An exhibition by artist and former rigger John Green at the Jack House Gallery has attracted critical acclaim and is the subject of an article in this edition. This painting is entitled *Propeller and Mooring Buoys* (2011).
John Green, Artist and Portsmouth Dockyard Rigger

John Green was fifteen when he started work as a yard boy in the rigging section of Portsmouth Dockyard in 1959, following his father, who was a welder there. As Celia Clark said in her article on ‘Dockyards in Art’ (NDS Transactions Volume 9, November 2014, p. 52), his work recalls the glory days of twenty thousand men working there. One of his special memories was the huge phalanx of cyclists pouring out of the gates at ‘muster time’ – a sight to behold. John’s studio is in Art Space (http://www.artspace.co.uk/), a converted chapel in Brougham Road, Southsea, where Celia has long admired his work, not least because of his subject matter – as well as his talent.

At the age of seventy-five, in February 2016, John enjoyed a very popular exhibition of his paintings and drawings at the new Jack House Gallery in High Street Old Portsmouth – where his vivid visions of the dockyard as a wonderful subject, full of expert details and lively characters, enjoyed a critical and a human success. Another exhibition of his work is planned in the gallery on 8 September 2016.

As his colleague John Hayes said, standing on his toolbox when John and his colleagues gathered in the gallery to discuss their skills as riggers and how John depicted them: ‘Being a rigger, we used to work as a team, on the dockside. We worked in all weathers. We had to wait for a coat, waterproofs and boots. The rigger had all his tools. He was the man splicing wires and ropes. The labourers stood beside us to watch the job. The rigger would get his pad out and draw a picture of what was on the ship. He had to have it in a notebook. John used to take out his notebook – and draw – because it’s necessary to plan where ropes and strops need to go around a hull or to plan the taking down or re-rigging of a ship. John says his pictures are drawn from experience: ‘Memory of action is in the body’. The expressions on the figures’ faces is based on knowledge acquired from long personal observation. His sketch books are vital tools. If John gets stuck while doing a painting, he’s got his sketchbooks as a rich resource, often laced with ‘Yard humour’.

First he worked on the Victory. ‘There was a long alleyway alongside the rigging house where they were tarring ropes with Stockholm tar, which penetrated our clothes and skin. It was really good stuff. John Hayes’s mum used to say: “You’ve brought the dockyard home with you – the smell on your clothes!” We were in the classroom for four years and then we went into the gangs . . . To work on the Victory was like a hot potato – because of the intensity. It took five years to learn the trade. In the winter months they cut up pallets to keep themselves warm. One picture shows riggers standing by. The clothing’s all black. Duffle coats. Waiting around . . . Buckets were filled up with hot water to wash our hands. We didn’t have gloves.’

We took down the Victory’s masts three times over a period of twenty years. It was a fabulous job. They were taken down traditionally using two capstans. On one occasion we took down the mast half way, when a storm blew up. As in the old days, we had to lash the topmast to the lowermost, leaving it there overnight until the weather improved to complete the task. In the dry dock a whistle controlled the men, blown by a Docking Master – everyone would put their wedges in when he blew blasts on it. They used to have a bell before that. They knocked the wedges out at the sound of a bell.’

Only on one occasion have I seen a ship fall over – in 9 Dock a ship toppled over due to a mistake made in the weight and dimensions of the vessel. They cut the shores too short. The riggers had to climb onto the side of the ship as it was resting on its side and climb through the ship over the bulkheads going from forward to aft, which was extremely hazardous, to replace the docking hawssers to allow it to be refloated. The dock was then very slowly reflooded, to allow the vessel to be up righted.’

John Hayes’s experience was similar to John Green’s. He began as a yard boy in 1959 and retired in 2011. ‘I’ve been in masts most of my life, going all over the country. The Ganges’s mast, St Vincent mast is about 200 feet high. We used to take it down, do the rigging and put it back up again. It wasn’t a bad job. My father was in yacht work in Gosport. The Yachting Association recommended it, but the British navy hasn’t got tall ships.’

Celia Clark can remember rigging displays at St Vincent Barracks and Portsmouth Guildhall Square, where masts and spars were put up by riggers, and men balanced on them – without any safety nets! They put on displays for Navy Days and events to promote the city.

‘Everybody wrote everything down. They’d say: “Where’s my guidebook?” You’ve had to produce
John Green: Old Caisson (2014)

Copyright Jack House Gallery/John Green

John Green: D lock in Portsmouth Dockyard (2011)

Copyright Jack House Gallery/John Green
notes of different wires and ropes. Now riggers have to find out for themselves. Only we have got the knowledge to put the rigging back as it was. Ropes are stronger now than before, being synthetic. Now they use Steelite, which is specially formulated – synthetic rope that the navy use to secure their warships. Victory since the early ’90s has slowly with each refit had her hemp ropes replaced with synthetic fibre ropes, all made to order from Chatham Rope Works.’

‘In the picture the matelot is having a smoke. My Bible is by John Diner. In those days there were so many people working in the dockyard – there was a queue when they clocked in, but nowadays, there are only twenty-five riggers left.’

This was before Health and Safety. Riggers had to do the job. It was dangerous.

‘Now there’s all sorts of assessment first – and demarcation. It was all in your head – what we had to do. For riggers – variety was the spice of life. You had a job more or less for life. This painting – I can relate to that! The people in the foreground are waiting to get strops under. It’s an action picture: guys pulling wires, releasing wires . . . They don’t use wires any more, they use ropes.

John Green’s paintings are informed by his study of Stanley Spencer, Muirhead Bone, Frank Brangwyn, David Jones, Edward Burra, W. L. Wyllie and Richard Eurich. He uses water-based paint, which dries in twenty minutes, and cardboard collage. He sands the card down, but ‘you can feel that edge’.

The Captain of the Port appointed John to produce an illustrated manual so that anybody working as a rigger on HMS Victory would know what and how to do it. He produced the Mast & Yard Rigging Victory handbook early in 1980.

It’s wonderful to see him still developing, and building on those considerable skills he and his colleagues first learnt in Portsmouth Dockyard.

Celia Clark and John Hayes 22 March 2016
Welcome to Dockyards! I hope you find something of interest and have an excellent summer!

As I write this, fresh in my mind is our superb Greenwich conference on the Royal Naval Air Service, quite a new topic for me! (A full report elsewhere in this issue.) Calshot on the Solent caught my eye particularly as a place to explore with remnants of its significant RNAS base and its sixteenth-century castle.

I recently enjoyed a pleasant trip to St Albans and ascended the Clock Tower (1403/12) which inter alia was used as a base for a semaphore system in the Napoleonic Wars. Apparently the Admiralty could get a signal to Yarmouth in five minutes... in good weather. Can readers advise further on this system?

I also found the Pepys exhibition Plague, Fire, Revolution at Greenwich very good. I had not realised that Pepys was appointed ‘Clerk of the Acts’ at the Navy Board although as he says ‘chance without merit brought me in’. He seems to have grown into the job, although benefiting from commissions and having a brief spell in the Tower even in 1679 on account of alleged ‘piracy, popery, treachery’.

If you are free in September, try to come on our ‘behind the scenes’ walks around Chatham on the 10th. More details to follow.

Former Maritime Books owner Mike Critchley (mikecritchley7@icloud.com) is now Gosport based and offering on his own account short breaks at interesting locations such as Malta and Belfast. Contact Mike for more details.

Ian Stafford wrote an excellent article on East Fortune in the last edition, but due to an error on my part his authorship was not shown, apologies Ian, mea culpa.

Finally good news from the South Atlantic where Leona Roberts, curator of the exciting new Falkland Dockyard Museum (see May 2014 edition) reports the Museum is expanding its facilities, ‘getting wonderful feedback’ from visitors and playing a much wider role in the Falkland community as a whole.

Richard Holme (richardholme@btinternet.com)

AGM and Conference Report – 16 April 2016

Twenty-one NDS members attended the AGM at the National Maritime Museum Greenwich and a new member joined. Eight non-NDS delegates attended the Conference, making a total of twenty-eight delegates, one of our lower attendance numbers (Deptford & Woolwich, 2013, 69; Building Victory, 2009, 75; Portsmouth Dockyard in the Age of Nelson, 2005, 82; Naval Surgeons, 2008, 105). This was probably due to the conference theme, which fully addressed our aim.

This AGM marked significant NDS achievements. If you input ‘naval dockyards society’ into Google, the new NDS website comes up second; if ‘naval dockyards’, we are on the first page. The NDS C20 Dockyards Characterisation Report was completed in October and launched in November 2015. It is now freely available online at https://navaldockyards.org/c20-naval-dockyards/. An archive of the report and associated documents, which will also shortly be freely available online, has been prepared for the Archaeology Data Service at York University (http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/), financed by Historic England.

Because of the time taken to prepare it for publication, C20 Dockyards delayed Transactions 10 Bermuda, for which we apologise, but this and Transactions 11 Deptford and Woolwich will be published in 2016, so members will not miss out. The profits from C20 Dockyards will be used to bring future Transactions publication up to date, so they will be published in the same year or within half a year of the conference.

2017 will be the twentieth anniversary of the NDS constitutional meeting. We plan to mark it in a special way by running a two-day bilateral conference and tour to the Netherlands. There was a healthy interest in ‘Anglo-Dutch state-formation, sea power and naval facilities, 1549–1801’, and the AGM agreed to allocate £500 to attract leading speakers. It will take place in June 2017. Discussions are progressing with two Dutch history societies for this conference (in English) in the Netherlands (The Hague, Amsterdam or Rotterdam). A balanced Anglo-Dutch programme will examine the reasons...
for the Dutch invasion of the Medway in 1667 and place Netherlands and British dockyards within an integrated framework and a two-day tour. The two elements will be costed separately, with a reduction offered on booking the package.

After our successful Rosyth, Edinburgh & Leith Tour for seventeen attendees in September 2015, organised by Ann Coats and David Baynes, we enjoyed an engaging Woolwich Dockyard and Arsenal Tour on 12 March 2016 for thirty-seven people, organised by Richard Holme. A Chatham Tour is now being arranged by Richard Holme and Philip MacDougall for 10 September 2016. Look out for more details.

I am indebted to the continuing committee members for taking the Society forward in such an effective manner. Their roles interlink and collaborate, just like the Navy Board. Navy Board Project Coordinator Sue Lumas and volunteers continue to move towards the target of completing the listing of ADM 106 correspondence at Kew by the end of this year.

Thanks to all the speakers for such remarkably complementary presentations for our Conference: Royal Naval Air Stations and the Defence of Dockyards. Satisfying our constitutional aim to ‘stimulate the production and exchange of information and research into ... naval air stations’, and linked to our 2015 visit to East Fortune Airfield, home to the National Museum of Flight, the committee had planned this exciting conference theme. It is a shame that more members did not attend this fascinating event. As well as a rich illustration of diverse flying machines, many stations were described, along with iconic inventors. Material prompted discussion of naval strategy, the innovation and bravery of RNAS personnel, social history, hangar construction styles and the heritage and re-use of sites. It was stimulating to interact with a related discipline. I received unanimous praise for the quality of the day. Thanks to Richard Holme for chairing the afternoon session.

Dr Nigel Rigby, Head of NMM Research, is thanked for his ongoing support for NDS events at the Museum, as are Lizelle de Jager, Research Department Executive, for her hard work in making the arrangements and attending on the day, and John Brown for AV support.

Dr Ann Coats

Good News from Malta!

I am happy to report that the Number One Dock project in Cospicua is now virtually complete. The historic dry dock designed by the British Admiralty architect William Scamp has been fully restored and the area around the dock redesigned as a landscaped promenade connecting the water-fronts of the Three Cities – Senglea, Cospicua and Vittoriosa. A number of industrial artefacts have been integrated in the landscaping project. Also, a steel bridge has been erected and installed over the Number One dock for pedestrians. It has given a new lease of life to Cospicua and the promenade is well frequented by locals and visitors. The next phase is the restoration and rehabilitation of the historic dock buildings, some of which were built during the British colonial period and others in the times of the knights. They will be restored and used as educational facilities for the American University of Malta, which should be establishing itself in Malta in the near future. One hopes that the conversion of these dilapidated buildings would serve to bring greater social and economic activity to Cottonera.

The restored dock and landscaped promenade. Conrad Thake

Prof. Conrad Thake
But . . . Uncertainty In Gibraltar
Dave Eveson reports no further news on the possible development of the Victualling Yard at Rosia Bay. Readers may recall from Dockyards May 2015 that the Government had invited proposals for new uses for the best surviving RN victualling facility outside the UK. If proposals have been made, they are not in the public domain! I was reminded that it is only the entrance to the Yard (see picture) that is listed but Dave refers to a new Heritage Act that may see this listing extended.

![Image of the Victualling Yard entrance]

David Eveson

Dave also reports that the former MoD HQ to the north of Rosia Bay is being transferred to the Gibraltar government. The HMS Rooke naval base is now nearly cleared but its future is also uncertain. Apparently local decision making is generally on hold.

The Military Hospital at Sheerness

The dockyard and fort at Sheerness on the Isle of Sheppey was established in 1665 within low-lying marshland, presenting an unhealthy environment in which the army, navy and dockyard workforce alike was ravaged by an indigenous form of Anopheline malaria called the ague, commonly referred to locally as ‘Old Jack’. Symptoms include shaking, chills, headaches, muscular pains, tiredness and sometimes diarrhoea. Governor Nathaniel Dare was complaining as early as 20 April 1672 of his fort not being effectively manned because his small garrison was weak from ill-health, with eighteen of his men cast down sick and ‘two into their graves’. During the first two centuries of the dockyard’s history the work programme often fell weeks behind because so many of the labour force were incapacitated through illness caused by the ague. In adjacent Blue Town, ague was just one of the diseases to beset the civil population. Outbreaks of cholera and typhoid among the close-packed people were greatly aggravated by the insanitary conditions that then existed in the community.
Disease was not the only hazard to the health faced by the many who worked in the dockyard, or were serving on ships moored in the harbour. Every year would produce its crop of personnel seriously maimed or killed in accidents at their place of work. The *Spanker*, an old floating battery converted to a hospital ship, was moored in the East Swale at the end of the nineteenth century. Her replacement was the *Sussex*, a decrepit 2nd Rate launched as the *Union* in 1752, but renamed as a hospital ship in 1802, and serving in that capacity until 1816. ‘The old *Sussex*, which has for a great many years been a hospital-ship, at Sheerness, having been condemned, is now ordered up to Chatham, to be paid off and broken up; part of her stores were last week sent on board the *Argonaut* hospital-ship, at the last named place.’

The *Argonaut* had been captured from the French in 1782, and designated a 3rd Rate of 64 guns. Assigned to the Medway at Gillingham for harbour duties in 1797, she was allocated as a hospital ship in 1810. Although already in poor condition the aged vessel was to stay employed as a hospital ship for the next eighteen years until the opening on 1 July 1828 of the large Melville Naval Hospital, standing on the opposite side of the road to the Main Gate at Chatham Dockyard.

The health of the army personnel stationed at Sheerness continued to fare no better that that of their counterparts in the naval service. A hospital built ‘beyond the ramparts’ for the military during the French wars was demolished when the land on which it stood was required for a wide moat, completed 1805 to enclose the army and naval installations, and Blue Town, as a defence from landward attack.

As the nineteenth century progressed, the soldiers, like all who dwelt in Sheerness, remained in the situation of having their health persistently undermined by the appalling conditions of their surrounding environment. A report made following the conclusion of the Crimean War stated: ‘This town is the site of one of the most important of our naval arsenals and dockyards, and is generally garrisoned by between 700 and 800 men, chiefly artillery. Its position, although on the sea shore, is most unhealthy, from the vicinity of marshes and undrained land. The town itself lies very low, and is in a wretched sanitary condition, without drainage or proper cleansing, all the filth being received into cesspits, from which it percolates into the soil. The water supply has in times past been obtained from two wells only. The troops in garrison are exposed to the influence of marsh miasma, and suffer to a large extent from miasmatic diseases, especially ague.’

While the army surgeons were well able to deal with the usual numbers of soldiers requiring treatment for injuries or illness such as would generally occur in any garrison, the peculiar incidence at Sheerness of up to seventy cases of ague at a time would leave both the medical officers and the medical facilities desperately struggling to cope. The situation was one that needed urgent remedy. In September 1855, the response from the War Office was revealed: ‘We understand that a large hospital, fitted with every modern improvement, is to be built at Sheerness, for the Royal Artillery.’

The site chosen for the new hospital lay beyond the southern edge of Blue Town, within the No. 2 Bastion of the moat defences, on the large tract of land possessed by the army known as the Well Marsh. Tests having been made of the ground, preliminary work was put in hand, and by the summer of 1856 it could be stated: ‘The foundation for the new Military Hospital at Sheerness is completed by Messrs. Carlish and Co., and an experiment has been tried to prove the strength thereof previous to issuing out tenders for the erection of the hospital.’

Due consideration having been given to the tenders received, in September it was reported that: ‘Messrs. Kirk and Parry, of Sleaford, are said to have received an order to build a new military hospital within the fortifications of Sheerness.’

Work on the construction was shortly commenced and quickly proceeded with and by mid-November it could be noted how ‘The officers’ new and elegant barracks are fast approaching completion, and the new hospital on the Well Marsh is at last considerably in advance.’

Not until the spring of the following year, however, would it be at last announced from Sheerness: ‘The large military hospital here draws near completion. It is a very extensive building, and will be replete with every accommodation for a large number of patients.’

In fact it would not be before the autumn that the hospital would be totally completed and fitted out to become operational, and it could be publicly proclaimed: ‘The New Military Hospital at Sheerness, built by Messrs. Kirk and Parry, has been opened.’
The new capacious hospital now standing in the Well Marsh comprised of a long single-range building which presented visitors with a pleasing frontal aspect. A description of its internal arrangements was included in a report published shortly after its opening:

Its position is open and airy, and it would be healthy were it not for the generally malarious condition of the surrounding atmosphere, and the low level of the site, which is several feet below that of high tides.

The buildings are in a single range, two stories high, with windows along one side. There is a central passage passing through the buildings, and terminating in a closed corridor, which extends the whole length of the range. At each end of this corridor there is a staircase, giving access to a similar corridor above. On the ground floor are a number of rooms used chiefly as stores, ablution and bath rooms, surgery, medical officers, and orderlies’ rooms.

Behind these, and opening out of the corridor, is the kitchen. The upper flat of the hospital is occupied by wards and a day-room.

There are, altogether, 11 wards, with hospital accommodation for 103 sick at from 667 to 723 cubic feet per bed.9

The presence of such a large modern and well equipped hospital for the use of army personnel at Sheerness would somewhat rankle with the naval and dockyard men who, when faced with a life-threatening injury, had to be conveyed all the way to Chatham before they could receive similar treatment. Matters were brought to a head in November 1858 when: ‘Owing to an accident to Mr. William Warner, who died as he was being conveyed to Melville Hospital; the officers in the Sheerness Dockyard, represented the case to the Admiralty, and they on their part, communicated the particulars to the war department. The result we are glad to state, is, that in future all serious cases of accidents occurring in Her Majesty’s dockyard, are to be taken to the Military Hospital; the suffer for the time being, to be allowed 10d. per day towards his maintenance. The same regulation is to apply to similar occurrences on board Her Majesty’s vessels.’10

With incidences of life-threatening personal injury so commonplace in the dockyard, the grant to the men of access to a proper medical facility lying near at hand was undoubtedly a great boon. An early beneficiary was John Elliott who had come to grief on 4 August 1859: ‘On Thursday morning a
labourer, named John Elliott, was engaged near one of the planing-machines, when he was accidently drawn into the machinery, and sustained a severe injury of one leg. Had not the machinery been instantly stopped, there is no doubt but the leg would have been torn from the body. The sufferer was removed to the Military Hospital, where he now lies in a very precarious state. Two other accidents also occurred in the dockyard on the same day.¹¹

Not all those seriously injured in the dockyard at Sheerness were, however, automatically taken into the Military Hospital for treatment, walking wounded still being sent to Chatham as before. Typical of such a case is a man whose accident had occurred on 16 June 1859: ‘Henry Swan, labourer, had three of his ribs broken on Thursday, by a piece of timber falling on him. He was kept in the surgery all the night and sent of Melville Hospital yesterday morning.’¹²

In the period following the conclusion of the First World War, and the subsequent wind down of the military presence in Sheerness, the hospital became significantly under-utilised. This led to the building being put a new use as The Senior Officers’ School, which ran courses attended by members of all three branches of the armed services. This in turn was closed, leading to the final use of the building by the army for married quarters. Following the announcement that the Dockyard was to close in 1960, bringing to an end the long naval connection with Sheerness, the army also took its departure leaving all its garrison facilities abandoned and looking for new owners.

It was the Sheerness Harbour Company that, in 1961, purchased the fifty-acre Well Marsh site, containing the former Military Hospital, a small assortment of houses and other buildings and the army sports field. At the beginning of 1970 a proposal was announced to construct a steel works on the site. A substantial steel mill and ancillary buildings were erected, and officially opened in November 1972. Although most of the army buildings had been the demolished to accommodate the steel works, the former Military Hospital was retained to be used as offices. Initially known as the Sheerness Steel Company the steel works underwent changes of ownership, becoming Co-Steel Sheerness and then Thames Steel.

Thames Steel, having been acquired as part of the Al Tuwairqi Holding Company, went into administration in January 2012, leaving the steel works abandoned, and the harbour company, who owned the land, with the headache as to what to do with the site. One suggestion is that the whole steel works complex should be razed to the ground, and the site then used as an industrial estate. Nothing, however, has at the moment been determined. All the uncertainty prevailing over new uses to which the former steelworks site might be put has served to bring into focus the precarious position of the historic Military Hospital in regard to its future conservation.

David Hughes

Note by editor – since this article was written, the Peel group, owners of the Military Hospital have applied for consent to demolish the building to allow for enhanced car parking facilities for their car import business. It turned out the building is not listed and so an application for emergency listing and a building preservation notice have been moved forward. Naturally the Society, with others, is campaigning against this wanton and unnecessary destruction. See http://www.kentonline.co.uk/sheerness/news/sheppey-historic-hospital-preservation-order-2302/ for a good local press report on the campaign. Please feel free to email your comments on the proposal to planningcomments@midkent.gov.uk citing reference 16/501257/ENVSCR giving your name and address. The more of us who can do this, the better the chance of this historic building surviving.

References
Author’s impression of the military hospital in late Victorian times.
Chichester Harbour: Home of a Saxon Naval Yard and Repair Base

An area five miles to the west of Chichester was, during the early to mid-eleventh century, the largest naval port in the country. The evidence is overwhelming with both the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* and the Bayeux Tapestry offering undisputable support. Unfortunately, due to a lack of archaeological finds, both the physical layout of the facility and its precise geographical location remain uncertain. However, there are a number of clues that, once put together, offer several very likely possibilities.

The Saxon naval base to which I refer is the one that was created and used by the House of Godwin, one of the most powerful families of the age. Indeed, the final head of the family, Harold Godwinson, albeit for a short period, became King of England before succumbing to the Norman invaders. The battle fleet possessed by the House of Godwin was a powerful military tool that allowed both for the movement of rapid military support and the possibility of engaging hostile fleets on the open seas. This made the family particularly feared, especially as they were prepared to challenge royal authority.

In 1052, Edward the Confessor, having outlawed the Godwins, nearly had his kingdom taken from him when the elder Godwin, Harold’s father, sailed his fleet into the Thames and threatened London. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, in reporting that event, noted that in the year preceding, Godwin had boarded his flagship from Thorney Island.

Harold succeeded his father in 1053 and continued to increase the size of his fleet while probably expanding facilities at Bosham. A few years later, the Bayeux Tapestry shows Harold boarding one of his warships there. This was the famous cross-Channel voyage that placed Harold in the clutches of the Duke of Normandy. In its own right, the Bayeux Tapestry is a particularly useful source, depicting Harold arriving at Bosham on the eve of the voyage, at prayer in the church and feasting in the upper hall of his manor house. Harold and his warriors apparently remain in the manor house until a messenger informs them that the tides are suitable and the group are shown wading out to a waiting long ship. The vessel, soon under way, is further depicted with a dragon’s head that is set on the bow when the ship is at sea.

Following his defeat at Hastings, nothing further is known of Harold’s fleet, reckoned to be of at least twenty Viking-style long ships. Certainly, the Conqueror made no use of these vessels, giving little thought to further maritime adventures. Indeed, under the Normans, England became very insular, with its powers extending only a little way beyond its borders. This was in sharp contrast to the Saxon rulers who had used ships to extend their authority much further north, effectively unifying the British Isles through assertive use of warships.

A number of possible sites come to mind in the harbour area and all of them lie within the former Saxon manor of Bosham. Immediately north-west of Bosham’s Saxon church has possibilities. Indeed, an abandoned modern-day boatbuilding yard still dominates the area. For the Saxons, the advantage of this site would have been that of proximity to the Godwin family’s manor house (also believed to be in this area) with easy supervision of vessels under construction. Pitted against this is the noise and fumes that would have been emitted, something that the Godwins may have preferred to avoid. Much more likely therefore would be an area on the east side of the Chidham Peninsula, visible from the manor house at Bosham, where a cut in the land takes on the identical shape and approximate size of a longboat hull. Here, in what was once known as Slipe Field, is a potential building slip. On this same stretch of shoreline and about 300m north is a second larger but not dissimilar feature.

At any time when the country lay under threat from hostile forces, it would be necessary for the Godwins’ fleet to be ready at a moment’s notice. For this reason, crews would need to have been kept in readiness and vessels anchored in water of sufficient depth that they could be navigated into the Channel on any state of the tide. This is not a feature of the water around Bosham. Much more suitable would have been for a fleet active in the summer months to be moored off Chidham, possibly close to Cobnor Point. Here, vessels would still have been sheltered but always afloat. From here, it would have been a relatively easy task to reach the Solent. The Bayeux Tapestry, in depicting Harold’s departure for the Continent, shows a long ship moored in water of less than one metre in depth with the party boarding the vessel by wading out to it, indicating that there was no jetty for a dry boarding.
For Earl Godwin in 1052 it was Thorney Island from where the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle states he boarded one of his longships that had been brought round from Bosham. It is useful to note that Godwin was probably not a well person at this point and was also accompanied by his wife and other family members. It is likely that his transfer to the waiting longship would have been carried out in a more genteel fashion. At Stanbury Point on the east side of Thorney Island a crescent or harbour shaped feature juts into the water. Clearly man-made and recorded on the Historic Environment Record (HER) database as possibly dating from the Saxon period, it might well have been from here that Godwin escaped the clutches of the Confessor. If serving as a harbour, this site would have been integral to the needs of the naval base.

One further site of possible interest is Furzefield Creek at the northern end of the Bosham Peninsula. Here, just above the tide level are a series of distinctive patches upon which nothing (in recorded memory) has ever grown. Maybe here was a storage area for boatbuilding equipment including the large amounts of pitch and tar (drawn from the sap of fir trees) used to cover the hulls of the longships and applied at least once a year. Once the site was abandoned the barrels in which the tar was held would have rotted with the tar (which had a high level of acidity) seeping into the ground and making the growth of vegetation impossible.
Harbour shaped feature at Stanbury Point and possibly part of the Saxon naval yard established by the Godwins. Photo: Philip MacDougall

What further evidence would have to exist to confirm the existence of a Saxon naval base? Iron nails and preserved timbers are likely to be the first signs. Additional evidence would be post holes from supporting timbers for boat sheds, storehouses and workshops. To uncover this treasure house that must lie somewhere between Thorney Island and Bosham Creek, a determined archaeological survey is required. So far, field walks have produced only the evidence I have itemised in this briefing paper. Unfortunately, a recent geophysical and augur survey overseen by the Chichester Harbour Trust concentrated on areas unlikely to have been used by Godwin’s fleet and so adds little to the available evidence as to the existence of the Saxon naval base. Instead, a full-scale evaluation of the harbour area, directed specifically at the immediate shoreline, is required and multi-disciplinary in nature (topographical, archaeological and historical). Hopefully, and at the very least, such a survey would uncover the location of the boat sheds, these potentially very large buildings into which the longships, once hauled out of the water, were housed each winter.

Philip MacDougall Ph.D.

Vikings and Mast Crane . . . Denmark Visit

In September 2015 we were glad to visit Copenhagen and see the former naval dockyard on Nyholm, Copenhagen. The yard opened c. 1692 on reclaimed land and closed in 1918, operations then being transferred to Frederickshaven. The impressive Masterkranen (masting crane) still dominates and was built 1748/51, designed by Philip de Lange. Curiously the crane is almost entirely a timber structure with a brick casing to protect against adverse weather. The upper timber sections are held together by tarred rope to give maximum flexibility and to avoid strain on the wooden structure. Another quirky feature is that there are lower windows on each ascending floor so as to give the impression of the crane being more imposing and substantial than it actually is. (See Celia Clark’s article on the Puerto Nova Masting Sheer in Venice, built 1809/10 for the same purpose but a completely different design concept – Dockyards, May 2015, p.9). Another major feature at Nyholm is the chunky former frigate
F352 HDMS Peder Skram now open as a museum ship (www.pederskram.dk). She was flagship of the Danish navy in the Cold War, commissioned 1966 and withdrawn from service in 1990. Also open to the public are the coastal submarine HDMS Saelen (out of the water) and fast attack boat P547 Sehested.

In September 1807 the Danes tamely surrendered their fleet including eighteen ships of the line to the British who also destroyed a number of ships under construction including three 74-gun ships of the line.

The destruction of the Holmen, with the Masterkranen unscathed in the background. C. W. Eckersberg

Just thirty minutes by train from Copenhagen is Roskilde, capital of Denmark till the fifteenth century and also well worth a visit. Pleasantly lacking the crowds and bustle of Copenhagen, the massive brick Domkirke Cathedral contains tombs, often elaborate, of Denmark’s royal family. Downhill on the edge of the fjord is the outstanding Viking Ship Museum (www.vikingshipmuseum.dk). First of all we helped crew a replica Viking ship with ten or so others, for an hour, first rowing her out of the harbour and then setting sail around the fjord, a marvellous experience, ably supervised by local boatsmen who reassuringly had not seen a crew member in the water in twenty-five years (they said!). These trips are available on a daily basis, no need to book. Then a Viking menu to choose from for lunch . . . and a number of craftsmen, displaying boat-building crafts using Viking-era tools. For example, we watched a ropemaker and learnt that Vikings tended to make ropes from the raffia of lime trees and most rigging from horsehair and the skins of walrus, seal and deer! Full-size replicas of a number of Viking ships had been built and were on display in the harbour. We then enjoyed seeing the prime exhibit, the remains of the five Viking Skuldelev ships, scuttled in the late eleventh century to form a defensive barrier in one of the natural channels in the fjord, 20km north of Roskilde, near Skuldelev.
The Masterkranen, with *Peder Skram* (left) and *Sehested* (right).

They comprise an ocean-going trader, an ocean-going warship with a crew of seventy to eighty, a coastal trader, a small longship and a fishing vessel. All are well displayed and elegant to the eye. They were excavated from 1962 and are displayed in a spacious purpose built ‘Japanese inspired brutalist’ concrete building on the waterfront and opened in 1969. While this and later in the 1990s the Museum Island were being constructed, the remnants of nine more vessels from the Viking Age and Middle Ages were discovered and hopefully will be on display soon.

A rope maker, a replica Viking ship under sail and two of the Skuldelev ships at Roskilde.

Only a bit further away is the Swedish city of Malmo, accessible by rail or road on the stunning 8km long Oresunds Bridge linking the two countries. Inter alia a boat trip round the City’s canals took us past the Kockums shipbuilding yard, founded in 1870 and formerly Malmo’s largest employer. It was under the control of the Swedish state till 1999 and then controversially sold to German company HDW with subsequent conflict on confidential designs and intellectual property between the old and new owners, then in 2014 back in Swedish (albeit private) ownership under SAAB. http://saab.com/naval/Submarines-and-Warships/. Kockums last built a naval ship in 1987, but there are plans to resume construction. The yard appeared to be used to store massive wind turbines.

*Richard and Tom Holme*
An Afternoon at Pembroke Dock

I was very glad to make a return visit to this Welsh town where the RN Dockyard closed in 1926. I started by locating (with some difficulty!) and viewing the exterior of the ‘Defensible Barracks’ high up above the town/dockyard on Barracks Hill. Built 1842–45 to a somewhat obsolete design, this massive and now derelict structure (see below) had a dual function, to house Royal Marines for the dockyard and act as a gun platform. I believe it has been empty since the 1980s and sometimes there are open days for the public. Standing forlorn on a marvellous hill top site, I noticed it was named in 2009 by the Victorian Society as one of the ten most endangered Victorian buildings in the UK.

The Defensible Barracks.

I then went down Barrack Hill to the four substantial grey stone buildings associated with the dockyard, two of which flank the dockyard gates. It was sad to see one of these, the 1847 Captain-Superintendent’s House, still unoccupied and semi derelict (p.19). Formerly a hotel, it was burnt out some years ago. I was pleased at first sight to hear that that planning permission had been given a year or more ago for a refurbishment into a boutique hotel and restaurant and for a rear wing to be converted into mews houses. It seemed a great shame though that three blocks of new build apartments/townhouses were to be built in the former gardens as well as a car park. Hopefully all this work will be done in a tasteful manner, although very recent intelligence suggests the property is up for sale again.

The highlight of my day was the Pembroke Dock Maritime Museum (http://wwmhs.blogspot.co.uk/), at Hancock’s Yard, a late-nineteenth-century shipbuilding yard, a few hundred metres from the former Royal Naval Dockyard. I was glad to meet David James who kindly showed me round their museum and some sheds where enthusiastic volunteers were expertly restoring a number of small boats. Really great to see. It was good to hear also that not only the local Council (landlord) but also a potential developer of the site were supportive of the museum’s efforts. As well as authoritative and interesting historical exhibits, the museum has made a special effort to appeal to school groups.
I then went to the former Dockyard Church built 1830–31 to the designs of Ledwell Taylor. Pevsner calls it a ‘Spartan’ design and indeed although elegant, the church was built on a low budget. On my first visit, c. 2000, I was literally able to peer through a hole in the wall and view the sadly derelict interior! Restored superbly from this parlous state from 2002 to 2006, I saw the church restored but empty in 2012. It was pleasing to see that it now houses the Pembroke Dock Heritage Centre. This is largely devoted to the Sunderland Trust http://www.sunderlandtrust.com/. Pembroke Dock was a substantial flying boat base in the 1939/45 war. Attached to the Dockyard Church is a modern extension. Although providing useful toilet and kitchen facilities, I had concerns that the extension had been built at all as it seemed to spoil somewhat the elegant lines of the church.

It is a while since the Society visited Pembroke Dock and there is certainly plenty to see. Let me know if you would be interested in the Society organising a further visit.

Richard Holme

A walk around Woolwich Dockyard and Arsenal

Our guide for the day was Ian Bull, a local historian who having undertaken the walk on numerous occasions would ensure that we took in as much as possible from this historic site.

Having been briefed about the walk by Ian we set off through a nearby housing estate until we reached a subway under the main road which we walked through. Having reached the other side we
paused and Ian talked us through the history of the aforesaid subway; it was in fact built as a railway tunnel for the nearby arsenal, around the time of the dockyard’s closure, and on closer inspection is quite an impressive structure. Walking along the very busy main road we reached the first of the dockyard buildings to be viewed (although this one only from the outside). It was a factory building built in 1914 and although it appeared to be very much a brick-built building in a Victorian style it was in fact ‘brick faced’, the main structure being known as ‘Store B, later Building 70’. However, it is an attractive, well-built building which is still in use today by a variety of local businesses and organisations, see note by Ian Bull below.

Further along the main road was an impressive brick-built chimney which was part of the Steam Yard complex at one time. A little further and we were to reach the Factory Gate/Entrance and on entering found ourselves flanked by two buildings in fairly good order; one of these was the old Steam Yard Police Station (with a Police Fire Engine House next to it) and opposite was the former Steam Yard Police Barracks (now the Cooperative Funeral Care hearse garage!). Facing into the former Steam Yard of the Dockyard we could see the Steam Factory building which we walked to and then around part of its exterior as we were not able to enter on the day. However, Ian assured us that the interior was a wonderful example of its type and is really worth viewing if the chance arises. This building is in the process of being sold on and unfortunately seems to be in the hands of owners speculating on rising land values, really sad as buildings such as this should be used and not left to possibly deteriorate.

Ian also talked to us concerning the ‘lost buildings’ of this Steam Yard including one which was a precursor of the famous Boat Store at Sheerness Dockyard.

The other precursor of this Boat Store was the now demolished No. 2 Smithery at Sheerness and as such it is of the upmost importance that the Boat Store at Sheerness is protected and saved (all of these buildings were built by Colonel Godfrey T. Greene and Mr William Scamp). There were other buildings which although lost to Woolwich had in fact been relocated. The three slipway covers were reused as the main structures for three factory buildings at Chatham Dockyard (two of which still survive today); and an iron framed building which had housed John Rennie’s Anchor Forge has been relocated to the Ironbridge Heritage site and is now used as a wrought iron works.

After a short walk through another housing development we reached the site of the former Dockyard Church, a site now occupied by a social club. The church itself was carefully dismantled, rebuilt and modernised as St Barnabas in Eltham in the 1930s. A little further on is the Clockhouse, a very impressive looking building which was once the Office and Residence of the Dockyard Superintendent. Ian explained that this building is still partially original, i.e. the outside walls, but that the cupola, the lobby and the rooms inside had been heavily restored.

We then walked along what would have been an avenue to the former Dockyard’s Main Gate where the former Guard House building still stands (although privately owned) alongside the front-facade of the Police Guard House, also a private residence which has been extensively modernised on the upper levels. The impressive columns of the Main Gate still stand and still serve to separate the former dockyard site from the busy main road.

We now turned towards the river and walked along the river frontage passing the dockyard gun battery, which was built to defend the dockyard (with two gun emplacements and a replica cannon in each), then further along the river front we arrived at two former dry docks both filled with water and
sealed from the river itself. Both were very scruffy and unloved although one had clearly been used as a swimming pool/lido as there were remains of structures associated with this type of operation. Ian did inform us that these had, at one time, been used by the Royal Artillery as swimming pools.

Finally we were to pass two slipways one of which was in a good state, the other not so good; this area was the end of the dockyard part of the walk.

On reaching Woolwich Arsenal we entered an area containing many buildings of historical interest. One of the first was the Royal Laboratory Offices building, which was built around the same time (mid-1850s) and in a similar design to the (New) Royal Artillery Hospital at Sheerness, now potentially in danger of being demolished; this building was in excellent condition and was currently in use. After this we went to the Dial Arch Block (now a public house) for lunch.

After lunch we went into the Royal Artillery Academy and entered into two rooms which both had interesting architectural features. From here we passed the Royal Brass Foundry (now housing part of the archive of the National Maritime Museum), which was a very unusual and well looked after building. We then left the Arsenal through the New Main Gate, and crossed the busy main road to view the Old Main Gate. On returning to the Arsenal we then went past two very dilapidated looking buildings – West Pavilion and East Pavilion both of which were built in 1696 and were once part of a later larger quadrangle (now long gone), called the Royal Laboratory. These two buildings are now being restored and it would be interesting to visit again when the work is finished. From here we continued around the Arsenal and passed the Royal Carriage Factory (which was interesting to see as one of my ancestors worked there) and also the Grand Store, both now in residential use. They were very impressive and it was good to see them in such excellent condition.

We were then lucky enough to be given special access to the south wing of the Royal Carriage Factory and the Mounting Shed with its original ironwork ceiling and also a form of parquet flooring, which is apparently similar to that in ‘The Steam Sawmill’ at Sheerness Dockyard.

This walk was concluded in the Greenwich Heritage Centre in the south range of ‘The New Laboratory Square’ where there were exhibits relating to the Arsenal, all of which were very interesting.
All in all, a wonderful educational day out and looking forward to future walks with the Society.

The Royal Carriage Factory and Mounting Shed (Building 19).

James and Kevin Pender

Woolwich Walk – contrasts and interest

We were really grateful to Ian Bull for guiding our walk and we were lucky to enjoy sunny weather throughout. The Naval Dockyard was founded in 1512 and sadly closed in 1869, additions and new buildings were curiously perhaps built in its last years of existence. Only fragments remain and many are not in a good state in contrast to the Arsenal where Berkeley Homes are redeveloping in and around historic buildings. We heard that a part of the Dockyard steam factory had recently been sold for £3m as the Dockyard area may also be the subject of redevelopment, hopefully retaining the historic Dockyard buildings but one fears demolition.

We did not have time on the walk to visit the Firepower Museum – www.firepower.org.uk – the excellent museum of the Royal Artillery. Sadly this is closing on 8 July so readers have a last chance to visit. Access to the superb archive and research facilities has already ended. The Greenwich Heritage Centre – www.greenwichheritage.org – is situated in the Arsenal (see reference above) and is well worth a visit along with its reading room.

The Society are most grateful to Berkeley Homes and Academy Performing Arts for allowing us access to their buildings, thank you. Also to the great tour given us by Ian Bull, thank you Ian.

Richard Holme
Building 70 Woolwich Dockyard Area 1914
The C20 Dockyards Characterisation Report has reminded us of the quality and highlighted interest in twentieth-century Dockyard and industrial buildings. The building shown below with the steam factory chimney), Store B later Building 70, was a warehouse completed in 1914. It retains a crane that probably dates from construction. The north side of the building now sports some access towers which certainly aren’t original, perhaps 1950s or later. The structure’s survival may be on account of its reinforced concrete frame. The use of a then modern constructional technique in conjunction with a brick exterior with features that hark back to an earlier era is quite interesting. Traditions must have died hard then!

Ian Bull

Woolwich Dockyard – Some Navy Board references

ADM 106/381 f355 22nd February 1685/6
Mr Bunce (Clerk of the Cheque) 22nd February 1685/68
He has received a letter from some of the Officers belonging to the yard to know if he would join with them in a letter to your Honours . . . He is sorry to trouble the Board with this but this is a sudden complaint after a practice of 20 years. There having been swine kept here all the while by all or the greater part of the Officers and he found it so when he arrived. He says the swine only pass to and fro in the mornings and evenings as they are in the fields during the day. The Storekeeper has not complained before now of any damage, which has accrued to the storehouse caused by the hogs, for had he complained to my brother Shish, deceased, who kept some likewise or to myself, we would easily have remedied by removing the hogs styes further from it (but find new faces have a greater influence on some than other but it hath been my fortune hitherto to have binn used to that) and was a perfect stranger to it till now, or that they where any manner of annoyance till the morning for re Builder and Storekeeper where with me last night and when talking of hogs they never mentioned one word of the matter (but find it is the nature of some people to speake you faire and smile in your face and the same minute indeavour to cut your throat but am obliged to say it is hard fortune for any gentlemen who has binn borne and bread so to come among such nabours and as to the Builder whom I understand hath, as likewise the Master of Attendance, there salaries are large and need not matter that keeping of any that form having only himself and a mide and said no more for the others, but as to my self having a small salary and for other chargeable misfortunes which I need not to name, knowing that your hons. cannot be but sensible of him being obliged to use all the little industry I have to keep myself and family and am sure my hogs will not prejudice so small a salary as £70pa and asks for
Woolwich Officers to the Board 11th March 1685/6
There being several swine constantly kept in and abut his Maties. Dockyard at Woolwich which we find to be a very great annoyance to all men belonging to the said yard by reason of the filth and stench that proceeds from those kinde of creatures, by their raining to and fro all the day long, besides we finde the foundation and ground plates of the Storehouse used for laying of Sprutia deals and blocks there to be very much damnified, the defects whereof have certainly bin occasioned by the wet soakin from the styes erected on the backside of the said storehouse for lodging of the swine there humbly pray that your honors will please to give order for their removal and that none may be kept in the yard for the future it being the reasonable request of Yr Honrs Most Obedient Serts.

Jos.Laurence, Master Shipwright an Robert Smth, Storekeeper

Por Mahón, Menorça: Isla del Rey Interpretation Centre
An evaluation

Representing the Naval Dockyards Society, I attended a meeting in June 2015 organised by the 1805 Club and hosted by the National Museum of the Royal Navy. Its purpose was to discuss support and fundraising for the Royal Naval Hospital on Isla del Rey, Port Mahón. As a result of the meeting and subsequent visit, a report evaluating Isla del Rey as an interpretation centre for Mahón Harbour was circulated to Fundación Hospital de la Isla del Rey Menorca, the Association of the Friends of Hospital Island and the Consorcio del Museo Militar de Menorca y Patrimonio Histórico Militar.

General Luis Alejandre Sintes OBE, President, and Mrs Lorraine Ure of the Fundación Hospital de la Isla del Rey Menorca described the naval hospital, built originally in 1711 by British Admiral Sir John Jennings, its history until 1964 and subsequent neglect, and recent refurbishment carried out by volunteers since 2004. In that year the Association of the Friends of Hospital Island/Amics de l’Illa de l’Hospital was created, headed by General Alejandre. Volunteers began restoration and the island was opened to visitors. The hospital’s tercentenary in 2011 inspired an intensified level of conservation. It is now run by the Fundación with some Spanish sponsorship, but this has been reduced in the current economic conditions, and relies mainly on donations from visitors. In the next four or five years an estimated €2m are needed to continue restoration. It emerged that a further goal was to make the hospital a centre of interpretation for the heritage of Mahón harbour. The establishment of a UK trust would reach a wider audience.

Mahón Harbour is the largest natural harbour in the Mediterranean, six kilometres long, 1,200 metres wide and up to 30 metres deep. Isla del Rey, located towards the east and middle of this harbour, has a surface area of 41,177 square metres. It can be seen from all round the harbour and demonstrates many of Mahon’s foreign influences. Menorca is a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and for much of the year its climate makes Mahón Harbour a comfortable outdoor environment.

Menorca’s rich history is a complex mix of influences from successive invasions/settlements: Neolithic, Phoenician, Roman, Byzantine, North African, Spanish, Catalan, British and French, making it a microcosm of European and Mediterranean history. The island’s resources and Port Mahón’s large natural harbour in the east made it attractive as a naval base. Jonathan Coad described the benefits to the English of the sheltered facilities and the availability of a water supply, but also the disadvantage of having to defend a long indented coastline. Despite the problems of negotiating the 225 metre wide harbour entrance, brushwood was available for breaming (cleaning the ship’s hull by burning brushwood to soften the pitch, to allow marine growth to be scraped off) and thirty-six English ships were
Menorca’s value to British foreign policy prompted the building of the naval hospital on Isla del Rey (‘Bloody Island’), ordered in 1711 by Admiral Jennings to care for the large numbers of seamen then based in the harbour. Coad identified the hospital as the ‘first purpose-built hospital to be owned by the Royal Navy’, albeit unauthorised by the Admiralty (1989, pp. 333, 339). Harland (2008, pp. 38–9, 46), disagreed, distinguishing Admiral Benbow’s 1701 Kingston hospital in Jamaica ‘as the first Royal Naval hospital to be erected entirely for the use of sick seamen, its building and grounds owned by the Crown.’ However, Mahón’s hospital is the oldest to survive, albeit with subsequent buttressing and extensions. Jennings’ hospital had an impressive single-storey stone central range 310 feet long, with wings either side, occupying about half of the island. There were planned facilities for three hundred and fifty-six patients, in wards holding twenty-one to twenty-four. In 1742 it contained five hundred patients. Its airy, isolated position removed sick seamen from the risk of further infection and drink in Mahón and provided more systematic care of scurvy and fevers. During the French occupation (1756–63) the hospital was neglected and its structure became unsafe. In 1772–74 it was remodelled by the British on the existing plan, probably re-using the original foundations and lower walls, with an additional first floor, to raise its complement to twelve hundred beds (Coad, 1989, pp. 333–9). It functioned almost continuously as a military hospital until 1964, when it was transferred to the town of Mahón.

The harbour’s many fortifications and museums complement each other. In the town of Es Castell (Georgetown), planned by engineer Patrick Mackellar in 1771, the Military Museum forms part of the barracks square. It holds a superb collection of maps, models and topographical and social oil paintings, notably by Anton Schranz (1769–1839) and Giuseppe Chiesa (1720–1805), which interpret the harbour and fortifications. It also has a rich collection of historical publications for sale, some in English. It is a vital starting point for the maritime and military history of Mahón Harbour and the interpretation of Isla del Rey.

San Felipe Castle, taken over by the Consorcio del Museo Militar in 1998, retains 2.25km of the original 8km of tunnels on two levels, excavated initially by masons, and again between 1983 and 2008 by archaeologists. Rooms carved out of the rock include stables, storerooms and powder magazines, served by ventilation shafts and wells. In the open air are the remains of the keep, the chapel and the governor’s quarters. There is no funding for much needed conservation, the only income generated by visitor fees. In torch-lit evening tours volunteers re-enact the hardships endured by the 3,800 besieged British forces and their families for six months in 1781–82, 998 of the people who sheltered in the tunnels dying of scurvy. These interactive presentations are very popular and engage both Menorcan and tourists in its history, although the torches deposit soot in the tunnels. There are also many wildlife species: kestrels, partridges, kites, hoopoes and three hundred bats in a protected bat colony.

Marlborough Fort, near San Felipe, is part of a network of towers guarding the south of the harbour entrance. Views from its walls reveal the landscape west of San Felipe, and nearby Torre d’en Penjat. The fort is funded by the Island Council/Consell Insular and is well interpreted through a series of tableaux and a self-guided tour.

I was fortunate in being able to visit the Naval Base on the north shore of Mahón Harbour, owned by the Spanish Navy. Several original boundary watchtowers (c. 1780) which are in a bad state of repair.
can be seen. The oldest operational building is the masthouse (c. 1763), a chapel since 1973. Iron rails lead into many of the storehouses, workshops and the boathouse. Most of the buildings on the mainland are in good condition. The surface of Isla Pinto, previously called Saffron Island (it is thought that expensive saffron was stored here for security), was levelled c. 1763 to build the storehouses and workshops, arranged in a St George’s Cross pattern. The buildings here are in a bad state of repair, but it is hoped to restore one of them for public use. Careening capstans can be seen. Dating from 1948, the underground American-controlled Cold War Mesquida tunnel is cut into dolomite. It is a marvellous time-capsule of machinery and submarine torpedoes from that era, including a gantry crane, a forge, testing tank and a torpedo escalator. When the Americans left they just shut the doors. The site as a whole and Isla Pinto in particular have great potential for historical interpretation and also accommodation development. The base already contains an officers’ mess, which is essentially an elegant hotel, and other accommodation blocks. The buildings are surrounded by beautifully maintained grounds and facilities such as tennis courts. Moorings line the harbour frontage.

La Fortaleza Mola (The Fortress of Isabel II on La Mola, owned by the Consorcio del Museo Militar)
is an enormous site guarding the north of the harbour entrance which provides guided or self-guided tours, with multiple information points and buggies for hire to explore the terrain. This principle works very well, as there is immense space for visitors to spread out. A very professional guide interpreted

La Fortaleza Mola entrance.

One of the two Vickers guns (1930s), La Fortaleza Mola.

the Vickers guns (range 35km) at the top of the cliffs, overlooking the sea to the east. The route enables one to appreciate the varied architecture and functions of the surviving buildings, such as the magazine (Polvorín de Isabel II, restored 2009–10 at a cost of €465,000), and gives panoramic harbour vistas. The guide conveyed a rich insight into the intensely troubled history of La Mola, particularly during the twentieth-century Civil War period, which most certainly qualifies as dark heritage.

Mahón’s Museo de Menorca is housed in a seventeenth-century Baroque Franciscan convent. Exhibits cover pre-Talayotic culture, Talayotic culture up to the Roman conquest, and the Roman and
Byzantine periods. Talayotic culture is named after the talayots, prehistoric limestone defensive towers, walled settlements and tombs typical of the Balearic Islands. The museum also displays the history of the Convent itself, the Moorish period and Menorca from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, with a rich display of paintings and maps. It is a traditional and systematic museum, characterised by rows of glass cases and some videos, with a strong focus on the Talayotic period. There is virtually no interactivity, but its great range of artefacts has the potential for more interaction.

The Hospital Isla del Rey interprets individual structures such as the priest’s house and garden, the laundry, the kitchen, the chapel and the garden. The priest’s garden has a replica of the original water irrigation system, rosemary borders and decoratively clipped wild olives. It also has a shop selling some carefully chosen products. The *esprit de corps* expressed at the Sunday breakfast is inspirational.

Within the main building are rooms dedicated to the botica/pharmacy, the governor’s quarters, marine biology and a conference room. Former wards are used for discrete exhibitions such as the *Roma* incident and its patients, an autopsy room, a library, a Catholic chapel, the ill-fated emigration scheme to New Smyrna near San Augustin in Florida in the 1760s/70s, another emigration scheme to Fort de l’Eau in Algiers in 1850, and the Hanoverian regiment. It appears that limewash is not being used on the walls, as the surface material continually flakes off.

Originally rainwater was collected from the roof through downpipes and fed via underground channels to all the wards. This system no longer functions, but there is a plan to reinstate it. There are three freshwater wells on the island. Island plants are selected to suit the limestone bedrock. Red and yellow lantanas from the tropical Americas reflect the Spanish flag and are attractive to butterflies and bees. The native caper plant is widespread, fragrant and edible. There is also a unique species of lizard. The central courtyard and south-facing borders of the hospital have been re- planted with medicinal plants by a volunteer group of pharmacists. More than a hundred species are now growing.

The sixth-century basilica is kept clear of damaging vegetation. Its mosaic is displayed in the Museo de Menorca. A reproduction shown on the Isla del Rey was made in 2014 by prisoners.

The Friends plan to allocate the island into four zones: hospital and associated buildings; paleo-Christian basilica; natural ecological areas; access/transit zone; and utilise the original hospital wards for separate exhibitions: The Catholic Chapel; The Anglican Chapel; The Pharmacy; The British presence (1711/1771); Hanoverian Regiments; Swiss Regiments; US navy, Dr Folz; French presence; Dutch squadron; *Roma* victims; Rat Island, models; Eighteenth-century treatment room, Dr Juan Camps; Surgical treatment room, Dr Rodriguez Caramazana; Twentieth-century Doctors Echevarria, Sampol and Jimeno; Sisters of Charity; Eighteenth-century hospital ward reconstruction; Scale models; Map room; Archive; Library.

Isla del Rey is ideally placed to interpret Mahón Harbour’s history and make connections to the rest of Menorca and this is a progressive plan. While the Mahón/Es Castell museums barely cover the history of the twentieth century, the Naval Base, La Fortaleza Mola and Isla del Rey balance this. It remains to be seen whether the multiple government, religious, professional, heritage and commercial stakeholders can work together to achieve this target.

Menorca is most definitely worth a visit, with many coastal fortifications and Martello towers
connected by the ancient Camí de Cavalls. Kane Road/Camí d’en Kane (1712–17), built by the innovative eighteenth-century lieutenant-governor and governor Richard Kane, originally linked Port Mahón with Ciudaddela, Menorca’s first capital in the west. This religious seat, possessing the Menorca’s only cathedral, has a similarly rich focus of buildings, museums and collections around its harbour.

Dr Ann Coats

Fornells Martello tower on the north coast of Menorca.

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