In September we held a very successful tour of lesser known parts of Chatham Dockyard. Here is a view of No. 1 basin opened in June 1871, intended for repairing ships, and now a home to many small craft including tugs Kent (1948) and Touchstone (1962). To the rear can be seen the Ship and Trades pub (the Ship Trades Planning Office in Dockyard days) and the frame of No. 8 Machine Shop, moved from Woolwich on closure of that dockyard in 1869. A full account of our visit inside.
Chatham – A Successful NDS Visit

A really successful day on 10 September enjoying some less often visited parts of Chatham Dockyard. A good attendance, all very pleased with the day I think.

After meeting for coffee, Edward Sargent gave us a superb tour of the Ropery, explaining with the help of illustrations the various items of machinery to be found not only on the ground floor but also in the upper parts which are not normally open to the public, a great treat for us all! Edward referred from time to time to an 1808 guide to the Ropery. With Des Pawson, Edward has, subject to financial constraints, plans to publish *The Chatham Ropery in 1808 as described in Memoranda prepared by Simon Goodrich Mechanist to the Admiralty in 1808* with an extensive introduction written by himself. The publication would also feature reproductions of drawings in the National Archives as well as patent drawings. Sounds most interesting!

Edward Sargent talking to our group outside the Ropery. (C Clark)

Edward standing by the 1811 Maudsley strand-forming machine. This is the last of the forming machines that still has its original cast-iron framework and is more or less as delivered by the company.

After lunch, Philip MacDougall gave a very interesting tour of the Victorian dockyard. This is out-with the ‘Historic Dockyard’, which is the tourist attraction open to the public. The Great Extension was built by convict labour around 1860/85 along the line of St Mary’s Creek. Quadrupling the size of the Dockyard at the time, it comprised three basins, and a range of other buildings, a minority of which are still extant. The magnificent red-brick Pumping Station (‘No. 5 Pump House’) was vacant but I was pleased (and intrigued) to hear that a craft distillery has opened at the southern end! See [http://www.coppermivetdistillery.com](http://www.coppermivetdistillery.com).

We passed dry docks including No. 5 nicknamed Invincible Dock, after the ironclad *Invincible*, which was the first to dock there in 1871. Docks 6 and 7 were used in the nuclear refit centre.
Entering a seemingly modern shopping centre, the Dockyard Outlet Centre, we realized a modern ‘skin’ (erected 2003) enclosed the intact No. 1 Boiler Shop which was moved from Woolwich c. 1875 upon that dockyard’s closure. The pictures attached show the Boiler Shop being re-erected and how it looks today with its frame painted blue. On balance, it seemed a good viable use for this dockyard building – see http://docksideshopping.com/

**No. 1 Boiler Shop**

Being re-erected c. 1875. (P. MacDougall, *Secret Chatham*)  
c. 1960s view. (CDHS collection)  
How we saw it as shopping centre!

Another fascinating structure was the shell of No. 8 Machine Shop. After the closure of Woolwich Dockyard in 1869, the shop was dismantled and re-erected in 1875 at Chatham. It comprised a foundry, light plate shop, electrical workshop and tool store. In 1987, the cladding was severely damaged in the storm and removed. More recently the remaining frame has been cleaned and repainted to secure its future for years to come. An unlisted north extension was removed c. 1999.
We passed the Ship and Trades pub [http://www.shipandtradeschatham.co.uk](http://www.shipandtradeschatham.co.uk) and this indeed had its origins as a dockyard building, as Clive Stanley recounts from his time in the Dockyard, 1970–75:

The . . . building served as a “Ship Trades Planning Office” where refits and other work on minor war vessels were planned and organised. The office was on the top floor of this two storey building. I know, for example, refits or other work at Chatham on the Inshore Survey Craft HMS Echo, Enterprise and Egeria were planned there. I suspect Ton class minesweepers and other craft were handled similarly. On the ground floor, I do know there was a Loan Clothing Store where workmen’s overalls and Fearnought jackets could be obtained and exchanged when dirty. No doubt there were other small workshops and stores within that building but I cannot be certain.

In the evening, with kind hospitality from the Chatham Dockyard Historical Society (CDHS), we enjoyed an excellent lecture by Philip MacDougall. It was a good opportunity to meet many CDHS members.

We had planned to do undertake a tour of Sheerness the next day, but this sadly had been postponed a month or so before due to restricted access to the working port. We will rearrange this for 2017.

Many thanks in particular to Edward Sargent and Philip MacDougall, and Clive Stanley of CDHS.

Richard Holme
Notes from the Editor

Welcome to our latest edition, sorry the last issue was unusually a little late. Best wishes to everyone for a happy Christmas and peaceful and prosperous 2017!

We featured in our last edition the history of the Military Hospital at Sheerness and our campaign to save it from demolition. I am glad to report that the Hospital has been saved and is indeed now listed Grade II. There are concerns though that its setting may be hemmed in somewhat by new railways and other infrastructure. However as we go to press news is emerging of plans to re-open the Steel Mill at Sheerness, which has used the Hospital as offices, so hopefully a secure use for the building. (See image of Sheerness c1972 below with inter alia Steel Mill building at top, next to Military Hospital.) So vital for dockyard buildings to find a new use to secure their future! By the way we are hoping to hold a walk around Sheerness in 2017.

A year for centenaries whether of Somme or Jutland but also lesser known ones as the Purbeck Gazette reports.

This year is the centenary of the opening of the biggest industrial complex in Dorset at the time: the Royal Naval Cordite Factory at Holton Heath. Winston Churchill, who was First Lord of the Admiralty during the First World War, commissioned the factory to supply cordite for the guns on the Royal Navy’s ships. Cordite was the propellant of the time. The factory employed thousands of workers and was part of the life of many families for miles around. The factory closed in 1957 and parts of the site were used by the Royal Navy as a research establishment until this closed in 1997.

Thanks to Celia Clark for passing this on. Dave Eveson reports from Gibraltar that the former HMS Rooke (served as RN base c. 1946–96) is now mothballed and presumably awaiting redevelopment. A historic undated aerial view below shows both Rooke and No. 4 Dock (1895–1908) on the right. I gather the Dock is to be built over probably as a hotel and used as a car park! No news on the possible redevelopment of the Rosia Victualling Yard.
Looking ahead to 2017, we have an excellent trip to Amsterdam, 23–27 June, a flyer will follow shortly. I am already looking forward to this very much! Hope to see you on this.

Hope the articles are of interest, unless otherwise stated photos in this issue are mine. I am always looking for material, however short or long, so don’t be shy and get in touch! I always enjoy hearing from readers.

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All Change at Portsmouth Boathouses

Portsmouth’s No. 5 Boathouse (1882) was home to the Mary Rose Museum until the new museum building was opened in 2013. It subsequently housed part of Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust’s historic small boats collection. In 2015 the small boats were rehoused in No. 4 Boathouse (1939) and in July 2015 the Boatbuilding and Heritage Skills Training Centre was opened there, delivering practical, intensive courses in traditional boatbuilding and related skills. On the mezzanine level are a display of historic boats including some hands-on activities for children, and a restaurant and bar with views over the harbour.

In May 2016, No. 5 Boathouse became part of the National Museum of the Royal Navy, hosting its Jutland exhibition, 36 hours: Jutland 1916, The Battle That Won the War. The exhibition, which opened on 19 May, will run for three years. Through never-before-seen displays and immersive galleries the exhibition challenges the belief that the Battle of Jutland was a German victory and presents the battle as a British victory, both tactically and strategically. Working with IWM (Imperial War Museum), the exhibition provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to view the National Museum of the Royal Navy’s collection together with objects from twenty-one private lenders and five public organizations.
The exhibition’s launch coincided with the NMRN’s other major contribution to the Jutland centenary, the opening of the battle’s only survivor, HMS Caroline, in Belfast.

A major exhibit is the superb builder’s model of HMS Canada, which is over 13ft long and weighs over 500kg. The model was in a very poor state when handed over by IWM to NMRN but has been fully restored to magnificent condition by Alan Berry-Robinson. The Canada was ordered by the Chilean navy from Armstrong’s Elswick yard but was taken over by the RN at the start of WW1. After the war it became the Chilean Almirante Latorre and served until the 1950s, outliving other all other contemporary Dreadnoughts. The exhibition also contains personal effects from men and women involved in the battle.

![Image of the builder’s model of HMS Canada ready to be placed on display in the Jutland exhibition. (Image courtesy of the NMRN)](image)

The diary of Queen Alexandra’s Royal Naval Nursing Service Nurse Mary Clarke tells of her service as a naval sister in the Grand Fleet hospital ship Plassy (May to June 1916). The diary is part of the IWM’s collection, and includes a good description of the reception and treatment of British casualties after the Battle of Jutland. Also included is the lifebelt belonging to William Loftus Jones, English recipient of the Victoria Cross and commander of HMS Shark, which sunk during the battle. The lifebelt was recovered from the body after being washed ashore following the battle, and is displayed alongside a photograph of HMS Shark survivors.

There are three guns on display that saw action at Jutland: the large gun from the German destroyer B98, and two smaller deck guns from the destroyers HMS Opal and HMS Narbrough, usually on display at Orkney Islands Council’s Scapa Flow Visitor Centre and Museum at Lyness. As part of this loan arrangement, the NMRN will carry out extensive conservation work on the guns. The exhibition showcases the bell from HMS Hood and ensigns flown by British warships at the Battle of Jutland. The bell was preserved from HMS Hood, battleship 1891–1914, by Rear Admiral the Hon. Sir Horace Hood KCB, DSO, MVO, who was killed at Jutland on 31 May 1916 when HMS Invincible blew up. It was presented to the Royal Navy’s newest battlecruiser, Hood, when she was launched in 1918, by the widow of Rear Admiral Hood, great-great-grandson of Sir Samuel Hood after whom the ship was named. The bell was unveiled by Princess Anne on 24 May 2016, the seventy-fifth anniversary of the sinking of HMS Hood. Other bells on display are those of Warspite and Tiger, both of which were at Jutland. The largest flag is from the dreadnought HMS Bellerophon, and measures around 2.6m by 5.3m.
Jutland casualties from HMS *Tiger* on HMS *Plassy*, 1916. (Image courtesy of the NMRN)

The Dockyard Apprentice exhibition in No. 7 Boathouse (1875) is being revamped in 2016 by Portsmouth Royal Dockyard Historic Trust to attract greater visitor numbers.

No. 6 Boathouse (1845) currently houses the Action Stations interactive exhibition. Following a £13.85m Heritage Lottery Fund grant it will become the home of the Royal Marines Museum, presently at the Eastney, which is scheduled to open there in spring 2019. Part of the NMRN, it is also receiving £2m from money raised from fines after the Libor banking scandal, with a further £2.5m coming from fundraising.

No. 6 Boathouse, one of the first examples of a building constructed with an internal metal frame with massive iron girders to support boat storage on the upper floors. The architect was Captain James Beatson, Royal Engineers. (Author)

The interior of No. 4 Boathouse, showing the steam launch *Osborne*, part of the small boats collection. (Author)
The lottery grant also provides for a new Centre for Discovery (also part of the NMRN) which will feature artefacts, currently housed elsewhere, in a project entitled SeaMore. Over two million artefacts, currently kept in thirty separate stores within fourteen buildings across nine sites, will be relocated and made accessible to visitors in a bold move to revolutionize the way the epic story of the Royal Navy is told. Many of these items, which include unique documents, photographs, medals, paintings and archaeology, are currently at risk in buildings and stores not fit for purpose. The Centre for Discovery will provide a safe haven for these collections, which will be available daily to view and access in a way not previously possible. It is to be housed on the first floor of No. 12 Storehouse (1855) and is also scheduled to open in Spring 2019. The NMRN and Admiralty libraries, on the ground floor of the building, will become much more accessible without the current security restrictions.

Dr Paul Brown

Boathouse 4 up for Civic Trust award

Client: Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust – lease from the MOD
Architect: Michál Cohen of Walters & Cohen
Contractor: Interserve
Functions:
- International College of Traditional Boatbuilding; Highbury College
- Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust small boat collection, children’s facilities, film projection: museum and interpretation
- High level restaurant with harbour view
- Dock, canal and lock gates to mastpond

Comments: This ‘cathedral to small boat building’ https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/buildings/boathouse-4-by-walters-and- Cohen-architects/10003984.fullarticle designed by four engineers, erected in the rearmament run-up to WW2 to house small boat building and repair, was built around four Dorman Long cranes, one of which was used in the recent construction. With its saw-tooth roof and horizontal Modern Movement glazing it is a distinctive C20 survivor facing Portsmouth Harbour in the naval base heritage area. Threatened in the 1980s with demolition and a replacement by John Winter who designed the heritage area ticketing building, the PNBPT used Boathouse 4 for storage and events – until discussions with the ICTB in Lowestoft and preparation of the HLF bid to house the new complex mix of uses began four years ago. Reversion to the original use: small boat building and craft training is not only a gratifying return to the boathouse’s original function, but the new facility addresses the continuing loss of traditional dockyard trade skills.

Cutting a window into the temporary wall to reveal boatbuilders at work – lit in the evenings – is a masterstroke. The existing mezzanine was extended and a new westward range added, filling three sides of the tall volume of space, to house the trust’s boat collection, children’s facilities, classroom and meeting room, toilets, restaurant and kitchen on the first floor, with offices and workshops underneath. A glazed acoustic screen shields the restaurant, with its unique-level view of the harbour, from the noise of the boat restoration and construction below. Its rope partitions and woodwork details were made by the trust’s in-house conservation team; timber from Beaulieu in the New Forest, where timber-framing still continues, was used for the cabinets. The harbourside workshops below the restaurant are light, airy and functional.

Three of the sets of steel columns supporting the roof are painted a vibrant yellow. Detailing throughout is plain, robust and industrial – entirely appropriate for what is still mainly an industrial building. Materials are recycled as far as possible – setting an example now followed by the surrounding active naval base. Heating the 2,700m² was not feasible, so only the enclosed spaces are heated, and timber stores season in the main space under cover. The colleges offer participation in education at many levels – family, school and college and adult – and makes an excellent and unmatched contribution to technical education locally and in the sub-region.

Dr Celia Clark (her draft for Civic Trust Awards)
Skiffs Naming Ceremony, Boathouse 4

This event, held on 26 October 2016, marked the anniversary of the International Boatbuilding Training College Portsmouth (IBTC Portsmouth) moving into the refurbished Boathouse 4 in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard. The College itself was set up three years ago by Nat and Gill Wilson in its first home, Boathouse 5. To bring a dockyard to life requires craft activities and ideally, boatbuilding – the 800-year-old tradition at the heart of the dockyard – and the College provides these in glorious magnificence. The two skiffs, Little Warrior (black) and Little Victory (blue), representing a year’s output of work of seventy-five local school children, IBTC Portsmouth’s students and the Portsmouth Sailing Trust, were launched by the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth, Councillor David Fuller. The ten-year-old dazzle-painting designers – pupils from Craneswater School, Charlotte Wallace and Harry Cole – were there too enjoying their designs being admired.

Boathouse 4, built 1939–40, the only British home dockyard boathouse built during the rapid rearmament period, is a free working boatyard with an upper-floor exhibition space and a restaurant with a superb view over the harbour. It is crammed full of historic boats under restoration and newly crafted boats being worked on by students and volunteers. The students learn their boatbuilding skills on genuine historic boats in an authentic working environment.

Following the launch Jim Brooke-Jones, Head of Operations, reported that there are currently thirty-four students attending the courses and all five who graduated in September 2016 had found employment, an impressive achievement. Captain David Newberry from National Historic Ships UK called it ‘a very impressive project’ and now their Solent Shipshape Network hub. Caroline Barrie-Smith, Head of Business and Finance thanked the ‘family’ of Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, project partners, ‘dedicated volunteers’ and ‘committed students’ for making Boathouse 4 ‘a very unusual visitor experience’. The graduates are equipped for both boatbuilding and restoration, but also all in fine woodworking skills. Nat and Gill Wilson will now focus on developing distance learning courses in conserving historic vessels, while the current team focuses on raising money for student bursaries and January and March 2017 recruitment drives.

A visit is highly recommended.

Ann Coats
Good news from Mahon!

Following up the evaluation of the Isla del Rey Interpretation Centre published in Dockyards (July 2016) 21(1), 23–28, an update about a new source of funding.

This year so far has seen several changes and improvements on the restoration project of the three-hundred-year-old British Naval Hospital on Isla del Rey, Mahon, Menorca.

The Hospital offered extra visiting opportunities with the usual guided tours, which proved very popular with tourists during the summer months, so the number of visitors this year has been much higher than ever before. Recently the old laundry room was reopened to the public, as well as a pharmacist’s shop of 1808. Thanks to a dedicated team of British volunteers, work is progressing on the old kitchens as well as some beautiful new gardens.

Plans are in place to raise funds for a new Church Hall to be rebuilt from a building currently in ruins beside the Anglican Chapel and for the first time we are going to test the crowdfunding system to raise the necessary donations.

However, arguably the most important change is about to take place thanks to receiving a donation from a foundation in the Balearic Islands known as Fundatur. This is an organization dedicated to promoting tourism. A few years ago some of the patrons (who are mostly local businessmen) gave the yacht Fortuna to the Spanish royal family for their private use. The high maintenance costs and the fact that it was being used less and less finally led to the decision to return this yacht, which was subsequently sold.

The patrons decided to reinvest the money from the sale into local projects working for the good of the communities on the three islands. The largest donation of €2m went to the Symphonic Orchestra of the Balearic Islands to provide them with a suitable location to practise and rehearse. Following some lengthy and delicate negotiations, the Foundation of Hospital Isla de Rey was awarded €400,000 towards the restoration of the North Wing of the British Naval Hospital.

Subject to the necessary permissions from Mahón town hall, the work is scheduled to start in early November 2016 and there now remains the challenge of raising more funds to finish the entire first floor of the building (approximately €350,000).

The Foundation members and volunteers, many of whom are British, will as usual strive to obtain the maximum benefit of this gift of €400,000 for which we are most grateful; the work will be carried out by our usual builder and a well-known local architect who has offered his services without charge. We are delighted to say that our target of becoming an Interpretation Centre for Mahón Harbour is now well on its way to becoming a reality.

http://www.islahospitalmenorca.org
Beverley Ward, Member of Fundación Isla del Rey
beverleyjeward@gmail.com

Malta’s Military Heritage Transformed

Malta displays the finest collection of military architecture in the world . . . a monumental heritage for sheer concentration and majesty quite unmatched.

Malta was the cork sealing the bottle of the Eastern Mediterranean, which if drawn would allow the waters of Islamic invasion to flow freely into the Christian lands of the West.

— Quentin Hughes

Since Professors Sir Gregory Ashworth and John Tunbridge reported on their visit to Malta in the November 2014 issue of Dockyards, many more defence and dockyard sites have been restored and re-purposed. Perhaps this impressive work has been stimulated by Malta’s presidency of the European Union in 2017, and Valletta’s forthcoming celebration as European City of Culture in 2018. On every site we visited this October, in a tour organized by Mike Critchley (www.maritimeheritagetours.co.uk), there were large signs proclaiming the EU’s beneficence – in funding 85 per cent of the building works, with Malta finding the other 15 per cent. As well as the government, with help from the Bank of Valletta
and Heritage Malta, the NGO Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna has brilliantly and meticulously restored five defence heritage sites and opened them to the public, working with the Ministry of Tourism. Din l-Art Ħelwa, Malta’s National Trust, restored and now manages several coastal fortifications. Volunteer enthusiasts have created the Malta Aviation Museum at Ta’ Qali on the site of the former RAF station, while the remaining Nissen huts now house a crafts village with two glassworks factories, a pottery, woodworkers and other crafts.

On the first day our boat tour from Sliema of the intricate creeks of the Grand Harbour was enhanced by the retired naval officers’ recollections: where their ships were anchored, Whitehall Mansions: the Wrens’ quarters, the shore establishments, NAAFI, police station and wardroom . . . Their continuing attachment to Malta is evident: at the airport we met another former naval officer, Sandy Tyndale-Biscoe, who with his wife Jo is working with volunteers and architect Edward Said to restore the early nineteenth-century Villa Frere Garden (see Friends of Villa Frere Facebook page, https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=Friends%20of%20Villa%20Frere). There is even a Friends of Valletta in Chichester!

Mike Critchley recounts:

There were two ‘withdraws’ from Malta. I was there in 1971 or was it 1972 when we ‘almost withdrew’ with 99 per cent of the personnel sent back to UK and HMS Bulwark sailed with the remaining equipment. Just before the ship sailed Mintoff signed a new agreement that expired on 31 March 1979, when we did leave for good. So many of the personnel and much equipment had to be returned for the seven-year stay of execution! Oil drums were sent empty to Cyprus on a Dover cross-Channel ferry, such was the determination of Lord Carrington that nothing should be given to the Maltese! RN Shipwrights flown out from UK worked 24/7 making packing cases for the families of troops (mainly 42 Commando) personal effects to be flown back by the daily shuttle of Hercules aircraft to the UK.

What remains of the British-era buildings? Some such as the key forts and barracks have found positive new uses. Language schools teaching English in a warmer climate than the UK occupy several barrack complexes, whilst others in St Andrew’s have been converted into social housing units and St Patrick’s barracks into a public secondary school.

But it is the recently restored Knights’ defences – in Valletta and the Three Cities – in the golden yellow Malta limestone that really stand out. Just after the Great Siege of Malta by the Turks in 1565 the Papacy’s leading military engineer, Francesco Laparelli, was commissioned to design a new city and its defences, building on work already done by Bartolomeo Genga and Baldassare Lanci. Girolamo Cassar continued construction for two decades, employing Sicilian and Maltese labourers.

Fort St Elmo, built in 1552 to defend the seaward point of the city, which was in a very poor state when we last saw it, has been elegantly restored by Heritage Malta and opened earlier this year to house the National War Museum. Each architectural element – Knights’ or British: bastion, polverista (gunpowder magazine), casemate, ceremonial gate, chapel, church, barracks, battery – is interpreted on site in Malti and English. Seven themed exhibitions in well-restored buildings illustrate the fort’s long history – from the Ottoman Sultans in 1512 to the zenith of the British Empire in 1912 to the present day, using the latest technology to bring the story alive. The timeline describes events in other countries – as far away as Japan. Documents and objects are more numerous as we approach the twentieth century. Whole aircraft, anti-aircraft guns, uniforms, WWII shells and debris and King George’s 1942 award of the George Cross to the island for its ‘heroism and devotion that will long be famous in history’. Re-enactors stage the ‘In Guardia’ Parade on Sundays, evoking the inspection of the fort and garrison by the Grand Bailiff of the Knights of St John. In the Vendome Bastion of the fort (1614) the National Library of Malta is part of the Valletta 1566 Melita Renascens exhibition.

Fort St. Angelo on the Birgu promontory facing Valletta, still the headquarters of the Knights, was for the first time open to the public from 1 November 2016. We entered via its magnificent baroque gateway into a vaulted hall, climbed steep steps to the roof, which offers a magnificent view of Valletta, Senglea, the Bighi Hospital, now a technical college, and to the seaward, Fort Ricasoli, sadly still derelict. Maps show the location and quantity of bombs that rained down on Malta in WWII, and also the make-up of the garrison and their armament. A grating is the only visible entrance to an underground
dungeon where prisoners, including a grand master, were held for years. The complex defences of the fort and the British naval barracks are well explained – and vividly brought to life by the naval officers in our group. Anchored in Dockyard Creek replacing the vessels of the British Navy are the superyachts of the mega-rich including Russians. At the head of the creek the newly established American University of Malta will be accommodated within the two ranges of storehouses – one British and one from the time of the Knights – as teaching spaces, adding top storeys.

The City Gate Ditch, Triton Fountain Square and the main bridge into Valletta are being repaired and rehabilitated. Inside the city walls two giant staircases are flanked on one side by the elegant new Parliament building designed by Renzo Piano. We learned more about the monumental baroque gate or Porta Reale that spanned the city entrance in the excellent new Fortifications Interpretation Centre: The Fortress Builders at Biagio Steps, a project which was part-financed by the European Union Regional Development Fund. The centre which includes a new wing at the end of St Mark’s Street was designed by architect Norbert Gatt, who won a silver medal for Architectural Heritage in 2012. The main displays are inside a large sixteenth-century warehouse. A wooden drawbridge platform dating from the time of the Knights which is believed to have been fitted to Valletta’s main gateway takes pride of place in the entrance. The curator, Paul Grima, explained how in an island where supplies of water are crucial, the diagonal grooves carved into the solid rock were designed to collect moisture and send it to a cistern below. Typical masons’ tools used to create the fortifications of Valletta are on display. Excellent models in the collection of Dr Stephen Spiteri help visitors to understand the evolution of the city’s defences. A series of panels describe and illustrate Malta’s defences, from the Bronze Age Citadel at Borg-in-nadur, Phoenicians, Punic-Roman, medieval, Hospitalier, and British periods, including the Victoria Lines built right across the island by the Royal Engineers from 1875 onwards. The hierarchy of the military engineers who designed the defences is celebrated, and on the top floor the WWII pillboxes and anti-aircraft batteries are illustrated. As the Centre’s leaflet says, it’s a cross between a museum, an information point and a resource centre. When we visited, a workshop had just taken place in the meeting room and courtyard on the top floor focused on ‘civil society and cultural diplomacy’. At the next table of the Taproom restaurant we met Australian delegates to the international Arts Policy Summit that week, and another conference on Cities as Community Spaces was due to take place in Valletta from 23 to 25 November.

Not all the new occupiers of defence structures are military museums. Opposite our hotel in Sliema is the Fortizza restaurant in what looks like a British fort. The sixteenth-century St James Cavalier, designed by Francesco Laparelli, which was built as a raised gun platform to defend the land entrance to Valletta, was converted by architect Richard England in 2000 to house an arts centre: Kreativita (www.keattifivra.org). The dramatic access ramp rises into the heart of the building. Two water cisterns were transformed into a spectacular theatre and a post-modern atrium which rises through all the floors. Nearby is the Victor Pasmore Gallery in a vaulted polverista. Pasmore lived in Malta from 1966 until his death in 1998. As part of the Revival of Old Towns and Cities from 2013 to 2015, another EU project, the pretty gardens and fortlet with a giant eye and ear on the point of Senglea were restored and re-opened in April 2015.

Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna (FWA), the Malta Heritage Trust, was working on the restoration of the
Victorian Fort Rinella when Mario Farrugia showed us round in the early 1990s. This time, our party enjoyed a ‘soldier’s lunch’ (meat stew with a hard tack biscuit followed by bread pudding!) served by uniformed soldiers who are also brilliant interpreters of the history of muskets and rifles, how the 100-ton gun was armed and fired, as well as carrying out military manoeuvres on horseback. The well-produced guidebook acknowledges the help of the Palmerston Forts Society based in Fort Nelson, near Portsmouth. The soldiers of FWA also fire the daily noon gun on the Saluting Battery, to the delight of tourists, including passengers from cruise ships anchored alongside.

FWA have also restored and opened the Lascaris War Rooms, a secret underground complex which housed the WWII headquarters for the defence of Malta and planning of the invasion of Sicily. Their Malta at War museum is in an eighteenth-century army barracks in Dockyard Creek, the Couvre Porte in Vittoriosa (Birgu), the Great Siege Headquarters of 1565 and former home to the Royal Navy from 1800 to 1979. Below it is a massive underground rock-cut air-raid shelter which offered refuge to hundreds of people during the relentless Nazi air raids. The baroque Notre Dame Gate and the Cottonera Military Hospital are now the FWA headquarters (http://www.maltaatwarmuseum.com).

Din l-Art Ħelwa, Malta’s National Trust, celebrated its restoration of several of the island’s Coastal Towers, built between 1605 and 1720, some of which it still manages, in a new book (Din l-Art Ħelwa 1965–2015). Its Youth Section was set up in 1967 ‘as a counter-reaction to the various acts of vandalism being perpetrated by an unfortunately large section of youth.’ This reminded me that on my last visit in the 1990s I spoke about built environmental education in the Grand Master’s Palace from my experience as Education Officer of the Civic Trust . . . As a reward I was given Joseph Bonnici and Michael Cassar’s book The Malta Grand Harbour and its Dockyard published in 1994.

As mentioned in connection with Fort St Elmo, from July 2016 to June 2017 twin exhibitions in the National Library of Malta and Fort St Elmo are celebrating the anniversary of the founding of the city of Valletta in 1566. It quotes Patrick Brydone who said in 1773 that ‘The fortifications of Malta are indeed a most stupendous work . . . These extend for a great many miles, and raise our astonishment to think that so small a nation had ever been able to execute them.’ An excellent book, Valletta 1566 Melita Renascens, reproduces the illustrations in the exhibitions.

A seeder side of naval life is explored in Strait Street: Malta’s Red-Light District Revealed by John Schofield and Emily Morrissey, published by Midseabooks which I bought at the airport bookshop. Mentioning this to one of our party, he described how sailors going out on the town were issued with a contraceptive put into their hats as they left their ship!

Is tourism to Malta changing from ‘sea and sun’ to cultural tourism? High-end boutique hotels are being created in historic houses in Senglea, once the despised home of the dockyard workers. These high-end hotels will no doubt offer a different ambience from the seaside hotel we stayed in in Sliema. For the culture vulture, fortifications freak and architecture devotee, Malta offers a rich and diverse experience.

Celia Clark November 2016
Venice Arsenale – don’t abandon the crane!

An excellent event was held in London on 13 July 2016 by the charity Venice in Peril, which since 1971 has financed fifty conservation projects in the city. Venice in Peril is now turning its attention to the Armstrong Mitchell crane noted by them as ‘a masterpiece of British 19th century engineering at the centre of the most famous historic dockyard in the world – the Arsenale’. This will be Venice in Peril’s first industrial heritage project.

The crane was designed and made on Tyneside in 1883 and is the only crane of its type left in the world. Similar cranes were built from 1877 to 1905 for Malta, Bombay, La Spezia for example, but were sadly demolished long ago. A hydraulic crane, highly innovative for its time, it was used for lifting new heavy guns and equipment on to Italian Navy warships and is still a significant feature of the Arsenale skyline. The crane is 37m high and weighs 565 tonnes, so a substantial structure. It has not though been used for dockyard operations since the end of the First World War.

A number of speakers gave presentations on the history of the crane and plans for its conservation. Although solid in its structure and appearance, deterioration has been particularly rapid recently. Blue textile bands have had to be used to hold the ballast box together, *see top left*. Plans will result in the counterweight box being lightened to reduce strain on the structure. A sample number of rollers and pads will be removed from the revolving platform which has been under most pressure and tested for strength and condition. The iron structure and base will be checked and conserved. The project will cost over €2m in total and stabilize the crane and allow it to rotate.

Speakers include a number of eminent Italians including Alberto Lionello, conservation engineer, and Claudio Menichelli, conservation architect. John Clayson from the Discovery Museum Newcastle spoke of the evolution of the hydraulic crane. All were passionate for the crane’s conservation.


We last covered the Crane in our March 2007 issue and will keep readers informed of how this fascinating project progresses.

**Richard Holme**

(Pictures courtesy of John Clayson and Michael Harding)
The Jutland Commemorations in Orkney

The principal national events to mark the centenary of the Battle of Jutland took place in Orkney at the end of May and beginning of June. We were on the islands at the time, so what follows is a personal account of what took place.

The main event was a service of remembrance in St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall, attended by the Princess Royal and various British and German dignitaries. The naval presence was provided by sailors from HMS Bulwark, the current flagship of the Royal Navy, which had anchored in Scapa Flow – the anchorage from which the ships of the Grand Fleet sailed prior to the battle. Efforts to procure an invitation to this service proved unsuccessful, although it was only right that the great majority of places in the cathedral went to descendants of those who had served. The same was true of the service that took place later the same day (31 May) at the naval cemetery at Lyness on Hoy, which contains the graves of many men who perished at Jutland, and memorials to the men lost on individual ships, notably the Barham and Malaya. HMS Kent and FGS Schleswig-Holstein anchored off Lyness, and saluted the official party as it came across from mainland Orkney on a flotilla of P2000 patrol craft.

After the conclusion of the ceremonies, HMS Bulwark sailed round from Scapa and moored at Hatston Pier, the deep-water berth in Kirkwall harbour. (Hatston is a former World War II Royal Naval Air Station, HMS Sparrowhawk; several buildings survive.) On the morning of 1 June, we went aboard her and had breakfast in the wardroom at the invitation of Mark Barton, naval historian and Cdr(E) of Bulwark (who, coincidentally, had been one of the readers during the cathedral service). He and I had previously arranged that I would act as ‘tour guide’ for a party from the ship’s crew, the tour being undertaken in one of Bulwark’s LCVPs! It was the first time I’d seen Scapa Flow from the water, and although I’d prepared my ‘script’ as thoroughly as I could, quite a number of things took me by surprise. Only on the water, for example, does one really get a proper sense of the colossal dimensions of the anchorage, which totals some 125 square miles. A huge oil rig, laid up temporarily in the Flow, looked utterly insignificant. Another surprise was how well hidden Kirk Sound, the first channel between Orkney mainland and the southern islands, is: from Scapa Bay, it is completely concealed behind the mainland until the very last minute. This explains a great deal about the events of 14 October 1939, when Gunther Prien conned U-47 through Kirk Sound to attack HMS Royal Oak, which was not moored out in the main body of the Flow but close inshore, under Gaitnip cliffs, to provide AA cover for Kirkwall.

We proceeded clockwise around the Flow, passing the main defensive gun batteries on Hoxa Head before turning west, passing Flotta and proceeding to Lyness, passing the remains of various wartime experimental facilities and defensive positions. We then passed over the remaining wrecks of the German High Seas Fleet before turning north-east toward Mainland and our return to Scapa pier. The whole cruise took close to three hours – a good indication of just how much time naval personnel must have spent on the water, as (unlike in, say, Portsmouth harbour) getting from any given point A to point B is a lengthy undertaking! On our return to Bulwark, Mark kindly gave us a personal tour of the ship. In many ways, she’s remarkably impressive, with her huge stern dock and multiple ops rooms. But she also bears witness to wrong-headed policies pursued by successive governments: originally planned to have a helicopter hangar and her own flight, this was cancelled at a relatively late stage as an economy measure, but Bulwark’s labyrinthine internal lay-out, with no central thoroughfare and tortuous routes between different parts of the ship, is still dictated by the non-existent hangar.
The strong naval presence in Orkney continued for the rest of the week. After Bulwark’s departure, her place was taken by HMS Duncan and FGS Brandenburg, which had conducted the service of remembrance in the North Sea over the wrecks sunk during the battle. The P2000 patrol craft, each attached to a University Royal Naval Unit, visited the outlying islands, which, in many cases, had not
seen a warship for many years. On Friday 3 June we went over to Sanday, and found HMS *Biter* and *Blazer* berthed there.

![Brandenburg (left) and Duncan alongside Hatston Pier. (Author)](image1)

Sanday also has a fascinating reminder of the naval events of World War I, the wreck of the destroyer *B98*, one of the last relics of the Imperial High Seas Fleet and a veteran of the Battle of Jutland. After the armistice, she was used as a mail boat between Germany and the ships interned in Scapa Flow, and was wrecked in Lopness Bay on 17 February 1920 when on her way to the scrapyard. The hull has broken up over the years, but at low tide, it is possible to walk completely around the wreck and to study the remains close up.

![The remains of B98, Lopness Bay, Sanday. (Author)](image2)

All in all, then, the events in Orkney marked a fitting commemoration both of the Battle of Jutland and of the islands’ hugely important place in naval history.

**Dr David Davies**

**Some images from Kronstadt**

The Russian cruiser *Aurora* alongside at Kronstadt dockyard, on the island of Kotlin at the head of the Gulf of Finland, July 2015. After an eighteen-month refit there she returned to her normal berth in the River Neva, St Petersburg, in July 2016. During the refit the exhibition space on board almost doubled. Traditionally *Aurora* is considered the principal symbol of the October 1917 Revolution.
According to the popular account of the uprising, the cruiser fired a blank shot signalling the revolutionaries to storm the Winter Palace, the seat of the Provisional Government, which the Bolsheviks intended to overthrow. The cruiser was on combat duty in the Russian Navy for almost half a century, from 1903 to 1948, fighting in the battle of Tsushima in the Russo-Japanese War, the First World War, the Great Patriotic War and the 1917 revolutionary events: in February 1917, the sailors of Kronstadt joined the revolution and executed their officers. *Aurora* was present at Kronstadt when Royal Navy coastal motor boats raided the base in 1919, torpedoing and sinking a depot ship and badly damaging a battleship. In 1921 a group of navy officers and sailors, soldiers and civilians at Kronstadt rebelled against the Bolshevik government but the rebellion was crushed by the Red Army in a twelve-day campaign, resulting in several thousand deaths. In 1948 the *Aurora* was moored at the Petrograd embankment and served as a training base for Leningrad Nakhimov Naval Academy up to 1956. In 1957 she was turned in a museum ship, hosting a branch of the Central Naval Museum.

Kronstadt’s most striking landmark is the massive Naval Cathedral, completed in 1913 by architect Vasily Kosyakov, and considered to represent a culmination of Russian Neo-Byzantine architecture. The cathedral explicitly represents the greatness of the Baltic Fleet, which used Kronstadt as its main base for many years.

**Dr Paul Brown**

**Note by editor**

Another historic ship to see in the St Petersburg area is the icebreaker museum ship *Krasin*, completed 1917 at Armstrong Whitworth on the Tyne. I was glad to recently enjoy an exhibition (now closed) celebrating her centenary at the excellent Discovery Museum in Newcastle. The most powerful icebreaker in the world until the 1950s, *Krasin* served heroically in Arctic Convoys and is much revered in Russia in consequence.

**Richard Holme**
New life for the *Medway Queen*

The paddle steamer *Medway Queen* was built in 1924 for the New Medway Steam Packet Co. Ltd. She worked on the Thames estuary between the Medway towns and Southend-on-Sea with occasional forays elsewhere; in 1937 and 1953 she attended the Coronation Naval Reviews at Spithead and in the 60s was spotted in the Pool of London on one or two occasions. Her inaugural run was on Friday 18 July under the command of Captain Tommy Aldiss. He remained in command for two seasons after which he was succeeded by Captain Bob Hayman. A few technical modifications were made over the years including the addition of a bow rudder in 1936 and conversion to oil firing in 1938 with a new boiler. The boiler came from the Wallsend Slipway and Engineering Company on the River Tyne but was fitted in Chatham Dockyard.

During WWII she was converted for the Royal Navy as a minesweeper. *HMS Medway Queen* was initially based at Harwich but paid at least two visits to Chatham Dockyard early in the war for adjustments and repairs and at some stage degaussing equipment was fitted as protection against magnetic mines. She also acquired a merchant ship style derrick for handling the minesweeping gear. This was felt to be more efficient than the usual boat davits and is rumoured to have cost the ship a case of whisky! Early 1940 saw her based in Dover and her principal claim to fame is the Dunkirk evacuation, when *Medway Queen* and her crew made seven return trips and brought back seven thousand British and French troops. After Dunkirk she was allocated to the East Coast as part of the 8th Minesweeping Flotilla based at North Shields. Of the eight ships in the flotilla two were lost during 1941; *HMS Southsea* was mined in February and *HMS Snaefell* was bombed and sunk in July. *HMS Medway Queen* remained a front line minesweeper until 1943, when she was transferred to a training flotilla at Granton, Edinburgh.

![HMS Medway Queen in Ramsgate, 1940. (PSPS Collection)](image)

After the war the ship was reconditioned in Southampton and returned to her old route in 1947. She worked there under the command of Captain Leonard Horsham until maintenance costs and falling revenues forced withdrawal in 1963. In 1966 she opened as a nightclub and restaurant on the Isle of Wight. The business proved successful and in 1970 she was joined by another vessel, PS *Ryde* from the Portsmouth–Ryde ferry service, renamed *Ryde Queen*. Initially the two ships worked together but the Medway Queen Club closed for the last time in 1974. She found her way back to Kent in 1984, rescued by Mr Jim Ashton and his colleagues and in the following year the Medway Queen Preservation Society was formed. The ship was eventually purchased by the society and moved to Damhead Creek in 1987. There followed a period of physical struggle against corrosion and administrative struggle to raise funds for a restoration to working order.
The Heritage Lottery Fund awarded a grant of £1.86m for phase one of the restoration, the hull rebuild. This began in Bristol in 2009 where the Albion Dockyard re-built the riveted hull to 1924 drawings using traditional methods and incorporating as much as possible of the original material. This material including major components such as the engine was moved to Bristol by road as needed. The MQPS and the dockyard worked closely together and in many cases cooperated on the refurbishment or replacement of parts. This work was completed in 2013 and celebrated with a rededication ceremony in Bristol on 27 July of that year. A few weeks later the hull was towed back to Medway by the tug Christine and moored at the Society’s base on Gillingham Pier where a visitor centre and workshop had been established with support from the European Regional Development Fund. The ship and her visitor centre, telling the story of the Medway Queen, are open to visitors on Saturdays from 11am to 4pm (last admission strictly 3pm). You can find out more of the history of this incredible little ship by looking at www.medwayqueen.co.uk and buying one or more of the books on sale there. The latest celebrates this year’s fiftieth anniversary of the Medway Queen Club. Better still come to Gillingham Pier and see her for yourself, you might even have the pleasure of drinking a cup of coffee on board. Sadly, the availability of ‘Navy Cocoa’ will have to wait until we get a drinks licence!

Richard Halton
The New Medway Steam Packet Co. Ltd.
Medway Queen Preservation Society - UK registered charity 296236
(Picture credits: Navy Week, PSPS; Medway Queen in June 2016, Barney Colley.)

Newport Medieval Ship

Here’s a fascinating insight into medieval life and trade that is hidden away in a small warehouse in Newport as a working project conserving the timbers of a large fifteenth-century Basque-built vessel.

The Newport Ship was discovered in 2002 soon after construction work began on the new Riverfront Theatre on the banks of the River Usk in Newport. Initially the city council said it was too late to excavate the ship – building work could not be delayed. Over 23,000 people visited the site over three days, many signing a petition to save the ship, and local volunteers mounted a round-the-clock vigil to prevent the diggers being sent in to smash the vessel. It was that massive public support that persuaded both the Welsh government and local council to excavate the wreck.

At over 35m long with a beam of almost 9m, she was a large merchant vessel for her time. The solidly constructed clinker-built and very well-preserved hull was dissembled and rescued. Over 1,700 beautiful timbers are now being conserved with a view to putting them back together.

Over fourteen years on, interest in the Newport Ship is as strong as ever; people flock to the regular open days from across the UK, Europe and around the globe. It occupies a special place in the hearts of Newport residents and those from further afield, as it should, for (if you count Mary Rose as post-medieval) this is the largest, best-preserved example of a medieval ship ever found.

Newport City Council is now much more supportive and is working with the Friends of Newport Ship and the Newport Museum and Art Gallery to find suitable premises for a new site to house the vessel along with some of the smaller boats that have been recovered from the mud of the Gwent Levels over recent decades. But you don’t have to wait another decade before viewing the remains: the Friends run open days on most Fridays and Saturdays at the industrial unit in Newport where the ship is now in the final stages of a long conservation process, scheduled for completion in 2018.

The Friends also give lectures on progress in understanding this most intriguing of vessels; intriguing because, unlike Mary Rose, there is no documentary record: everything we have learned about the ship has come from archaeological study. Initial dendro studies suggested that some of the ship’s timbers were felled in southern Britain in 1465; that is now thought to be the date of later timbers used to repair the ship. A coin minted in 1447 was found embedded in the joint between the stempost and keel, probably placed there as a token of good luck during the ship’s construction. More recent studies have determined that the majority of the timbers were cut after the spring of 1449 from the oak forests behind Santander and Bilbao in the Basque region, now part of Spain.
Seeds, pottery shards and Portuguese coins provide clues to her varied cargo manifests and her trading links. Such large ships would not normally have called at Newport – the remains of a timber cradle found below her hull suggest that the vessel had sought refuge at Newport for emergency repairs before toppling over and being abandoned as beyond rescue, scavenged and then allowed to sink slowly into the safety of the mud of the River Usk.

For more on the ship and the glimpses it affords of fifteenth-century trade, see the Friends’ website: www.newportship.org

Phil Cox – Chair of Friends of the Newport Ship

NB Newport has a great deal to offer heritage visitors. The City Centre has the main museum highlighting Newport through the ages (including the treasures found on the Newport Ship) alongside a fascinating Art Gallery. The imposing Transporter Bridge and the Canals (Fourteen Locks Visitor Centre) are all Council operated with assistance from ‘friends’ and volunteers.
Note by editor

I was very glad in September 2016 to visit the Unit which has detailed displays about the Newport Ship as well as the chance to view many of the timbers being conserved and receive a good briefing from the Friends. Recommended if you are in the area.

Richard Holme

Final Act in the Tragedy of Victoria Row, built 1846 in Bermuda Dockyard . . . demolished 2016. What hope for Bermuda Dockyard’s historic buildings?

As highlighted by the NDS in 2012 (‘Going. Going. Gone! Obliteration of Bermuda Dockyard Heritage: Victoria and Albert Rows and Ship Crest Paintings’, and ‘The Vanishing Dockyard Houses of Bermuda’, Dockyards, vol. 17, no. 2, November 2012, pp. 12–20), these 170-year old dockyard workers’ houses in Victoria Row were destined for demolition by the West End Development Corporation (‘Wedco’), the NGO responsible for managing the Bermuda Dockyard estate.

Victoria Row’s three blocks of eight houses, built in 1846 and 1858, were a unique Bermudian solution to house essential dockyard workers, a blend of British dockyard officers’ houses, with kitchens and toilets separated from the main house, and the ‘Bermuda Image’. Dockyard architectural historian Jonathan Coad characterized them in January 2016:

This group of buildings at Bermuda is extremely rare. The buildings as a whole form an important element in the architectural, economic and social history of Bermuda. They are almost the last survivors of very limited examples of housing built for dockyard workers – skilled tradespeople and others – as distinct from housing for dockyard officers. The island location of Haulbowline in Cork Harbour forced the Admiralty to construct workers’ single-storey housing there, some of which still exists (Fig. 1). Later, Bermuda was clearly even more of a problem, with the base developing as the fleet changed over from sail to steam which led to a growing need for skilled workers in the dockyards. Ireland Island was also a distance from the main settlements, but the major problem was the very high cost of living on these islands—this seems to have forced the Admiralty to provide this housing. The 1909 TNA plan of the dockyard (Fig. 3) shows a quite extraordinary amount of housing outside the yard for the workforce. It would be interesting to know exactly who was living in these terraces. It would seem that workers’ housing was provided only in very limited circumstances and only survives today at Haulbowline and at Bermuda. In short, Albert Row has considerable rarity value.

However, although Wedco has the financial and professional duty of care for the estate, this NGO has not reinvested revenue in its upkeep. No maintenance of these houses has been carried out since 2009 and they were vacated in 2014. Built of hard limestone and Bermuda cedar, the buildings require limewashing every two years to keep them weathertight. No evidence of an objective condition survey or valuation reflecting international heritage property values has been presented by Wedco. Wedco rejected the Habitat for Humanity scheme, which included both Victoria and Albert Rows, in 2006 and 2008, because it would not agree to give existing tenants priority or not raise the rents after refurbishment. The rows are shown on the 1863 map (Fig. 2) as ‘Dwelling Houses’ and ‘Workmens Cottages’, and named in the 1909 map (Fig. 3). Because they are adjacent and similar in appearance, they are frequently coupled together, but Albert Row was listed Grade II* in 2000: Reference SY 092, Albert

* ‘Grade 2 refers to buildings, structures or groups of buildings that have survived in such condition and are of such special interest and architectural or historical value that alterations and additions should be limited to works that do not impinge on those parts of the building to be protected and preserved. Such works should normally be carried out in the structural and decorative style of the existing buildings.’ Government of Bermuda, Department of Planning, Alterations or Additions to Listed Buildings and/or Buildings Located Within Historic Areas (Ref. GN203, October 2012), p. 8. http://www.planning.gov.bm/Documents/Final%20Bermuda%20Plan%202008/Guidance%20Notes/GN203%20Listed%20Buildings%20Restoration.pdf.
Row, 6–14 Malabar Road Sandys, whereas Victoria Row was not, hence the latter could be demolished. Their condition in 2013–14 was revealed in the report that seventeen properties of 1,200 square feet each were condemned: Albert Row Nos 3, 4, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17 and Victoria Row Nos 2, 4, 12, 14, 15, 17, 20, 21.

In 2013 the situation seemed hopeful when Trevor Moniz, Minister for Public Works, made an undertaking to preserve Victoria and Albert Rows: ‘Although there is no currently defined plan or timeline, it is our intention to restore both Albert and Victoria Row properties in due course’. Moniz concluded: ‘As a government, I just wanted to say that we have listened to the people of Bermuda in taking this decision which now ensures two significant Historical sites will be preserved’.

Nevertheless, twenty new prefabricated houses, reportedly costing $24.7m, were erected by
Wedco in November 2013 to house tenants from Victoria and Albert Rows (Bell, ‘Wedco prefabs installation delayed due to weather’, Royal Gazette, 6 November 2013). In 2014 Wedco chairman Ray Charlton ‘still hoped the historic buildings could be renovated should a viable option be found’, adding ‘It was always my position that I was advocating for the majority of the tenants, who wanted to see the buildings renovated rather than destroyed.’ Mr Charlton noted that in 2006 Habitat for Humanity’s estimated cost to renovate Victoria and Albert Rows was around $87,000 per unit.5 However, these intentions were not implemented by Wedco.

It is Wedco’s responsibility to fund estate maintenance from rental receipts. As the NDS argued to the Planning Department in 2014:

Sustainable renovation of Albert and Victoria Rows will create tradesmen’s jobs and train young people in essential crafts such as applying lime mortar, which will be transferable elsewhere in Bermuda. A set percentage of WedCo’s rental income should be invested and ring fenced for refurbishment, ongoing repairs and maintenance expenditure of its listed buildings. That would address the issue of no capital available to protect built heritage assets.6

The NDS proposed to Wedco and Bermuda Planning Department in 2014 and 2016 that a Victoria and Albert Rows Building Trust should be established, transferring the freehold to new owners. In its view, only a Buildings Preservation Trust, which could apply for interest-free government loans to make renovations or restorations and link to such organizations as Habitat for Humanity, which would also train craftspeople, could provide a long term solution. Such collaboration among many small stakeholders can work.

The NDS also argued that Wedco should create a Dockyard Conservation Management Plan, funded by rental income, to conserve and find appropriate uses for its historic buildings. Seeking sustainable value is crucial, representing both future commercial rental/resale value and retention of the embodied energy of these houses, built by manual labour from locally quarried limestone.

Bermuda National Trust was also approached to refurbish the properties, but Wedco offered an unrealistic lease which would not enable BNT’s investment to be recouped. BNT Executive Director Jennifer Gray was quoted in the Royal Gazette.7 ‘The Trust is keenly interested in the preservation of buildings which make up the historic fabric of the Dockyard,’ she said, continuing: ‘We are always saddened when they are allowed to fall into disrepair and believe it is better to repair and reuse what is there than to knock buildings down. These buildings are very much a part of the ambience of Dockyard and a part of Bermuda’s heritage.’

Victoria Row is part of the old Dockyard ‘town’ that included schools, a hospital, theatre, stores and a post office and supplied the technical expertise and labour to run the giant industrial complex. Today, only a few buildings survive in usable condition to represent that thriving community.

Victoria and Albert Rows are the last remaining examples of the housing built for Dockyard tradesmen or artisans and their families. Other, similar rows — Portland Place, Princess Louise Terrace, Clarence Terrace, and Marine Terrace at Lodge Point — have all been demolished.

With no evidence of a condition survey, in 2016 the NDS forwarded to Wedco an independent proposal for an historic building survey, cost plan, and development and investment analysis, to establish options for developers to refurbish Albert and Victoria Rows. This was rejected by Wedco on 13 April 2016. NDS also wrote to the Bermuda Planning Department in January 2016, urging that:

1. Wedco should enable a Victoria and Albert Rows Building Trust to be set up
2. Wedco follow the provisions of the Bermuda Plan Planning Statement 2008
3. No interventions are allowed on the fabric/context of Albert and Victoria Rows which will detract from their character
4. Wedco create a Conservation Management Plan for Bermuda Dockyard, funded through its rental income, which specifies a conservation programme for all the buildings in the Dockyard estate according to best international heritage practice and finds appropriate uses to conserve their integrity and ensure their future security.

As a result, in March 2016, following a brainstorming session with a number of stakeholders in-
cluding the Bermuda National Trust, the National Museum of Bermuda and the Historic Buildings Advisory Committee, the Planning Department insisted that Wedco draw up a comprehensive plan for the dockyard historic buildings so that the Planning Department would not have to deal ad hoc with individual sites. The demolition of Victoria Row was put on hold until discussions were completed and the Director of Planning created a sub-committee to discuss possible solutions including a Heritage Preservation Trust.

However, on 27 April 2016 it was reported in the press that ‘Reluctant’ demolition starts at Victoria Row,8 despite the case that the NDS and others had advanced to have the houses refurbished. NDS submitted an emergency listing application on 18 May 2016, to halt demolition and give Victoria Row a fresh chance. Questions were asked in the House of Assembly on 28 May. Nevertheless, demolition proceeded. Local residents and visiting relatives of former Victoria Row residents sent images of the demolition.

Above: Victoria Row, 17 May 2016.
Right: Victoria Row demolition 25 May 2016.

Finally, on 27 May, the total cost of demolishing the Victoria Row units was reported as $331,400 by Minister of Public Works Craig Cannonier in the House of Assembly, in reply to a question from Shadow Public Works Minister Dennis Lister. The report noted:

According to WEDCo, surveys indicate it would take approximately $11 million to renovate Victoria Row which would mean that the interest alone on the renovation for each unit would be $2,500.00 per month which far exceeds any rental return they may be able to earn.

However, no evidence of these surveys was ever presented. A video of the demolition may be seen at http://bernews.com/2016/05/minister-cannonier-cost-demolition.

This tragedy must mark the end of unprofessional neglect of unique dockyard heritage. As Gray highlighted, all the workers’ housing has now been demolished apart from Albert Row. Many other dockyard structures have been allowed to decay or have been demolished (such as the Parsonage and the naval crest paintings). On a positive note, it is reported that funds are now in hand to restore HMS
Malabar (Moresby House) and Prince Alfred Terrace is undergoing a complete refurbishment, following 2014 hurricane damage. Also three of the big buildings in the north yard of the Dockyard have now been re-roofed and made watertight, from funds related to the America’s Cup (2017). The NDS charges Bermuda Planning Department to enforce a Wedco Conservation Management Plan for Bermuda Dockyard. This should be funded through its rental income, specify a conservation programme for all the buildings in the Dockyard estate according to best international heritage practice, and find appropriate uses, including setting up an Historic Building Preservation Trust to conserve their integrity and ensure their future security. We shall request a timetable for this Plan.

The NDS is very grateful to Royal Gazette editors and reporters Jeremy Deacon, Jonathan Bell, Owain Johnston-Barnes, Simon Jones and Ceola Wilson, who have published our arguments and kept the issue of dockyard housing alive for their readers. We are equally indebted to Jennifer Gray, former Executive Director of Bermuda National Trust, for her tireless efforts to preserve dockyard buildings and wish her successor Bill Zuill all our support and good wishes. Jonathan Coad, Brian Hyde and local supporters are thanked for their information and suggestions during these attempts to save Victoria Row.

Dr Ann Coats

6 Coats and Hyde, ‘New solutions for Victoria and Albert Rows, Bermuda Dockyard?’ Dockyards, vol. 19, no. 1, June 2014, pp. 11–14

Why was the Thames Waterfront extended, 1100–1400?

Between 1100 and 1400 the city of London expanded into the Thames, increasing its size by a sixth. This provided vital acreage for its ever-increasing population and its expanding economic activities. The roughly 100m strip south of Thames Street was eagerly reclaimed in this period and put into valuable use. This process was particularly prevalent in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This was not easy of course for those concerned, working against the currents, tides and vagaries of England’s second longest river. Although the benefits are evident, less clear is what prompted this frantic activity. Perhaps it was a desire to provide better port facilities for expanding trade and larger ships, silting or a need to maintain a sound frontage to counter the ebb and flow of the often fast moving river? Or perhaps it was a natural human desire to expand property holdings.

This was certainly a prime motivating factor in a land reclamation at Lubeck, a Hanseatic city which expanded in size by 60 per cent or so, thus enhancing a cramped but otherwise excellent site. Many other ports saw land being reclaimed in the Middle Ages. Kings Lynn’s waterfront was extended by 100m, and Amsterdam and Bergen reclaimed land was for better port facilities.

London saw a Victorian reclamation with the creation of the thirty-two-acre Thames Embankment from 1862. This carefully planned project provided useful transport links as well as facilities for sewage etc. As this was only 150 years ago, the reasons for its construction are clear and well evidenced. What though of the medieval waterfront? What evidence is there for its expansion?

Between 1970 and 1991 the demolition of Victorian dock facilities on the waterfront strip meant a chance to uncover valuable archaeological information. Wet conditions preserved deposits and the emerging science of dendrochronology (along with pottery and other finds) meant timber wharves
and revetments could be accurately dated and so the waterfront expansion traced. A series of fascinating studies have been produced (and are still being compiled) on individual excavations. Milne usefully lists no less than thirty-one digs on the medieval waterfront, almost all in the last forty years.

Although documentary evidence on waterside properties is extensive from c. 1270 in the form of deeds, parish and livery company records, it can be very time consuming to link these to archaeological evidence and finds. Schofield’s ninety-page gazetteer gives interesting and multi-faceted accounts of individual sites (not just at waterfront) and their development, by knitting together the archaeological, documentary, cartographic and pictorial evidence for each one. The first pictorial depictions of London (beyond crude drawings) do not emerge until around 1483/5, panoramic views from 1540 and the first maps in the late seventeenth century. Nevertheless these can be of great relevance for medieval students since the waterfront remained largely unchanged in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Although this evidence depicts with increasing confidence the layout and progress of expansion, there is less evidence as to why this took place.

This note reviews the expansion of the north bank of the Thames in the City between 1100 and 1400 and attempts to draw conclusions as to why it occurred. In late Saxon times, waterfront activity was centred on three areas, Queenhithe, Vintry and Dowgate. Evidence suggests that small ships were pulled up on the beach and markets held on the river bank outside the old Roman wall. It seems that between Queenhithe and the mouth of the Walbrook there were substantial embankments constructed by the community and open for all to use. Gaps had been made in that Roman wall to facilitate this and other development such as a late tenth-century jetty at Rothersgate. However a major event was the demolition of the decayed Roman wall in the twelfth century. It had inhibited the extension of the port for seven hundred years and its destruction opened up the whole riverfront, paving the way for the southward dash. Now in its place was Thames Street, which acted as a spur for development.

Another catalyst for waterfront expansion was the construction of a new London Bridge in around 1000. Although possibly intended mainly as a defensive measure, it prompted the development of the adjacent Billingsgate site with rubble and clay embankments for traffic from the seaward side. Nowadays London Bridge is one of many Thames bridges, but until the eighteenth century it was the only bridge! Its economic impact cannot therefore be underestimated. Later on in 1209, a stone London Bridge was completed. Its construction prompted further development. Although a drawbridge in its middle permitted access for river traffic to the west, Queenhithe now became perhaps more a base for river rather than sea-bound traffic.

The riverfront not only moved southward but became a more complex and crowded area with lanes, alleys, water gates and public access restricted in many areas. The use of the terms ‘wharf’ and ‘quay’ may suggest to our modern eyes harbour facilities but more often in medieval times, meant simply a road or lane by the water. New churches (e.g. St Magnus the Martyr) were constructed in the more densely populated areas of the reclaimed land, to serve the waterfront communities.

It is clear in some areas that minor extensions of perhaps only two metres or so were made to the waterfront revetments, hardly a great land grab and no doubt making good a decaying or collapsing timber structure which was exposed to the tide. In the Eyre of 1244, for example, when enquiries were made into encroachments into the Thames, the City replied there were none save that the wharves were lengthened and extended towards the current of water and this was permissible by all custom because thus their lands and tenements could be protected against the sea ebbing and flowing night and day, and in the current of the Thames they placed no wharf save that they ought and might to the advantage of the king and the City and of the great ships fully loaded coming towards the City.

This motive of maintaining the waterfront is emphasised by the Milnes as the main motive for waterfront expansion in their study of the Trig Lane dig. They conclude that any expansion of the waterfront was secondary. They then assert that documentary evidence suggests that other private wharves were no different from Trig Lane although it should be noted that their excellent excavation is one of the earliest, dating from 1974.

The gap between the old and new revetment was often infilled with organic material. Revetments
were of timber, sometimes recycled, for example, from old ships’ timbers, although occasionally as early as the twelfth century stone wharves and river walls are found, mainly at public landing places. In the fifteenth century, increased prosperity led to the extended construction of stable stone walls for jetties and riverfronts, obviating the need to renew and potentially extend the waterfront. It has been suggested that a rise in the sea and/or river level (manifested, for example, by tidal surges) may have prompted the use of stone rather than more fragile timber revetments. Such rises in river level and surges may ironically have been exacerbated by the narrowing of the river through reclamation.

The Thames has always carried a considerable degree of silt and contemporary records suggest the river was used as dumping ground for a wide range of rubbish and sewage. Inevitably to some extent this must have not only blocked minor river entrances and along with the silt led to a blocking and silting up of the channel and revetments. There is no evidence of dredging, so especially upstream from the Bridge, silt would have accumulated.

One interesting study reveals the difficulties faced by three other English cities in combating the pernicious effects of river pollution. Rivers would become clogged not only by natural silting but also weed growth and accumulation of waste such as dung. Banks of both waste and silt may have formed in front of the revetments in London, leading to further structures being built on those sandy banks, every cloud having a silver lining.

Such minor extensions though, however repeated and necessary, cannot account for the waterfront extending southward so far. In many cases it is clear that further precious land was being sought and sometimes new leases were granted on the basis that the river bank would be extended. Such activities must account for most of the expansion although there was plenty of smaller-scale activity. Land needed to be reclaimed to build a variety of structures including significant warehouses, now the norm for trade and secure storage rather than the beach markets.

Extensive archaeological work has not revealed significant evidence of major jetties or docks to accommodate larger ships. Normally only smaller vessels would berth at a quay; larger ships would moor in the river and offload into lighters. There were three public quays, at Queenhithe, Billingsgate and Botolph Wharf, and the City attempted to encourage unloading to take place there. Together with the German merchants’ port at Dowgate, these only comprised 10 per cent of the waterfront. To what extent was the rest of the waterfront used for unloading cargo from boats?

A relevant point is that larger vessels could not be moored against the front-braced revetments (which became prevalent in certain areas from the late twelfth century) in any case due to the normal design of these projecting outwards underwater.

So what were the main reasons for this remarkable expansion of London into its own river? The main evidence is new and archaeological although very interesting and potentially illuminating efforts are ongoing to link archaeological with other more limited or less accessible evidence. The demolition of the decayed Roman wall in the late eleventh century was crucial as a curtain raiser for the rush to follow. Clearly besides specific developments as at London Bridge and the Custom House, the bulk of evidence suggests a desire by the community to maintain the waterfront against rising tides, floods and surges, which were not uncommon at the time. Increased prosperity meant that ultimately stone walls could be afforded, meaning a more secure riverfront and no need for further southward. The creation of harbour facilities only played a minor part in the development and some of the larger acquisitions from the Thames must have been motivated by the hunger of landowners for fresh acreage. However, maintenance of the water front against an ever active and threatening river was the main reason.

Richard Holme

Peter Edmund Dawson (8 July 1926–17 August 2016)
NDS Chair March 1997–April 2002

Peter Dawson of Chatham Dockyard Historical Society (‘CDHS’) was instrumental in setting up the Naval Dockyards Society in 1996–97. Keith Slade, CDHS Chair was our chair-designate, but sadly died before our inaugural meeting in 1996. To maintain the connection with Chatham, Peter very kindly agreed to be nominated in his place and became a very active Chair.

After attending Rochester Mathematical School, Peter began his career as a Chatham yard boy in 1941 and became an apprentice patternmaker. In 1947 he passed City & Guilds exams in teaching Woodwork, Metalwork, Cabinetmaking and Patternmaking and took up a teaching post at Ancona Road School, Woolwich in 1948. From 1955 to 1965 he taught at Highfield School Chatham, and was a visiting lecturer in Foundry work to City & Guilds final levels at the Technical College and a visiting examiner for CSE and AEB handicraft exams. He later became a Member of the College of Handicraft Teachers and an Honorary Fellow of the College of Craft Education. In 1965–71 he was Head of the Technical Department at Senacre Technical School, and finally in 1971 moved to Swanley Comprehensive as Head of their large technical department before retiring in 1988. During this time he was also Editor of 3-D, the journal of the Educational Institute of Design, Craft and Technology, and was elected President of the Institute of Craft Education from 1980–81. After retirement Peter worked as a supply teacher for seven years, serving thirty schools in the Medway area. His career exemplified the opportunities available following a dockyard apprenticeship. Richard Holdsworth said:

He left in 1948, at the end of his apprenticeship and as part of a sharp decline in the number of dockyard workers which had peaked during the war at a record 17,000 men and women. It was a training that set Peter up for the rest of his working life.

Retirement gave Peter time to indulge other pursuits, joining the Lower Medway Archaeological Research Group. When he joined the NDS he listed his interests as: Chatham Dockyard, SE bases, crafts, trades, apprentices, ancient sites and Classis Britannica. He volunteered at the Chatham Dockyard Museum for thirty years, editing CHIPS magazine for CDHS and overseeing the publication of more than forty-five research papers.

In 1993 he undertook a detailed review of the Dockyard Apprentice Exam result lists and made them available in the Royal Dockyard Library Reading Room. It recorded aspects of his own life: securing a place in the Dockyard’s Upper School following his success in the dockyard entrance examination. He came =55th at the end of his first year exams in 1942 and =33rd at the end of his second year in 1943. He enjoyed helping others to discover information about their relatives in the Dockyard archives. I am very grateful to Peter personally, because in 2005, in a typically kind action, he tracked down my father’s Rainham relatives with whom I had lost touch. Philip MacDougall wrote:
I was very sad to hear the news that Peter Dawson has died. I have known Peter for the last thirty years, first meeting him when he joined an evening class I was teaching in Rochester. From that time onwards we both knew we had a shared interest in the history of the naval dockyard at Chatham and where he had been employed at the start of his working life. He was both an enthusiastic member of the CDHS and the Naval Dockyards Society, serving the latter for a number of years as its chair. If ever I asked him a question relating to his knowledge of the yard I always knew I would get a lengthy and well-considered written response. I still frequently refer to these letters. Chatham, of course, was his main interest, and he oversaw the production of a number of research papers that are all available from the CDHS bookshop in the Rigging House. In particular, we collaborated on a research paper I wrote on the Bentham Saw Mill and I much appreciated the advice and help he offered in both its writing and subsequent production. There was little that Peter would not do to further the interests of the dockyard at Chatham and bringing its history to the attention of the widest possible audience. As a former dockyard ‘matey’ he had a particular resonance with those who at one time had worked in the yard. This he successfully used to create a healthy working relationship between those former one time workers, the bureaucratic administrators of the Chatham Dockyard Historic Trust and those, like myself, who had a more historic and popular interest in the yard.

Peter’s funeral service was held on 2 September 2016, followed by a Celebration of Life at the Commissioner’s House, Historic Dockyard, Chatham. Richard Holdsworth acknowledged his contribution to Chatham Dockyard:

Peter regularly gave lectures around the Medway towns to a large number of interested groups, organizations and associations, promoting the Historic Dockyard and the CDHS to our local community. More recently he took a great interest in the collection of dockyard departmental honours boards and contributed greatly to our project to list and photograph the boards in the Fitted Rigging House – campaigning hard for more of them to go on display. Peter also acted as a volunteer gallery host wherever the Society was based – most recently in Steam Steel & Submarines – providing cover two days a week, on Mondays and Thursdays – a real and generous commitment of his time. His contribution over the years was great and he leaves an ongoing legacy through his research and publications.

Peter chatting with an NDS visitor, Chatham, 2009.

Peter’s regular letters kept the NDS in touch with activities at Chatham. He last attended the NDS Conference and AGM in 2014 and continued to send warm greetings until December 2015. Peter will be remembered as the first Chair of the Naval Dockyards Society, his unstinting generosity and dedication setting the NDS on an enduring course.

Ann Coats, with thanks to Cheryl Hill (Peter’s daughter), Richard Holdsworth, Director of Preservation and Education at the Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust, Phil Poulter, Editor CHIPS and Clive Stanley, CDHS Webmaster.
Chair’s message

Apology

As we approach 2017, some of you may be wondering where Transactions 10 is. It was in fact almost completed at the beginning of 2016, but the final checks of text and images, which are time-consuming to obtain the best possible outcome, were held up because the Chair had a huge backlog of work due to C20 Dockyards. Trying to preserve parts of Bermuda Dockyard also demanded some time. The final, final checks have now been carried out, and the authors will approve their texts, then it can be printed. We are vindicated in our care, as a new academic library member has said: ‘I am most impressed by the publications of the Naval Dockyards Society’ and thanked ‘the Society for its exemplary scholarship’.

The Society has four issues of Transactions pending:

• Five Hundred Years of Deptford and Woolwich Royal Dockyards, marking in 2013 the 500th anniversary of the foundation of the Thames yards by Henry VIII, opened by Dame Joan Ruddock MP for Lewisham Deptford.

• British Dockyards in the First World War. Commemorating the centenary, this conference explored the role of British dockyards and naval bases within issues of national policy, dreadnoughts and other warships, women and dilutees, and effects on dockyard communities.

• The Royal Dockyards and the Pressures of Global War, 1793–1815. The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars placed the royal dockyards, both home and overseas, under unprecedented strain. A huge increase in workload necessitated greatly expanded workforces, the adoption of new technologies and working methods, and a series of contentious reforms and counter-reforms. The 2015 conference evaluated the effectiveness of the dockyards’ work and the nature and scale of the work carried out.

• Royal Naval Air Stations and defence of dockyards (2016). The Royal Naval Air Service was formed from the Naval Wing of the joint Royal Flying Corps (1912), but from 1914, when the RFC became the flying branch of the British Army, it was administered by the Admiralty Air Department. It merged with the RFC as the RAF in 1918. Naval Air Stations guarded dockyards and promoted research and development. Wartime bombing caused Naval Air Stations to be built around British and overseas coasts, particularly along the English south coast.

The Chair will make every effort to catch up during 2017. The good news is that as the Committee reviewed the way Transactions was printed in 2014, the money is in our bank account.

The NDS needs you!

The hard-working Committee is stretched and would welcome more volunteers to help out with tasks. When we ask for volunteers at the AGM we really mean it: we need more people! We are not getting any younger and it would be sensible to have several people lined up who have sat on the committee and can carry our work forward. So please think about this before next April. I shall be asking a member to take on some responsibility for the Symposium on Memories of Dockyard Workers at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich: Saturday, 29 April 2017.