolvement of the dockyard in the late 1690s. Being a keen amateur historian Stanley thought a museum would be the ideal solution to the problem he perceived. So began a fairly long quiet effort to get the authorities to listen to his suggestion. It wasn’t until 1969 with the arrival of Vice Admiral Dick Wildish and his Assistant Sec. Mr Norman Chaff (below left; still a Friend of the museum), with, it is believed, a little help from the Dockyard Welfare Officer, Councillor Fred Stott, that authority was given and plans set in motion to set up a museum. The Old Admiralty Fire Station, then just inside the dockyard gate but previously just outside the gate, became surplus to requirements, and being so near to the gate was an ideal place for visitors to gather. Mr Reg Blackett and ‘Tom’ Sawyer were employed to set up displays etc., and Norman Chaff made an appeal for the donation/loan of memorabilia in the local press. Reg Blackett (above right) became the Curator and Tom Sawyer the Tour Guide, both wore uniforms which were provided. The Museum was opened on 28 April 1969 by the late Dr Basil Greenhill, Director of the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich, who stated ‘There were few places with a greater maritime history than Plymouth’. To coincide with the opening, George Dicker (above left), also a Naval Stores employee, wrote a booklet entitled ‘A Short History of Devonport Dockyard’.

Visitors to the North Yard used to form long queues outside Albert Gate AM and PM - I can remember well the queues outside Albert Gate when I came back from my lunch break at 1.30pm. In December 1969 it was reported in Below: the old Albert Gate. Note the Fire Engine outside what was to become the site of the 1969 museum building.
the press that 1,500 people a week were being given a conducted tour around the dockyard and visiting the duty ship; there were also pre-booked visits from organised groups and schools. Visits to South Yard were also arranged in the same manner - prior to the 1960s no travel was possible from South Yard to North Yard and vice versa. The yards were ‘joined up’ during the 1960s by flyovers.

The Museum moved in the early 1970s, due to redevelopment within its area, and ended up in the dockyard Church of St Lo, this Church was previously known as St Chad’s and outside the dockyard wall in Devonport, however after the war the Admiralty claimed land which had been bombed and the church became within the dockyard walls. The museum moved again in the late 1970s and was housed in its present location, the former Cashier’s Offices - on the ground floor were the offices of the Assistant Chief Constable (Western Area) Admiralty Constabulary. Today’s museum is manned by many voluntary staff and was enthusiastically managed up to July 2007 by Commander Charles Crichton OBE.

It is ironic that old records and mementos of the dockyard, including a model of the ill-fated HMS Hood were destroyed when South Yard’s No. 1 Store was blitzed in 1941. Likewise records held at North Yard, near to the then Main Central Office Block, were also destroyed in the Second World War, along with the wall alongside the Burma Road, a plaque at this spot makes interesting reading and if you look carefully at the old Main Central Office Block on Burma Road you will note a First World War Memorial to Dockyard Workers.

Mary Wills
(Daughter of the late Stanley Greenwood)

(Since Dockyards received this article, the MoD has announced the disposal of much of South Yard to Princess Yachts for the construction of so-called ‘super yachts’. This development casts some doubt on the future of the dockyard museum, and the NDS has written to the Second Sea Lord, English Heritage and other interested parties to state our strong support for the survival of the museum. See http://www.thisisplymouth.co.uk/news/mod-dispose-yard-sites/article-1075394-detail/article.html and related articles on the same website.)

Below: a print illustrating Devonport Dockyard in 1829, with a sheer hulk at left and an intriguing collection of receiving ships and (perhaps) prison hulks.
THE SOCIETY’S DOCKYARD BIBLIOGRAPHY

The production and dissemination of a bibliography of dockyard history was one of the key aims of the society from its inception. Unfortunately, the bibliography has not been updated for some years, and a large number of works that should be included within it are currently absent.

Fortunately, NDS member Peter Le Fevre has recently volunteered to take on the task of updating the bibliography. Peter will be well known to many members, perhaps most notably as the joint editor of two important and successful books, *The Precursors of Nelson* and *British Admirals of the Eighteenth Century: the Contemporaries of Nelson*. He has been working for many years on the definitive biography of Admiral Arthur Herbert, the Earl of Torrington.

Peter is keen to invite members to participate in the updating of the bibliography. If you are aware of a published (NB) source that you feel should be included within it, please contact Peter directly, preferably by email at DRLEF50@aol.com; ‘snailmail’ contributions can be directed via Dockyards.

To help Peter in his work, and to greatly accelerate the completion (and therefore the dissemination) of the new, expanded edition, please adhere strictly to the following format when sending suggestions to him.

**BOOKS**

Name of author or editor (‘ed.’ to follow if latter); title of book; number of volumes (if more than one); publisher if a university press, or else place of publication (e.g. London); year of publication.

**ESSAYS**

Name of author; "title of essay"; then title of volume, name of editor of essays, publisher, place, year, page numbers.

**ARTICLES**

Name of author, “title of article”, journal title, number, year, page numbers. Please also state whether the article can be read online (e.g. the *Northern Mariner* has articles available online as downloadable PDFs). If the article is published in a foreign language it should be stated whether there is an English synopsis.

**PROSPECTUSES, BROCHURES ETC**

Please lay these out as for the book form above, but with added information as to where they can be seen – e.g. which local library or local council offices.

**THE SOCIETY’S WEBSITE**

The website has recently been updated with a significant amount of new content. The chairman / Dockyards editor / webmaster apologises for the long hiatus between updates, but multitasking has its difficulties...

More significantly, it will now be considerably easier to reach and to search for the website. We have acquired the domain name www.navaldockyards.org, which automatically directs to the current site; members may wish to update their bookmarks accordingly. Although the domain name http://navaldockyards.moonfruit.com remains valid, and will continue to appear on the society’s literature for some considerable time to come, the new, simpler version should greatly increase our ‘outreach’ to potential new audiences. Even with our slightly odd ‘moonfruit’ address, the statistics for the website have been very impressive: in the year between 8 July 2008 and 30 June 2009, the site has had 18,865 visitors. Once the index to *Dockyards* and the new Bibliography are added to the site in the near future, it should become an even more useful resource for all those interested in dockyard history.

David Davies
THE NAVAL BASE IN PORT MAHON

As soon as the British arrived in Minorca in 1708 they set about re-enforcing the island’s defences and began building the dockyard and arsenal in Mahon harbour. The situation on the north side of the port almost in front of the town of Mahon, was chosen as the Dutch had already built small boathouses there, and it was the most protected part of the harbour. In 1724 work began on draining the site and installing sanitation, and some enormous warehouses were built. By 1765, a lot of the building had been done and work began on the small mushroom shaped island next to the dockyard. It was known as Ille de Carenge, by the French and people from Mahon, and Isla de Pinto by the Spanish, and is still known by this name.

In 1763 plans had been approved by the English government for a causeway to be made joining the island to the dockyard, and by 1765, the sides of the island had been built into the hexagonal shape that remain to this day, where the larger ships could be moored.

By 1778 a wall was built to enclose the area of the naval base, with small watch towers placed at strategic points round the enclosure. This was completed on the 18 January 1779. Nevertheless, we can see that they were not very effective from the conquests and reconquests of Menorca. Brigadier Moreno installed artillery batteries on Isla Pinto, with no results.

In 1786 the Spanish enlarged the arsenal, occupying the land known as Sa Vinyeta, where they built a small covering for boats, and it was under Spanish rule when the dockyard reached its maximum activity, as a base for the construction and repair of ships.

Between the years of 1825 – 1830, the Spanish authority, rented out the warehouses and other buildings to the American fleet. In 1850, building of a shipyard began there, with authority of the government for the Steam Society of Mahon’s use, and that lasted many years. Later it became
state property.

In 1879 it was used by the Torpedo Brigade, until 1923 when it was taken to the old Quarantine Island, changing its name to The Torpedo Station. At the same time they began to use the eastern most point of Lazaretto, known as Cremat, as a depot for submarines.

Under the advice and recommendation of admiral Augusto Miranda y Godoy, the Spanish government dictated a law to recondition military ports, in which Mahon was included.

On 22 March 1916, work was started in what was to become the Naval Base, under the direction of D. Pedro Maria Cardona y Prieto, who had travelled to many foreign naval bases.

With help from the Spanish naval aviation a hangar was raised/built in Sa Vinyeta to shelter the hydroplanes and a crane installed to lift them onto the wharf.

Between the fortress of The Mola, and St. Philip’s, a system of machinery was put into place totally closing the entrance of the port; the work was overseen by CN. D. Emilio Hédiger Olive, Commander of the Marina on the island, and run by a division of torpedo boats dedicated exclusively to the defence of Minorca.

In 1917, a cistern holding 1.200m³ was dug out on Isla Pinto, and another of 1.500m³, between the electric power station and the coal yard, corresponding pipelines, two electric engines and two petrol engines, costing 79.290 pesetas.

Outside the enclosure a warehouse for gunpowder, barracks, warehouses, offices, electrical store/house, a clinic, accommodation for officials and storage for underwater torpedoes.

In 1945 some enormous underground tunnels were built, known as the torpedo tunnels, under orders from Military Naval Building Industries in Madrid. The project included three tanks for gasoline of 200 tons each. A water tank was installed with the water piped directly from San Juan at the end of the port, to hold 1,450,000 litres, a warehouse and a workshop for the torpedoes. Both the warehouse and the torpedo room were never used, and when the building was finally finished, the type of torpedoes for which it was built was replaced by more up to date ones. During this period they also built a coal store, and a radio telegraph station at the highest point in the naval yard.

The surface of the wharf was 900m², alongside the 500m of the perimeter of Isla Pinto, with an extension of 350m². There are around the 30 buildings.

It was converted to a naval aero base under the Vice Admiral. Two or three submarines were at the base, a torpedo boat, four hydroplanes of type Saboya, two tugboats, a barge type K.

Since these transformations the naval base has hardly changed. Most of the original Georgian buildings still stand, although many are in desperate need of attention. One can still relate to them through the few pictures there are of the original dockyard of the 18th century. Unfortunately all the buildings on Isla Pinto are unsafe now, and will eventually become ruins, unless something is done in the very near future, which is unlikely. Many people feel that these once magnificent buildings should be restored.
and some interest shown for this British legacy in the heart of the Western Mediterranean.

The naval base now comes under the command of the Naval Sector of the Baleares of the Maritime Action Force of the Fleet.

The future of the base is uncertain and part of British heritage in the heart of the Western Mediterranean may be lost.

Marina Lermontov

(With additional thanks to David Hilton for facilitating the publication of this article, taken from Marina’s forthcoming book)

DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

Sheerness

The last edition of Dockyards confidently reported the defeat of the proposal for major development within the historic dockyard area at Sheerness. This proved to be premature, as the developer subsequently re-submitted an almost identical proposal. The NDS immediately lodged a written objection to this and either the Secretary or the Chairman will deliver a verbal objection to the planning committee whenever the relevant meeting takes place; it was originally meant to be held on 28 May but was postponed at the last minute, as indicated below. The gist of the submission drafted by NDS Secretary Ann Coats follows.

Swale Borough Council Planning Committee 28 May 2009: Sheerness Dockyard
Planning Applications SW/08/1294 AJJ, SW/08/1295 AJJ, SW/08/1187; Case No. 11262
Application for Listed Building Consent; Restoration and conversion of existing buildings into 26 residential units and one existing office unit (no.2 Main Gate) new build development of 69 residential units along with associated landscaping, car parking, closing of existing vehicular and pedestrian access onto High Street, Bluetown through Listed Dockyard Wall.

I was honoured to have been asked to make the formal opposition to this proposal, representing the long-running campaign of Sheppey residents and the unanimous views of local and national conservation organisations, to preserve this local, national and international heritage. It was yet another occasion for Sheerness and Swale communities to express their unanimous opposition to this proposal, which was very similar to that rejected by Swale Borough Council in January 2008 and the Planning Inspectorate in September 2009.

On Monday 25 May I was interviewed by Sheppey Gazette, published Wednesday 27 May: [Dockyards] are historic listed buildings, part of the heritage of the country, responsible for preparing and maintaining the fleets for 500 years of our history. We are surprised he has put forward an application which appears practically identical to the previous one which has been defeated. We cannot understand in the current climate why any developer would want to undergo a programme of building without any certainty of selling them.¹

In detail the proposal was:

- No. 1 Main Gate Listed Grade II (conversion into one 3-bed house)
- No. 2 Main Gate Listed Grade II (refurbishment of existing office)
- Dockyard Cottage Listed Grade II (conversion into one 5-bed house)

¹ Sheppey Gazette, 27 May 2009, www.thisiskent.co.uk
• Stable Block Listed Grade II (conversion into two 2-bed houses)
• Dockyard House Listed Grade II* (conversion into seven 1-bed flats)
• Regency Close - 5 houses Listed Grade II* (retention of 15 1-2 bed flats)
• Breaching of Dockyard Wall to create vehicular access
• Construction of three new blocks of flats:
  • Block 1: thirty 2-bed flats
  • Block 2: twelve 2-bed; twelve 1-bed flats
  • Block 3: three 2-bed; twelve 1-bed flats

Opposition derived primarily from concern to preserve this historic site. Sheerness Dockyard dates from the 1660s and is unique. The largely intact residential sector of the Rennies’ remodelling dates from the 1820s. Jonathan Coad, Inspector of Ancient Monuments, wrote:

Sheerness remains a remarkably intact and rare example of a minor but important dockyard redeveloped and modernised in the immediate aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars when expenditure on such works was severely curtailed….Sheerness benefited from the input of the great civil-engineer/architects, John Rennie and his son. Their work makes Sheerness Dockyard one of the most important groups of historic buildings, not just on the Isle of Sheppey, but also in Kent and internationally.2

I would have argued that their listed and national and international status and planning guidelines, especially SBC’s AAP5, require that not only the listed buildings, but also their settings, are treated protectively and sympathetically. Breaching of the Grade II listed Dockyard Wall should on no account be permitted: ‘This ought to be avoided at all costs - the security walls of the dockyards should be seen as being comparable to the curtain walls of castles.’ Once the wall, residences, settings, and underground archaeology of the Georgian stable block mews are despoiled they cannot be restored authentically.

The proposal promised restoration but signalled destruction (the wall, iron lamp posts, historic kerb stones and underground archaeology). Confidence was low because the developer had owned the site since 2003 but had carried out no repairs under SBC’s Repairs Notice served on Regency Close in June 2006. Regency Close and Dockyard House are still on English Heritage’s Heritage at Risk Register.4

Nothing about this proposal was attractive, neither the project itself nor its design. The Head of Development Services’ Report to SBC Planning Committee made it clear that the developer had incorporated no design features consistent with the Rennies’ architecture, either in scale or decorative detail. The style of the proposed new buildings claimed to have been ‘inspired by the existing late Georgian ones’ but was not convincing.

Instead of this anti-historical scheme, the developer should simply restore the original houses to their original splendour, to retain the Rennies’ architectural axes, vistas, and spaces, and enhance this sadly long neglected corner of

4 http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/conBar.7848; ditto, ending 7342 retrieved 27.5.09

2 NDS to Swale Borough Council 14.6.07.
Sheerness Dockyard. Restoration of the buildings as single occupancies, as has been so successful at Chatham and nearby in Naval Terrace, is the best possible protection for these buildings.

However, I was not able to put this argument, as the developer submitted a new document at the eleventh hour, creating a further round of Planning Department reports, circulated to all the opposing parties for comment, and another date at the Planning Committee. We wait with interest to see how he has again tweaked the proposal. You can see the existing documentation at www.ukplanning.com.swale cases SW/08/1187; SW/08/1294; SW/08/1295.

(Further to the above, the dockyard chapel at Sheerness – not included within the development proposals already described – failed to sell at auction on 5 June, having fallen short of its reserve price of £380-520K)

Ann Coats

Portland

A bid by the owners of the former naval base at Portland to redevelop part of the site was rejected by Weymouth and Portland Borough Council at the end of June 2009. The owners had wished to build a £1 million sailing park to provide training facilities for the American, French and Australian squads prior to the 2012 Olympics, but this would have involved demolishing a number of Victorian naval buildings, notably the Grade II listed 150-year-old viaduct built to carry wagons from the Great Coaling Shed to the breakwater.

The proposal also included tearing down buildings around the Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST) building and the Camber basin. Most contentious of all was a plan to demolish the seven-arch viaduct to make way for a ramp. Part of the viaduct was covered with bricks by the navy so it could be used as stores, but the original features still lie beneath. English Heritage objected to the demolition of the viaduct; other objections put to the council expressed alarm that such large-scale destruction could be contemplated in the interests of an event that was going to last for only two weeks. LOCOG, the Olympic organising committee, hoped that a compromise solution, respecting EH’s objections, could be found.

Councillors said the port should have more regard for the old buildings which played an important role in the development of the area. The owners are now said to be reviewing their position.

David Davies

Pembroke Dock

The First Minister of Wales, Rhodri Morgan, has lent his support to the plan to convert the former dockyard chapel at Pembroke Dock into a military heritage centre. The group at the centre of the project, the Pembroke Dock Sunderland Trust, hope to raise a sunken Sunderland flying boat from the seabed and make it the centrepiece of major heritage development at the yard (see www.pdst.co.uk; Pembroke Dock was used as the world’s largest flying boat base following its closure as a Royal Dockyard in 1926.)

David Davies
THE RESTORATION OF PORTSMOUTH DOCKYARD BLOCK MILLS (BUILT 1803), 2006-8

Report on the meeting of the Portsmouth Society, 3 June 2009 St. George’s Building, University of Portsmouth

Malcolm Ives, Defence Estates Portsmouth
Andy Lumsden, Debut Services South West Ltd (placed all works)
Steve Barrett, WYG Management Services

Malcolm Ives outlined the national rôle of Defence Estates. Nationally they are one of the UK’s largest landowners, owning 1% of UK land which contains 793 Listed Buildings and 720 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, holding the government’s largest heritage portfolio. Their remit is to maintain them sustainably, find the best use and ‘whenever possible open them to the general public.’ Inevitably there are conflicts between military and heritage priorities. Eighty per cent of MOD buildings and 89% of the Scheduled Ancient Monuments/Listed Buildings are in a ‘good’ or ‘fair’ condition. Twenty-eight of their buildings are on English Heritage’s Buildings at Risk Register (BARR), but DE have appointed a BARR Officer. Four other structures within Portsmouth Naval Base remain on BARR: No.6 Dock, 2-8 The Parade, the Iron and Brass Foundry and No.25 Store. Defence Estates’ annual outlay in the south of England is £40m, so Block Mills - estimated at £1-2m - was not a ‘large’ project. Up to £2m was allocated by Defence Estates in 2007, with further funds for internal works at the beginning of 2008.

English Heritage and its predecessors had been concerned about the Block Mills since the 1960s. A Scheduled Ancient Monument and Grade I Listed Building, it had been classed as a Building at Risk since the Register began in 1998. Chairman Sir Neil Cossons visited the building in 2003 and 2005 and the Chief Executive in January 2006. It published Jonathan Coad’s book on the Block Mills in 2005.

Steve Barrett began by saying that the building was unexceptional amongst late Georgian industrial buildings, but its activities were highly exceptional. He summarised WYG’s restoration approach, overseen by English Heritage. For historical evidence they were guided by Coad, J.G. (2005) The Portsmouth Block Mills: Bentham, Brunel and the start of the Royal Navy’s Industrial Revolution (Swindon: English Heritage), and surveys made by English

Left: Block Mills showing the contrast between the old and new brickwork, especially on the North Range in the background. The south front is now without the fire escape, with new rubbed brick arches and new bricks between the two doors.

Above: New timbers in the ground floor central range

Heritage and Wessex Archaeology. English Heritage advised their approach through much pre-application discussion. Scheduled Monument Clearance was agreed in March 2006, and the discharge of conditions by frequent site-visits and other channels by Dr Rory O’Donnell, Inspector, and Mr Alan Johnson, Architect of the EH, GHEU\(^6\) branch in London.

There were no other records available of changes made to the building since 1805. Steve described the layout simply: north and south ranges running west-east three storeys high, with a single storey range infilling the middle space. The first floor corridor crosses the middle range north-south.

The main hazard throughout Block Mills’ life has been damp rising from the Reservoir over which it was built. Ironically, open windows, roofs and doors, while letting in rain (sometimes in torrents), also produced an air flow which had ventilated the building fairly well since blockmaking ceased in 1983. Without it, internal timbers would have been ravaged by rot. WYG is confident there is only one original 1803 window: in the North Range stairwell, hence preserved from weathering. The rest had been replaced throughout the building’s history. It is thought that the North Range roof was flat originally to accommodate a water tank of approximately 200 tons: Bentham’s fire risk management in a building containing a steam engine, coal, vast amounts of timber and friction. The South Range had a late C19 hipped roof similar to the original design; the North Range had a beautiful Belfast truss frame thought to date from WWI.

WYG’s project brief in 2006 was to carry out an option survey with the aim of removing Block Mills’ category C ‘poor’ BARR classification. Their construction brief:

- Restore to wind and watertight condition
- Replace North Range roof to match South Range roof
- Reslate South Range roof
- Restore fabric and windows (replace/repoint brickwork; replace/repair windows)
- Improve rainwater dispersal from the roof
- Improve fireproof access inside South Range
- Remove rotten wood
- Remove asbestos from electrical control boxes
- Install fire alarm and lightning conductor systems
- Avoid intrusive cabling etc
- Scaffolding to be freestanding, not attached to the building

The core principle was to repair/replace what was there, not restore to the 1805 state: ‘Block Mills is a wonderful building to read for what has happened over the years.’ Conservation was to be minimally invasive, but with no attempt to hide the repairs, so the building would continue

\(^6\) For Government Historic Estates Unit, see http://www.helm.org.uk/upload/pdf/GHEU-

flyer.pdf?1245563948 ; http://www.helm.org.uk/server/show/nav.19660
to be read. Steve illustrated the process with ‘before and after’ slides.

Work began at end of 2006, with the erection of scaffolding. By January 2007 the North Range roof was extremely fragile, with missing slates, ridge lead flashing ripped away and lead guttering in the valleys worn to almost nothing. ‘It was at the end of its life.’ One enigma was a disappearing course of bricks running from east-west in the North Range south-facing wall, below the top range of windows. It meant that window frames and sills were misaligned. This was corrected, the whole top section of the wall and roof parapet being rebuilt with mostly new bricks by Cathedral Works. Lambs Bricks & Arches supplied them. The new imperial bricks look much brighter than the 200 year-old grimed bricks, but were colour-matched to the inside of the originals. Where possible originals were retained, including glazed headers. The roof is now the same height as the south roof, but with a slightly different pitch, and without the west-facing roof light of the south roof. This could be inserted later. Steel trusses were used to support the roof, as 11m spans of timber were unavailable. Timber rafters topped them, then

sarking boards (75% were retained) to take the slates. Portland stone was used for the coping stones.

All window frames were taken out and rebuilt individually by joiners who set up their woodwork shop inside Block Mills for a year. Sound wood was retained and frames remade according to the existing pattern, testimony to changes made over 200 years. They were pivoted in the existing manner. All woodwork was painted.

Rubbed brick arches over doors and windows were replaced by Cathedral Works. Bricks were repointed. A large

Left: Scarphed cross beams in the ground floor central range

Above: Looking through a restored North Range window towards the South Range, with the cross corridor in the left foreground
Cement mortar could not be replaced throughout due to cost restraints, but in the worst areas it was replaced with lime mortar, carefully tested to match the original composition.

The ships’ timbers used in the north-south first floor corridor were rotten, as lead flashings had perished. Windows were replaced to the same design and lead flashings applied in very difficult positions. English Heritage approved the use of lead to replace the shallow pitched slate roof.

The lead-lined roof gutter on the South Range was worn and its shallow pitch had allowed water to rise by capillary action, therefore a steeper pitch was designed. Richardson Roofing did all the leadwork. Festiniog slates were used for the roof.

A major change to the building’s appearance was removal of the C20 fire escapes from the south front. In all 400 pieces of iron (brackets, nails etc) were removed, as rusting was pushing apart the brickwork.

In the central ground floor range lights were remade with cedar, replicating the existing pattern. Where rain had penetrated from the crossing corridor, roof-mounted machinery had to be carefully surveyed and taken down to replace the cross beams, incorporating a very complex scarph joint. Wall plates of 3m in the south-facing north wall had to be replaced by reclaimed timber from France. Andy Lumsden commented that the skilled craftsmen of Green Oak Carpentry enjoyed decoding this intriguing building.

Inside the North Range ground floor timbers, badly rotted from the water below, were replaced, with a damp proof membrane added. Wessex Archaeology recorded them as they were removed.

The final cost of the restoration was £2.5m and from the April 2006 survey to completion in August 2008 represents a major achievement for Defence Estates. Budget constraints and removal of the fire escapes will restrict large scale public access, so future use as a museum would involve installation of more fire escapes. There is also no disabled access to the first or second floors.
The building itself was almost certainly not intended to last 200 years, but is unquestionably an historic building, for it signifies the Royal Navy’s technological innovation of mass-producing blocks using steam power. Crucially, restoration has now removed Block Mills from the Buildings at Risk Register, the primary aim. The quality of the work was recognized by a Georgian Group award in 2008. English Heritage has agreed a Conservation Management Plan with the Naval Base, which now has responsibility for making regular external and internal site inspections, attending to defects and finding an appropriate long-term use.

The audience was impressed by the care and attention demonstrated by all engaged in this restoration. While visitors in 1805 were awed by the innovatory technology, the surveyors and craftsmen of 2008 were tracing the work of former craftsmen to ensure that this building will stand for another 200 years. They have become part of the Block Mills’ continuation.

**Ann Coats**

This report was complied from notes taken at the meeting and shown to the speakers, with additional information from Dr Roderick O’Donnell FSA, Inspector of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings, Government Historic Estates, who together with Alan Johnson, English Heritage Architect, was responsible for overseeing the Block Mills restoration 2006-8.

Further reading:


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**CONFERENCE REPORTS**

**Fourth Symposium on Shipbuilding and Ships on the Thames, Museum in Docklands 28 February 2009**

Like ‘New Researchers’ (also sponsored by the SNR), this conference has wide-ranging themes and attracts the usual suspects, so is a good social, as well as information event. On this Saturday the various SE London rail authorities agreed to cease all services, so an hour-long bus journey took some delegates through unknown and interesting parts of London, such as Shadwell.

The concentrated list of papers, ranging from Damian Goodburn’s ‘New light on building large clinker-built war galleys in the 1290s in London’
to Rif Winfield’s ‘John I. Thorneycroft & Co – the Chiswick years’, was absolutely enthralling, well chaired by Sarah Palmer and Andrew Lambert. I especially enjoyed Andrew’s ‘Woolwich Dockyard and the early Steam Navy’, but gained something from nearly every paper. The practice of only allowing one question after each paper was very effective in speeding up the question times. The published Proceedings will be welcomed.

Ann Coats

Conference: New Perspectives on Resources, War and Government, 1750-1815 Greenwich Maritime Institute, 4 April 2009

This very professional conference concluded the Leverhulme-funded ‘Sustaining the Empire’ project, led by Roger Knight, examining the naval Victualling Board and its contractors. Martin Wilcox as research fellow and James Davey as research assistant at Greenwich Maritime Institute presented authoritatively some of the key conclusions of the project, which set itself the task of assessing how the eighteenth century state utilized the private sector to supply the navy and army. Themes covered were ‘Contractors in the Public Service 1750-1815’, ‘Reform and improvement 1770-1806’ and ‘Merchants and the Military 1739-1815’.

Their collected research certainly seems to have borne fruit in producing directed empirical evidence concerning the workings of the victualling system, its efficiency per se and its effectiveness in supporting naval operations. They ‘discovered a system of considerable complexity, marked by a high degree of decentralization and flexibility.’ Knowledge transfer, as well as global provision movements, effected through such things as Lloyds’ continued insurance of French ships and tight European merchant networks, undermined Napoleon’s blockade. Researchers found that the Victualling Board’s efficiency in making and supervising contracts lay at the heart of its success, ensuring that naval operations were not seriously hampered by victualling failures and avoiding major corruption scandals, although not some contractor bankruptcies, a continued casualty of war. On the whole, victualling during these wars refuted its traditional bad press.

It was good to see new researchers maturing, thanks to thriving university maritime history programmes. A lively session led by Professors Michael Duffy and Roger Knight ended the day, proving forensically that experience gained through state intervention to ensure quality control and predictability enhanced the state supervising power.

Articles have been published, a monograph by Roger Knight and Martin Wilcox is pending in 2010 and a database of contractors will be placed on the National Maritime Museum website. Investigation of efficiency will always be to some extent subjective, depending on the choice, soundness and contextualisation of data, but this project has delivered some astounding statistics. Its findings and analysis will be invaluable in informing a multitude of interconnected fields, such as dockyards and naval administration, which firmly embed military history within social and economic history.

Ann Coats

ARCHIVES OF INTEREST

Online Resources for Dockyard History

Maligned by some, terra incognita (or, indeed, an object of terror) to others, the Internet is nevertheless developing into an indispensable research tool for those interested in dockyard history. In particular, an increasing number of
important primary and secondary resources are now available online, potentially saving the researcher many trips to libraries, and this brief survey attempts to consider some of them.

The Times has been available online for some years through Palmer’s Full Text Online, though this usually needs to be accessed through a library or other institution. It can provide a wide range of interesting pieces of information about dockyard history, as the following examples indicate:

The Times 1 May 1844

Naval Intelligence

Portsmouth April 30 -The Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty have gratefully acknowledged the 57 years’ services of Mr Michael Austin, the master rigger of Chatham dockyard, by granting him a retiring pension of £193 per annum-£47 for his services as a warrant officer, and £146 for his civil services. This respected veteran retains, in addition to the above, his pension of £16 for the loss of his right arm on board the Victory as boatswain to the immortal Nelson.

The Times 17 October 1844

Portsmouth Wednesday - ... On Monday, about half past 20, a labourer in the dockyard named Thomas Smart, was struck by a ladder, which was blown down by the violence of the wind, by which his skull was horribly fractured, and he died soon after being conveyed to Haslar Hospital. He was aged about 60, and has been a number of years in the dockyard.

The Annual Register 1845 p. 30

11 February 1845

Fire In Chatham Dockyard

An extensive building, used as a carpenter’s shop, with a dockyard school and other adjoining buildings in Chatham Dockyard, was destroyed by fire. The fire was discovered two hours after midnight, and burnt with such fury that the numerous engines on the spot, manned by soldiers, police and workmen, and well supplied with water, were of no avail in saving any portion of the pile of buildings; but they prevented the Queen, a ship of 110 guns, which was very dangerously situated, from taking fire. The loss is estimated at £10,000 or £20,000.

Recently, the British Library has made available online access to a wide range of provincial newspapers: http://newspapers.bl.uk/blcs/. Although this has to be paid for, searches are free. The newspapers available through this service include The Hampshire / Portsmouth Telegraph, available under its various titles from 1800 to 1900 and including a great deal of material about the dockyard.

An entirely free source with a huge amount of information about dockyard history is the online version of Hansard (http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/). A search through the 1860s, for example, produces a phenomenal amount of information on the closures of Deptford and Woolwich dockyards, while much can be gleaned about less well known yards such as Haulbowline, Pembroke Dock and – in the following example – Antigua;

HC Deb 01 June 1938 vol 336 cc2042-3 2042

§ 55. Sir P. Hannon asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies whether his attention has been called to the generous offer made by Sir Gordon
Lethem, Governor of the Leeward Islands, to restore the old capstans at the Antigua dockyard at his own expense in commemoration of His late Majesty King George V; and whether His Majesty’s Government propose to support this proposal by undertaking additional restoration of some of the old buildings and landmarks of the dockyard in view of its historic associations with the British Navy?

Mr. M. MacDonald

No, Sir. But I am aware that both the present Governor and his predecessor have taken a keen personal interest in the preservation and restoration of the Old Dockyard at English Harbour, Antigua, and that some measures have been taken, with the assistance of a grant from the Carnegie Corporation, and funds raised by means of a local appeal.

§ Sir P. Hannon

In view of the great interest which attaches to this place, which was the foundation of British sea power in the days of Nelson, would His Majesty’s Government be inclined to be sympathetic to the restoration of those old docks?

Mr. MacDonald

No proposals for fresh assistance have come to me from the present Governor. If any do come, I will, of course, consider them.

§ Mr. Markham

Is it not a fact that the Carnegie grant was for the precise purpose mentioned in the question?

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Mr. MacDonald

Yes, that is so; but there is various other work to be done.

§ Mr. Pritt

Would it not be better to let the Navy do its own work?

For earlier periods, the resources available at British History Online (http://www.british-history.ac.uk/) are immensely valuable. They include the Commons and Lords journals, the Statutes of the Realm, various primary sources for Tudor and Stuart History, Lysons’ Environs of London, and the complete calendars of Treasury Books and State Papers from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Many of these can be accessed for free, although some (such as the Calendars of State Papers, Domestic) require the payment of a subscription. Even brief entries can reveal useful information:

Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, James I, 1603-10, 15 May 1610

Warrant to pay to Sir Robt. Mansell, Treasurer of the Navy, £8,476. 9s. 8d., to be disbursed to Benj. Decrowe, agent for the merchants trading into Muscovy, and to Wm. Russell, merchant, for cordage delivered into the storehouse at Deptford.

‘Google Books’ (http://books.google.com) is another mine of information for dockyard history. Entering virtually any key word will produce a large number of relevant results, though copyright issues mean that the site frustratingly offers a full view of only a minority of books; others come with ‘snippet views’, which at least enable one to establish the likely scope and relevance of the material, or with no preview at all, particularly in the case of more modern works. For example, a search under Woolwich soon brings one to the entry in Stanford’s New London Guide for 1860, which suggests that dockyard security was not taken quite so seriously by the Victorians as by their twenty-first century successors:

WOOLWICH

The Royal Dockyard was established by Henry VIII in 1512. It extends for about a mile, consisting of an outer and inner basins, numerous docks and slips, a mast-house, smithery, hydraulic testing-house for chain-cables and anchors, rigging, store and- boat-houses. The patent Nasmyth hammer, the
vertical, horizontal, and circular saw machinery, and the shears for raising weights are especially deserving of attention.

The Dockyard is open to the public every day except Sunday, between the hours of 9 and 11 A.M., and in summer time from 1 to 5 P.M. Foreigners are not admitted without an order from the Admiralty.

Google Books is particularly useful for finding references in obscure nineteenth century magazines!

Finally, ‘Googling’ the Internet can turn up some fascinating nuggets of information; but, being the Internet, these frustratingly often come with no evidence to back them up. Take the following, which recently appeared in an online list of ‘Ten More Ancient Inventions You Think Are Modern’:

The world’s earliest dockyards were built in the Harappan port city of Lothal circa 2400 BC in Gujarat, India. Lothal’s dockyards connected to an ancient course of the Sabarmati river on the trade route between Harappan cities in Sindh and the peninsula of Saurashtra when the surrounding Kutch desert was a part of the Arabian Sea. Lothal engineers accorded high priority to the creation of a dockyard and a warehouse to serve the purposes of naval trade. The dock was built on the eastern flank of the town, and is regarded by archaeologists as an engineering feat of the highest order. It was located away from the main current of the river to avoid silting, but provided access to ships in high tide as well. The name of the ancient Greek city of Naupactus means “shipyard”. Naupactus’ reputation in this field extends to the time of legend, where it is depicted as the place where the Heraclidae built a fleet to invade the Peloponnesus.

The editor of Dockyards would be delighted to receive opinions on this matter!

David Davies, with contributions from Peter Le Fevre and Lawrie Phillips

(We would be delighted to receive notification of other websites that readers have found useful during the course of their own research. These could be placed in the ‘links’ section of the NDS website, and/or could form the basis of a ‘sequel’ to this article.)

Left: an undated view of Invergordon, c. World War I, with a number of destroyers alongside the Admiralty Pier in the distance and a Dreadnought in the floating dock beyond.
UPDATE ON LIBRARY FACILITIES AT THE NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM

Readers of Dockyards will recall the considerable angst caused at the end of last year by the abrupt announcement of a total closure of the Caird Library prior to the construction of a new research facility in the Sammy Ofer wing. Fortunately, the NMM eventually amended its position considerably, and the Chairman recently attended a meeting at the museum where a number of leading members of the naval and maritime research community were consulted about the layout and provision within the new reading room. It is good that such dialogue has now been established, and the plans for the new facility also proved to be both impressive and reassuring. The Chairman expressed concern that the NMM’s heavy dependence on the Internet as its primary means of communication caused difficulties for those NDS members who have no access to that resource, and therefore offered to make space available in Dockyards for the NMM’s staff to provide updates on progress: the first of these is reproduced here.

Update on Sammy Ofer Wing, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

We are pleased that great progress has been made with our plans to increase access to the museum’s world class collections. The Sammy Ofer Wing, to open in 2012, will provide a new exhibition venue and give the public much better access to the Museum’s pre-eminent maritime archives, including manuscripts, rare books, maps, charts, and prints and drawings, that together document Britain’s relationship with the sea.

As part of the planning process, the Sammy Ofer Wing has now received planning permission from the London Borough of Greenwich and approval from HM Treasury of our outline business case. Both approvals meant a great deal of work by the project and wider team at the museum, but also they were gained with the support and constancy of our external stakeholders, including members of the Naval Dockyard Society. For this, we thank you for all your contributions.

We plan to provide regular news on the progress of the new building and our plans for the new research and reading room, as these develop. Please watch this space.

Update on Caird Library opening hours

Whilst construction continues on the Sammy Ofer Wing, the Caird Library has had to reduce access to its collections, to allow time to retrieve the collections from temporary offsite storage, and for staff to enhance the descriptive catalogues in readiness for the new service offered in 2012.

Opening hours from 2 June 2009 until opening of new Library in 2012

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Readers are required to make an appointment and order material in advance - details on how to do this are published on the Museum’s website, see http://www.nmm.ac.uk/researchers/library/visiting/access-to-archive-
and-library-collections-until-2012. No appointment is required to look at Library material in the Caird Library – only for manuscripts and other offsite material.

Retrievals for manuscripts and offsite material are twice a week. Please order 3 working days in advance. Readers may order up to 15 manuscript items per reader per retrieval, and 15 Library items per reader per retrieval. Please order 1 week in advance for LTE retrievals (identified on online catalogue).

Readers of this Newsletter will be pleased to know that when the Caird Library opens in the Sammy Ofer wing in 2012, the Library will be open 40 hours a week, including every weekday and every Saturday, and one late night a week. We will continue to regularly provide news on future opening hours and services on our website, www.nmm.ac.uk, as these become available.

Eleanor Gawne, Head of Archive & Library, National Maritime Museum

BOOK REVIEWS

(Potential contributors to this section are reminded of ‘house policy’ that reviews should generally not be more than 1,500 words long.)

208 pp, many colour and b/w illustrations, glossary, bibliography, index

The latest book by NDS member (and frequent contributor to Dockyards) Paul Brown is truly sumptuous. Lavishly illustrated, the book sets out to record all of the historic and preserved ships extant in British waters. The author adopts a thematic approach across eight chapters: the Sailing Navy (including the obvious candidates, such as Mary Rose, Victory, Trincomalee and Unicorn, but also various replicas, namely Matthew, Golden Hind and Grand Turk); Merchant Sail; Coastal Sail; The Transition from Sail to Steam (including Warrior and Gannet); The Early 20th Century Navy; Coastal Steamers and Harbour Craft; the Second World War Navy (including the likes of Belfast, Cavalier and Alliance); and the Postwar Navy, including Britannia, Ocelot, Onyx, Courageous and (perhaps less expected) Bristol, still flying the White Ensign as a cadet training ship at Whale Island, and Gay Archer – part of a class of which it is possible to state categorically that their names will not be re-used in the modern navy! – which is now used for ‘corporate hospitality’ at Watchet. An appendix lists other vessels of sixty feet or more on the core and designated lists of the National Historic Ships Register.

Although this will undoubtedly prove a popular ‘coffee table’ book (and is undoubtedly priced very reasonably to appeal to that exact market), it also contains much that will fascinate enthusiasts and specialists alike. Brown provides the technical details for all of the ships in the book, career histories that vary in length between one and ten pages, and – perhaps most valuable of all – extensive information on the current status and preservation prospects of each ship. From the viewpoint of NDS members, perhaps the most interesting chapters are those that deal with slightly lesser known or more remote warships. There is an excellent study of the World War One light cruiser Caroline, still in use by the RNR as a drill ship at Belfast; the author notes that she is likely to be replaced by shore facilities between 2012 and 2014, when her preservation will clearly become a major issue. The proximity of those dates to the 100th anniversaries of the outbreak of the Great War and the Battle of Jutland, at which Caroline
fought, provides an obvious incentive for ensuring that this exceptionally important survival is preserved for posterity. There is equally impressive coverage of the likes of M33 at Portsmouth, President and Wellington in London, CMB 4 at Duxford and CMB 103 at Chatham, MTBs 71 and 102, MGB 81, ML 1387, and a host of merchant craft of all shapes and sizes.

Brown’s coverage is broad and his text is both very accurate and readable. Some might quibble that the focus on British waters leads to the exclusion of some ships preserved overseas that undoubtedly helped to ‘shape the nation’: one thinks of Queen Mary in California and QE2 in Dubai, for example (although the future of the latter is now in some doubt due to the troubled finances of Nakheel, the current owners). Perhaps more surprising is the absence of HMS Plymouth, which now seems to have been touted as a potential tourist attraction in virtually every port in Britain, Rame Head, the World War II maintenance ship still extant in Portsmouth Harbour, and the various survivors of the Ton class, notably Bronington and Iveston (the former famous for having been the sole command of the Prince of Wales, the latter for having been the location of the last mutiny – to date – in the history of the Royal Navy). The author notes the precarious situation of Plymouth, Bronington et al since the collapse of the Warship Preservation Trust at Birkenhead, but perhaps giving them more high-profile treatment in this book would actually have enhanced their prospects of a secure long-term future.

Overall, this is a hugely impressive book, and one likely to be of interest to many NDS members. Although this review is being written in sweltering summer heat, one can easily envisage it appearing on many a Christmas list!

David Davies


327 pp, 14 b/w illustrations, footnotes, extensive bibliography, index

I was introduced to this book by hearing Richard give an excellent talk on its themes to SNR(S), interested especially in the influence wielded by ‘Blue Lights’ upon naval discipline reforms after 1800, following the naval mutinies of 1797.

It presents an illuminating focus on a particular aspect of naval life, religious observance. The introduction suggests that at the end of a secularising Enlightenment which had diminished religious commitment across society, leading admirals and captains, pejoratively called ‘Blue Lights’, enlisted religion to improve naval performance. ‘The Blue Light programme aimed for more than individual salvation: it nurtured a compassionate awareness of lower deck needs which in turn developed into workable schemes of humanitarian reform.’ (p.2) Blake contends that religious fervour was not just the preoccupation of a minority of naval officers and wishes to present ‘compelling evidence of their success in running ships’ companies’.

Blake traces pre-Reformation Church care of seafarers ashore and regular prayers and hymns at sea. The Reformation institutionalised Anglican services onboard to discourage Catholicism, but provision of a chaplain depended on the captain; apart from the commonwealth period and 1698-1713 few naval ships carried chaplains or carried stocks of religious works. He finds evidence of a revived prominence of religion in Regulations and Instructions Relating to His Majesty’s Service at Sea (1731). These were reissued thirteen times by 1790 and superseded in 1806. He suggests that Admiralty Secretary merely transcribed

David Davies
them from Charles II’s provisions making
Captains responsible for religion and morality,
although Thomas Corbett tended to have a
reason for doing something. Blake infers from
noted occasions in Admiralty records that daily
prayers and sermons were not normal practice.

The tenor of the book is that pious Captains such
as Middleton, Kempenfelt and Gambier
proactively introduced more services and tracts
from the 1770s. Duncan was recording almost
monthly services in the 1790s and Israel Pellew
the same in 1807-8. By the 1790s more Captains
were requesting Bibles, prayer books, New
Testaments and psalms from the SPCK, and
Jervis made religious services obligatory ‘for
social utility’ (p.85) in the Mediterranean Fleet
from 1795-9 and Channel Fleet in 1799.

Blake asserts that ‘The Blue Lights were
individuals, not an organisation’ (p.105), but
refers to them collectively as ‘Blue Lights’ during
the French Revolutionary War (ch. IV) and writes
of ‘Blue Light thinking.’ He traces the influence
of James Ramsay on Middleton and his
networks. Prosopography follows the careers of
marine officer Andrew Burn and naval officers
James Gambier, James Saumarez, Charles
Penrose, Edward Pellew, Jahleel Brenton and
Adam Duncan, to link evangelism and naval
prowess. This develops into accounts of the
Battles of Copenhagen and Aix Roads and
Gambier’s court martial.

Analysis of the 1797 naval mutinies is
problematic. Blake contends that the Blue Lights
promoted religion to ‘elevate the self-respect of
the lower deck.’ (p.3) but they already had self
respect, articulated by the mutinies. Following
Dugan and Manwaring and Dobrée, he
acknowledges that Spithead demands were
moderate, its leadership outstanding; the Nore
more extreme and unpatriotic. He speculates
that communication between ships could have
been spread by a ‘Christian underworld’ of
Methodist prayer groups, ignoring the fact that
official messages were carried constantly from
ship to ship and stores were taken onboard
regularly, allowing many opportunities for
seamen to pass messages. Trusted seamen were
also allowed ashore.

He writes that there were undeniable ‘religious
elements in the mutinies, even though not
specifically evangelical. It is noteworthy that the
Spithead mutineers used an oath to bind
loyalty’. (p.94) Seamen were inevitably a cross
section of Anglicans, Catholics and
nonconformists; some were bound to be
evangelicals. The Spithead mutineers expressed
themselves in god-fearing language and used
oaths because that was their culture, used
customarily. Nore leader Richard Parker could
write a letter full of religious references before
his hanging because that was his upbringing.

Blake maintains that the ‘Mutinies induced the
Blue Lights to reappraise their aims’ (p.95) and
that the officer corps as a whole learned from
them. He cites as evidence increasing numbers
of SPCK Bibles and booklets requested by
Captains from 1797. More prayer groups were
allowed, as the mutinies had, perversely, shown
that the men could be trusted.

These gathered phenomena, traced from the
1770s, are interpreted as a single selfconscious
movement promoting the 19th century end of
peacetime flogging and naval welfare societies.
This thesis is not convincing. The navy was
merely reflecting the increasing public humanity
of land society. But it is a well-crafted discourse
on aspects often omitted from naval writing
which has added new information and analysis.
Most references are to secondary sources
although the bibliography lists archival sources.
PRO is used instead of TNA in footnotes.

Ann Coats

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SHORT REVIEWS

John Jordan (ed.), *Warship 2009* (Conway, 2009)
ISBN 978-1-844860-890-0 £30
208 pp, many illustrations, index

The latest edition of Conway’s familiar annual contains two essays that are likely to be of particular interest to readers of *Dockyards*. Bob Wilson writes on ‘Fuelling the Victorian Steam Navy’, providing some excellent information on the logistics of coaling and on the location and nature of British coaling stations. The article is well illustrated by a number of fascinating photographs of coal hulks in Portsmouth Harbour and of the coaling station on Ascension Island. Ian Johnston writes on ‘A Shipyard at War: John Brown & Co Ltd., Clydebank, 1914-18’, focusing on a case study of the building of HMS *Repulse*. This is superbly illustrated by a series of photographs of the stages in the battlecruiser’s construction. All in all, *Warship* as always provides much fascinating material on what are often little known aspects of naval history.

Above: An engraving of Deptford Dockyard in 1810, showing the ‘Great Storehouse’ originally built in Henry VIII’s reign.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The Greenwich Industrial History Society’s programme for 2008-9 includes a number of events that are likely to be of interest to NDS members, notably:

- 21st July - The Thames Discovery Team on discoveries on the Foreshore
- 20th October - Duncan Hawkins on Waterfront Archaeology of Greenwich and Lewisham
- 7th November - Edward Sargent on The Grand Surrey Canal
- 16th March - Ken Mcgovern on Pitcher’s Northfleet Dockyard
- 18th May - Jonathan Clarke on The Survey of Woolwich – some new light on Woolwich Dockyard
NEGLECTED NAVAL MEMORIALS

This grave, hidden away at the very edge of the isolated churchyard of St Leonard in Old Warden, Bedfordshire, gives no indication whatsoever of the occupant’s remarkably distinguished naval career. Admiral Sir Lionel Halsey was Jellicoe’s captain of the fleet aboard Iron Duke at Jutland, and subsequently served as Third Sea Lord in 1917-18. A highly popular officer, he ‘might have gone to the very top’ of the navy after World War I (according to Arthur Marder, quoted in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography) but became instead Comptroller and Treasurer to the Prince of Wales, only to be dismissed when the prince became King Edward VIII – allegedly because Halsey objected to his proposed marriage to Mrs Simpson.

AND FINALLY

The NDS has not previously been particularly active in the field of organising competitions, but this issue of Dockyards sees an exception to the rule!

On Saturday 25 April 2009, following the AGM, an audience of members and non-members heard a new Perspective on Chatham Dockyard & Recollections of Ropemaking. Philip MacDougall lectured on his new Navy Records Society volume, Chatham Dockyard, 1815-1865: The Industrial Transformation. The publishers, Ashgate, have kindly donated three volumes as prizes for a competition devised by the author.

1. When did Chatham Dockyard close (day/month/year)?
2. Who designed the Saw Mill opened at Chatham in 1817?
3. Who was responsible for designing the new No.3 Dock built at Chatham c1820?
4. What was originally stored above the Saw Mill opened in 1817?

Return answers by 1 August 2009 to Dr Ann V Coats, Secretary, Naval Dockyards Society, 44, Lindley Avenue, Southsea, PO4 9NU, 023 92 863 799, ann@dockyards.org

The three people with the most correct answers will be sent their prizes.

The committee confidently expects that NDS members will not resort to the nefarious and underhand tactics employed by those participating in competitions organised (for example) by national television channels!