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# DOCKYARDS

## The Naval Dockyards Society

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

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**The Sheerness Boathouse, the innovative precursor of modern skyscrapers, is sadly in an increasingly perilous condition. The picture above was taken in 1993 before this decay became obvious. In this issue, Sheppey historian David Hughes traces the history of this outstanding Grade 1 listed building and relates an extraordinary encounter with the BBC . . . and other parties!**

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## Notes From The Editor

Welcome to another edition of *Dockyards* and I hope there is something of interest to you.

I understand that sadly there is no positive news on refurbishment of the neglected dockyard buildings in Portsmouth, the lamentable condition of which was featured in previous issues. Sadly as noted elsewhere in this issue, the condition of the Boathouse at Sheerness continues to give grave concern.

On a more positive note it was good to hear that the popular Historic Dockyard Museum in Stanley, Falkland Islands, is fundraising for a £1.5m extension. This will feature more space for research facilities, their reserve collections, a Sea King SAR helicopter and the cockpit of an F4 Phantom 11 as well as a display of sections of the 850-ton American packet ship *Charles Cooper*. The *Cooper* had arrived in a parlous condition in Stanley in September 1866 on passage from Philadelphia to San Francisco and was condemned to be used as storage hulk, local dockyard facilities being limited. An alloy roof covered her and meant the interior was in a remarkable state of preservation. Acquired in 1968 by the South Street Seaport Museum New York for potential return to that city, she had to be dismantled in 2003 in Stanley as the hulk was sadly in danger of disintegrating.



***Charles Cooper* hulk in 1998, 132 years after she arrived at Stanley.**

I was also glad to hear from Clive Stanley that at Chatham, the Chatham Dockyard Historical Trust have moved into new offices in the refurbished Fitting Rigging House. The *Call the Midwife* display and tours are up and running and hopefully attracting many visitors who might not otherwise come to the Dockyard. The Chatham Dockyard Historical Society's areas have been refurbished also, although at the time of going to press, their Reading Room is out of use due to a minor environmental problem. The Dockyard Church is being used as a lecture theatre by the University of Kent, and indeed has been for some time I gathered.

We featured the campaign to save the Commodore Hotel, a Georgian dockyard building at Pembroke Dock, in our last issue. NDS member Adrian James is involved and reports steady but slow progress. Their updated and informative website – [www.commodoretrust.org.uk](http://www.commodoretrust.org.uk) – is well worth visiting as is their Facebook page.

Also at Pembroke Dock, the Defensible Barracks went up for sale earlier this year for £1.2m, this event attracting national press coverage. Although part of the building has been converted successfully to flats, most is still derelict, although planning permission has been obtained for a 56-bed hotel and coffee shop. At the time of going to press, the Barracks were still up for sale, with the price reduced to £1m. Off Milford Haven, the Victorian Stack Rock Fort was also for sale, the asking price being just £400,000 for a substantial, if dilapidated, structure!

A new book, *War and Peacey*, covers the life of the 'luckiest sailor', Chris Peacey, featured in our last edition. It is favourably reviewed in *Warship World*, now published by Peter van Schie with an editorial team of David Reynolds and Sheila Moloney. I was glad to have an interesting chat with Peter recently and wish them well.

Many thanks to Nicholas Blake for his expert assistance in producing this newsletter.

Let me know if you have any ideas or articles for *Dockyards*, however large or small.

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## The Sheerness Boathouse

In the late Georgian period it was common for royal naval ships coming into the Thames or Medway to undergo major refits in the royal dockyards to disembark their boats at Sheerness Dockyard for storage in its boathouse. As the nineteenth century wore on, however, with the Royal Navy progressively increasing in size, the boathouse found itself struggling to accommodate the number of boats it was expected to house. Eventually, in 1857, to remedy this situation, the Admiralty authorised that a 'boat store' be built as an extra storage facility for use by the boathouse.

Through the first half of the nineteenth century the conventional design adopted for the building of large warehouses and stores within the nation's ports and dockyards remained that of the sturdy brick edifices of which many examples survive until this day. They were generally gaunt buildings, insufficiently lit by natural light and often poorly ventilated within, providing a dingy, musty and often dank environment for those obliged to work in them. Such was the kind of building it might be expected would be built to form the new boat store at Sheerness.

The architect detailed to provide working drawings for the construction of the boat store was Godfrey T. Greene, the Admiralty's Director of Engineering and Architectural Works. The design that he produced for the building represented a major innovation in building practice. Eschewing the traditional methods of construction then in common use, his design concept represented a major leap forward in industrial architecture, the bricks and mortar normally used for construction being totally replaced by structural iron. The projected building, which was to have four storeys, required the instigation of a new method of construction. A skeletal framework formed of iron columns and girders was first to be assembled, with sheets of iron cladding then being added to provide the exterior walls on each floor. All the major components were to be prefabricated elsewhere and then conveyed to the building site for assembly.

In ground plan the building was to be of conventional rectangular angular form, 210 feet long and 135 feet in width. Its main entrance would be through large sliding doors situated at its western end. Internally it presented a somewhat cathedral-like appearance, having a tall wide nave, flanked on each side by deep aisles of similar width, each aisle carrying three upper storeys of flooring. The central area of the building and each of its two flanking aisles would be topped by ridged roofs which ran through the length of the boat store and were 53 feet high at their crowns. To allow daylight to enter the building window frames were situated in a continuous range along its sides at each floor level and a continuous skylight also provided above the nave.

The contract for constructing the building was awarded to Henry Grissell at the Regent's Canal Iron Works in London. The iron castings and other components for the structure of the building were to be manufactured at the works and transported down river by hoy to Sheerness for erection.

**Internal view  
in heyday.**





**Southern side looking distressed in 2002.**



**Shipwright apprentice training in the boathouse.**



**Shortly after completion in 1860.**

All pictures by the author or from his collection.

Construction of the building commenced in 1858, and it was finished in 1860, the constructor's final account being settled in August of that year. The total cost was £4,491 11s 4d.

So capacious was the completed building that was placed in dockyard hands that, rather than it being used merely as an adjunct to the boathouse, it was decided from the beginning that it should instead become *the* boathouse. So it was that from the start of its working life the new boathouse became the focus of all shipwright work within the dockyard, being so used in addition to the storage of ships' boats, as a major workshop. In time it also housed the shipwright apprentices' group training centre and even providing a home for the huge dockyard model made at the time of the yard's rebuilding in the 1820s. The old and now redundant boathouse found new use as a mould loft.

The boathouse still stands at Sheerness. As the first of its kind it is a high-status building representing a major landmark in the development of industrial buildings. With a large white-painted exterior and its light and airy interior it pointed the way to the future designs of commercial buildings through the clean lines of its structure which managed to so successfully marry functionality with aesthetic elegance. It was the world's first prefabricated multi-storey iron-framed building and without using the innovative construction techniques pioneered here at Sheerness, none of the famous skyscrapers of today such as the Empire State Building would have been possible. From the point of view of history, therefore, the Boathouse is a structure of international importance. In recognition of this it has been classified as a Grade 1 listed building. Those who have stewardship of the building thus have had a statutory obligation to preserve it and maintain it in good order so that it may be appreciated by future generations.

Currently the Boathouse is in the hands of Peel Ports Group Ltd., who now own and operate the former dockyard as a commercial port. The historic Boathouse building is not faring well. Years of neglect have left it in a rusty and dilapidated condition, and it is continuing to rot away at an alarming rate.

Swale Borough Council, the local authority for Sheerness, has for many years adopted a minimal attitude to ensuring the historic building stock held by the harbour company is preserved and kept in good order.

When in 2001 there was a small flurry of concern in conservation circles about the increasing distressed appearance of the Boathouse, it was stated that the Council was taking up the issue with the port. In the seventeen years that have since passed, the Boathouse has sadly been left to rot.

## Postscript

This summer I received a telephone call out of the blue from the BBC inviting me to participate in its TV programme *Inside Out* which was themed on historic buildings at risk, and was going to include the Boathouse at Sheerness. The intention was that recording should be carried out on site at the Boathouse. I readily agreed to appear but pointed out the situation with Peel Ports, and the great unlikelihood of access being granted for the purpose of visiting the Boathouse and revealing the sad state into which it had been allowed to fall. The response to my comment was that since it was the BBC making the application, it was expected that permission would be given, with the visit being chaperoned by the harbour company. Two days later I received another call from the BBC informing me that its request to the port management had been turned down point blank. Notwithstanding this, I was told that the intended programme would proceed, with filming taking place in Sheerness at some suitable location outside the port.

On 10 July, the programme was duly recorded at Sheerness. The BBC presenter, Emma Thomas, the camera crew and I positioned ourselves on the public promenade at the seafront from where, through an adjacent wire security fence on the perimeter of the port, there was a distant and partly obscured view of the Boathouse. Cameras having been set up, and sound levels etc resolved, Emma and I began to record our pieces to camera, outlining the historic importance of the Boathouse and explaining its current plight. As soon as we began doing this however, a loud siren began to wail from close by within the port, blotting out our voices on the recording. The sound stopped but as soon as we again began recording, started up again. This happened several times, and it became quickly obvious that we were being subjected to a deliberate spoiling action seemingly coordinated, by means of one of the CCTV cameras trained on us from within the port, with our attempts to record. Looking down through the wire fence, a vehicle could be seen parked a short distance away within

an open space that in dockyard days had been a parade ground, A security man sat in the car in readiness to operate its siren, and another stood alongside the car. Emma Thomas called out to the standing man and in an exchange of words, pointed out that we were not filming within the port but on a public bridlepath, and asking why the men were behaving like they were. The answer given was that it was because they had been instructed to do so. Shortly afterwards the men drove off and we were able to complete our filming.

The BBC afterwards contacted the harbour company for an explanation of the behaviour that had been displayed. A spokesman stated that it was unaware any BBC filming had been disrupted. Peel Ports was unable to supply a spokesperson from its management for questioning in a televised interview. The BBC did however subsequently receive the following statement from the port:

Our security team would not have been able to differentiate you from any other potential security risk and any measures that were taken would be part of our standard security procedures. The Boat Store is located in an operational port . . . any suspicious activity is taken very seriously. We are however aware of the historical significance of the building and are working with Swale Borough Council to develop a long-term heritage strategy.

The programme was broadcast by the BBC on 10 September and included full recordings of the efforts by the port to sabotage the filming and the exchange of words with the security man, who could be clearly heard they were acting under instruction. His statement was at odds with the assertion by Peel Ports that it had been unaware that any BBC filming had been disrupted.

**David T. Hughes**

## **NDS response to Sheerness Dockyard Church Planning Applications**

As part of Sheerness Dockyard Preservation Trust's ongoing plans to regenerate parts of Sheerness Dockyard, it submitted planning applications (Ref. Nos 18/502226/LBC and 18/502224/FULL) to refurbish the Dockyard Church. Permission was granted in August 2018. While this was an excellent plan overall, and the conservation plans seem well thought out and designed to stabilise the building, with consistent attention paid to its historical structure, inconsistencies concerning the re-use of the two stairwells need to be addressed. If only one stairwell is reinstated, there are insufficient fire escape routes. Access for disabled visitors above the ground floor is also unclear. Furthermore, provision of twenty-two car parking spaces in front of the church portico will detract from the concept of the Georgian square and vistas of the church. Instead, parking could have been located on the triangular plot of land to the north of the church.

**Ann Coats**

## **Gibraltar update**

I have little to report on dockyard related interest from Gibraltar this period, however due to Gibraltar's particular nature, any development relates to the whole of the Rock's infrastructure and eventually its historic link to the Fortress and HM Dockyard.

Building and rampant development continue apace with housing and school projects affecting old dockyard links. The Old Mole Head, once the furthest west that any visitor landing at the Commercial Mole would have seen, is now still standing but being engulfed within a major school development. We will have to wait for the hoardings to come down to see what has happened to the building.

Another large housing project could provide shivers down the spine to NDS members of ten or more years standing. Remember the Rosia Water Tanks? Well! More water tanks situated in a retired position up the hillside on Engineer Road beneath the Old Casino now come under scrutiny. This site has plans for 120 plus new homes above two very large 1865-ish limestone water tanks. How ideals have changed! The developer, instead of destroying the reservoirs, wants to keep the vaulted

**Water tanks.  
(Author)**



**Old Mole Head.  
(History Society  
of Gibraltar)**

caverns not for his own use but for the good of the people for posterity. On initial viewing, a mammoth engineering feat will have to be undertaken to span the Victorian structures and large sums spent in protecting the two water tanks set up for the Admiralty and City Council of Gibraltar, for fresh and brackish water respectively. How refreshing that a private company is so interested in saving an innocuous site whereas in the past antiquities have been swept away for profit and gain by government!

**David Eveson**

## **Buckler's Hard Tour Report**

It was almost fifteen years to the day that the NDS visited the maritime New Forest (25 September 2004). Then we focused on Bursledon and the history of shipbuilding on the River Hamble. This time (22 September) we were privileged to be taken on a behind-the-scenes-tour of Buckler's Hard and shipbuilding on the Beaulieu River by new NDS member Mary Montagu-Scott, who is the Director of Beaulieu Enterprises.

The number of those taking part was small, due to competition from London Open House. However, in Ian's view, that made the group perhaps more manageable. He found Mary Montagu-Scott very interesting: 'It was worth hearing of her plans for expanding the museum. Her talk on the walk-about was essential for interpreting the site.' He 'thought that the museum was splendidly full of sensible information and I found it extremely worthy and useful. The trip focused my mind on eighteenth-century naval contracting with private dockyards.'

Mary's passion for and depth of knowledge of the site drive all her endeavours. Currently these include reinstating the forge and mould loft shown on the 1963 model in the museum, restoring



**Traditionally made timber workshop at Buckler's Hard.**



**1963 Model of Buckler's Hard showing HMS *Euryalus* ready to be launched and HMS *Swiftsure* being built on 3 June 1803. (A Coats)**

the slips infilled by the navy after the war and training shipwrights to restore 'at risk' historic ships. The latter process has begun with the construction of a workshop, built with estate timber cut by ten professional hewers, using only traditional methods.

Beaulieu Palace House and estate were built around the gatehouse of the former Cistercian Abbey founded by King John in 1204. On Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries, the abbey and its estate were sold to Thomas Wriothesley, 1st Earl of Southampton, in 1538 for a reported £1,340.

Naval shipbuilding on the Beaulieu River began in the 1690s when the Fourth Rate *Salisbury* was built by contract using Beaulieu timber in 1697–98, although its progress was delayed when the contractor went bankrupt and Ralph, 1st Duke of Montagu, seized it for non-payment for the timber. The estate was developed further by John, 2nd Duke of Montagu (1690–1749), who in the 1720s founded the shipbuilding village of Buckler's Hard to import sugar from the West Indian islands of St Lucia and St Vincent and process it within an extensive planned town. While this plan failed substantively to materialise, the wide street of attractive brick terraced houses was built to house the anticipated workers and unload produce. Housing was thus available for shipbuilding artisans and labourers when shipbuilding recommenced in 1744, with Anthony Adams and his son Henry (1713–1805) moving from Deptford to become resident master shipwrights. Their house is now the Master Shipbuilder's House Hotel, Henry's former study a weather-boarded bay projection overlooking the slipways. Henry owned the shipyard from 1749 to 1793, when his sons took over. The first vessel built for the navy was *Mermaid* in 1749. *Agamemnon* (1781), *Indefatigable* (1784), *Euryalus* (1803) and *Swiftsure* (1804) were further notable naval ships built here.

Malcolm: 'The individually-built two- and three-storey cottages have been carefully conserved,

while the attractively grassed setting, sweeping down to the water and backed by woods, had to be extensively restored following industrial occupation by the Admiralty during the Second World War. The waterfront is now characterised by timber-revetted wharves and the sites of former slipways embayed in the shoreline. We took a half hour's trip on the river near high water, the placidity of the scenery intensified by heavy drizzle.'

This attractive little village has been conserved with every attention paid to retaining its rural character, so the few single-storey modern buildings do not encroach upon the eighteenth-century ambience. The Tea Rooms are set within attractive woodland and planting. There is an enticing smell of coffee and baking and the staff welcome visitors as if into their own home. The Museum was remodelled seven years ago, incorporating one of the poorer labourers' cottages, to tell stories of Buckler's Hard and its notable inhabitants, and beautifully crafted models. I did not realise until this visit that one side of the street consists of higher status three-storey cottages for the master shipwright and artisans, while on the opposite side are smaller two-storey labourers' cottages.

Clive: 'Despite the unkind weather it was a most enjoyable and informative day out. Everyone at Buckler's Hard was very welcoming, especially our guide, Mary Montagu-Scott, who had taken time out from what must be an extremely busy diary. Her comprehensive and detailed knowledge of the site was most impressive, there was not a question she did not fully answer with interesting and relevant facts.'

He continued: 'The site itself is fascinating and well presented. It also has an excellent museum with a wide range of fascinating artefacts and facsimile documents, all with informative captions designed both for the casual and the more knowledgeable visitor. The personal histories of those who have worked and lived on the site were also well presented and very interesting. Yes, it is a

**Three-storey houses on one side of Buckler's Hard street and two-storey houses on the opposite side. (Malcolm Tucker)**



**Below: Buckler's Hard wharves and sites of slipways. (Malcolm Tucker)**



more traditional museum than some; but when you have, just outside the door, an historic site and buildings to explore you do not need lots of “bells and buzzers” to generate a desire to know more, the site itself has already done that.

‘The enthusiasm and attention to detail of everyone involved is clearly evident in what has already been achieved, and the plans for the future are truly exciting. Eventually visitors will be able to actually see late eighteenth-century shipbuilding taking place, and with modern day apprentices as well! This will not only be a unique tourist “attraction”, it will also add a wealth of practical knowledge to our often only theoretical understanding of early shipbuilding practices.’

Finally, Judith: ‘Over many years Peter and I have visited Buckler’s Hard on numerous occasions and watched as the site changed and developed. Our last visit was also a guided group visit about a year ago, therefore we were aware of the fact that museum had been vastly improved and modernised. In previous years one of the main attractions on the site were people (apprentices) working on bits of timber, using traditional tools and methods. However, during last year’s visit we saw the new Shipwright Workshop but there was no hustle and bustle in this area. In fact, we came away with the impression that there were no long-term plans to utilize this facility.

‘This year’s visit, guided by Mary Montagu-Scott, changed all that. The extra dimension she gave to our tour was amazing. Her talk about the whole estate and her family’s involvement gave us a new understanding. Her plans for the future of Buckler’s Hard are ambitious and interesting. We now look forward to future visits.’

And Peter: ‘There can be no more emotive site in the world to compare with this little corner of history. To visit is to step back into our wooden-walled past, where the craft of shipbuilding was paramount for the Royal Navy. Everything is present from the food on the worker’s table to the very tools they employed. It is so easy to cast one’s mind back to those days before the introduction of machines and to become aware of life in that setting.

‘To have Mary Montagu-Scott show everything to us in such exquisite detail was the icing on the cake. Despite the atrocious weather Judith and I came away so much wiser and in tune with life in those hard times.’

**Ann Coats, Clive Moore, Ian Stafford, Malcolm Tucker, Judith and Peter Webberley**

## **The Anchor Wharf Storehouses and Fitted Rigging House at Chatham Dockyard**

In 1771 John Montagu, 4th Earl of Sandwich, was appointed First Lord of the Admiralty by the Prime Minister, Lord North. It was the third time Sandwich had been appointed to this important post and his knowledge and experience made him arguably the most effective First Lord of the eighteenth century. He took a close interest in the Royal Dockyards and, such was his high standing, he was able to maintain generous funding for them even when others in Government were seeking to reduce expenditure on the navy.

In 1773, Sandwich and fellow members of the Admiralty Board visited Chatham Dockyard. Whilst they were full of praise for the yard’s efficiency they noted that ‘Everything appeared to be in good order except the buildings themselves the chief of which are in a very ruinous state and must be rebuilt . . .’

The southern end of the yard was in a particularly poor state. Five years earlier the Ropery tar kettle had overheated and the ensuing fire had severely damaged the Yarn Houses. Fortunately, the adjacent twin Ropehouses escaped damage but, being made of wood, the vulnerability of these and the rest of the motley collection of timber buildings in this narrow end of the yard was not lost on Sandwich and his fellow Board members. Of particular concern were the seriously dilapidated storehouses on Anchor Wharf, which had been built in 1718. Admiralty minutes confirmed that little other work could be done at Chatham ‘until we can undertake the rebuilding of the Great

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\* Report of visit to Chatham, ADM 1/164.



**Anchor Wharf – aerial view.**

Storehouses which are undoubtedly in a very ruinous state . . . as some part of them are actually in danger of falling.'

Construction of a new storehouse on Anchor Wharf commenced in the late 1770s and was completed by 1785. The building contractors were Messrs. Nicholson & Co. of Rochester. At nearly 700 feet in length and with four storeys it was, and still is, the largest naval storehouse ever built. Later to become known as Storehouse No. 3, it was constructed of brick with timber pillars supporting the wooden floors. The pillars were also convenient for forming the timber lattice partitions which sub-divided the interior of the building allowing it to be used as a lay-apart store. Here stores and equipment from warships under repair or lying in Ordinary, or reserve, in the Medway, were brought on shore and kept 'laid apart' from those of other vessels. The building was completed with a double-pitch roof covered with clay tiles. With the completion of this new storehouse the Navy Board was now able to direct its attention to the rebuilding of the adjacent rope-yard for which it submitted its proposals in 1786.

Amongst the Board's proposals was one for a new Rigging House to complement the new rope-yard buildings. The increasing size of warships had led to the requirement for larger and more complex sets of rigging which the existing Rigging House could not accommodate. Plans for the new building were drawn up in 1791 with a cost estimate of £20,100. It was a dual-function building comprising



two parts, Rigging House No. 1 and Storehouse No. 2. Its design matched that of Storehouse No. 3 and was built immediately to the north of it. Some of the building work was undertaken by some of the yard's own workforce under the supervision of the Master Shipwright. When completed in 1805 it formed another hugely impressive building. Its brick walls were four-foot-thick at ground level and its four storeys rose fifty foot above Anchor Wharf with a length of 540 feet. Internally its working spaces measured forty-five feet wide on all four timber floors with a total area of approximately two acres. The one-foot-square columns that supported the floors (see image) were made from Baltic fir shipped from ports such as Memel, Riga and Dantzic (today the Polish city of Gdansk). It was the last major building in the dockyard to be based on wooden beams and supports. Further storage rooms were built into a vaulted basement level which ran under the northern half of the building (see image).

Completed rope was moved from the double Ropehouse the short distance to the Rigging House where it was stored and then formed into sets of 'Fitted Rigging' specifically tailored for each ship.

The Riggers were skilled men but not craftsmen. They came under the Master Attendant and later the King's / Queen's Harbour Master and later still the Captain of the Port. When the first Master Rigger was appointed in 1807 he was a warrant officer of the Royal Navy, a boatswain, and so a hierarchy was established that ran until the 1960s when the first civilian Master Rigger was appointed. One of the main duties of the Master Rigger was the preparation of Rigging Warrants, and every warship had to have one: a document which detailed all the fitted rigging of that ship and was signed for by the captain of that ship on her first commissioning. It was checked again by the Master Rigger on return or to pay-off the ship.

The first major warship to be launched at Chatham Dockyard without sailing rig was the battleship HMS *Hero* in October 1885. She still had a Rigging Warrant, which by now included all her wire guard rails, awning wires, davit and derrick hoist wires, as well as all her mast rigging. The Royal Navy does not forgo its traditions easily and so when the first nuclear powered submarines were sent to re-fit at Chatham in the 1970s they still had to present their Rigging Warrants to be checked by dockyard officers.

In 1834 some structural problems were becoming evident with the later building. Its floors and walls were showing obvious signs of derangement. The Surveyor of Buildings to the Naval Department, the architect George Taylor, was called in to investigate the problem. He was surprised that although the two extensive buildings on the site were built on the same alignment and of virtually the same design, the earlier building, Storehouse No. 3, showed no signs of structural problems. On closer investigation it became clear the reasons why. Storehouse No.3 had the brick footings of all its walls carried all the way down onto the bed of solid chalk below. These foundations were further strengthened with a network of transverse sleepers and longitudinal chain bond timbers laid at such intervals that decay in any of them would not affect the stability of the walls. With the later Fitted Rigging House & Storehouse No. 2 it was found that the brick footings did not extend down all the way to the solid chalk bed. Instead they had been laid on wooden planks and sleepers supported by piles. The surface of the chalk bed here also sloped away requiring unequal thicknesses of timber in different parts to prepare it for the brickwork. Most of these timbers were found to have rotted away causing the walls to subside. It was discovered that the dockyard's Master Shipwright who had overseen the construction, despite having no real knowledge of building construction methods, had ordered that old ship's timbers be used for the foundations for which purpose Taylor declared them most unsuitable. To rectify the problem Taylor ordered part of the front wall to be pulled down and re-built on new foundations of concrete.

The huge extension of the dockyard onto St Mary's Island in the late nineteenth century included a new rigging house, making the existing one redundant. It was taken over by the Naval Stores Department, who were now responsible for the storage and distribution of all materiel stores in the dockyard under the direction of the Senior Naval Stores Officer (SNSO).

The storehouses were also now served by the dockyard railway network, originally just a tramway but later upgraded to a standard-gauge rail system which connected to the main line at Gillingham. Tracks ran the length of Anchor Wharf close alongside the storehouses where wagons could be easily loaded and unloaded.

Into the twentieth century and the storehouses were now served with electricity and electric



lifts were installed on the rear of the buildings connecting the four-storeys. The timber flooring on the ground floors were replaced with concrete and both buildings were completely re-roofed. New electrically powered cranes were installed on the outer walls and a spiral gravity-fed conveyor (see image above) was installed in Storehouse No. 2 connecting the ground and first floors.

The storehouses continued in use until the closure of Chatham Naval Base in 1984. They then passed into the control of the Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust. Because of the size and riverside position of the buildings a number of proposals were made to convert them into apartments, none of which came to fruition. The buildings were left to decay for many years until 2000 when the ground floors of the Fitted Rigging House were adapted for use as the Dockyard Museum. A new lift was later installed in Storehouse No. 2 enabling the first floor to be used as the Dockyard Library. Storehouse No. 3 is now used commercially for secure document storage.

In 2017 the Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust were awarded a grant of nearly £5 million by the Heritage Lottery Fund for the redevelopment of the Grade 1 Listed Fitted Rigging House. The Trust's plans will see part of the building rented out for commercial use but there will also be a new volunteer centre of excellence to improve facilities for on-site volunteers. The Dockyard's Library and Archive, a nationally important collection, will be opened for wider public use. The new facilities are planned to open in the Autumn of 2018.

**Clive Holden, August 2018**

*Note by editor* – for update on Chatham generally and Fitted Rigging House, please see also 'Notes from Editor' elsewhere in this issue.

## **Spies and Saboteurs at Chatham Dockyard Prior to 1914!**

On 13 September, Philip MacDougall gave a fascinating talk on German covert operations to a packed meeting of the Chatham Dockyard Historical Society. As Rosyth was still incomplete and Scapa Flow not in existence as a proper naval base in 1914, Chatham was expected by the Germans to be the prime naval base for operations in the North Sea, the expected 'battlefield' for naval operations, hence the covert operations which Philip described in his inimitable entertaining and yet authoritative style.

Philip explained that a German naval intelligence capability only developed from around 1904 and generally the focus of military intelligence was on the army side. A number of German-born 'sleepers' were dispatched to the Chatham area to collect information such as naval ship movements in the Medway, although as Philip pointed out, such information was in the public domain generally through publication in the local press! The sleepers might be paid £10 monthly for this and would give the impression that despite their Germanic names they were perhaps of Swiss or Austrian birth and allegiance.

Later attempts were made to tempt or blackmail Royal Navy and dockyard personnel into passing across secret information. There was a shopping list showing the prices that would be paid for such information. For example, £1,000 would be paid for a flotilla signal book, equivalent to £90,000 at today's prices.

Such documents would be stolen by the British person concerned, passed to the German spy and then transported by courier to Belgium where they would be swiftly photographed and then returned quickly by the same courier to Chatham where the delinquent naval or dockyard personnel would return it to the relevant file before its absence was noticed. Usually a document would be 'borrowed' on a Friday, taken to Belgium over the weekend and then returned by Monday to the dockyard office concerned.

Special Branch, MO5 [*sic*] and the local constabulary were all deployed to counter these covert operations. On occasions post from or to suspects was opened and it was noted at times that a special code was used to pass information in written communications. For example, a reference to three loaves of bread in what appeared to be a merchandise order was actually a note that three destroyers had arrived!

Karl Hentschel arrived in Sheerness in 1908, claiming to be Swiss, and started working as a German-language teacher. He attracted a number of naval officers as pupils. His wife had three sisters, the Riley sisters, who acted as a 'honey trap' for naval personnel. The police lacked evidence against Hentschel and he was ultimately let off with a warning.



Another spy was Karl Adolphus Gould (left), who spoke impeccable English following his English boarding school education! He moved to Rochester in 1908 and became landlord of the King Charlotte pub on the High Street in the city. There he befriended naval personnel, offering free drinks and paying for secret documents, for example, the plans for the new fast cruiser HMS *Arethusa*. His wife Maud Sloman aka Gould acted as a courier and was a music hall performer, once performing in the naval barracks. The Goulds were arrested in February 1914 at Charing Cross under the Official Secrets Act. Following trial at the Old Bailey, Karl was sentenced to six years' penal servitude and to be deported whereas the case against Maud was not proceeded with, it seems.

Maybe there were other spies in the Chatham area, not detected by the authorities, although with the advent of war in 1914, communications with Germany ceased abruptly so their activities could have little effect.

In all probability there were similar German covert operations in other dockyards at that time, any information from readers on this would be most welcome. Please drop me a line.

As far as sabotage, there were no obvious episodes although the sudden explosion of a number of significant naval ships (e.g. the pre-dreadnought HMS *Bulwark* in November 1914 in Kethole Reach in the Medway estuary) were initially thought to have been the work of saboteurs. A subsequent Court of Enquiry though concluded in *Bulwark's* case that the ship's loss was due to overheating of cordite charges stored improperly against a boiler room bulkhead.

A very good talk then and many thanks to Clive Stanley of CDHS for facilitating the talk.

**Richard Holme**

Note – a similar talk will be given by Philip to SNR (South) on 11 May 2019 in Portsmouth. NDS members are welcome to attend.

## Steam Pinnace 199 – 107 Not out

Amongst the collection of the National Museum of the Royal Navy in Portsmouth (NMRN(P)) is a fifty-foot steam vessel known as Steam Pinnace 199. She is believed to be the last remaining steam picket boat in operational service. For an extended period, it has been believed that she was built for the RN at J. Samuel White's Yard at Cowes in 1911. This was based on a plate found on her boiler circa 1980. However, recent research indicates that her machinery was originally fitted in pinnaces 208 and 224 (the machinery was frequently switched around between pinnaces to increase avail-

ability and for ease of repair) and the hull, stern cabin and funnel came from 224. 224 was built by J Reid of Portsmouth and she was assigned to HMS *St Vincent* but at the last minute switched to HMS *Inflexible*, a battlecruiser of the *Invincible* class built on the Clyde. She was needed as an admiral's barge during *Inflexible's* visit to the USA. She was returned to the Boat Store at Portsmouth prior to a career as a harbour duties pinnace and later use as the Captain of the Port's barge. The museum has decided that despite the new findings, the title of 199, which she has been known by for many years, will be retained.

The engine is of a compound type with two-cylinder made by Mumford. The cylinder sizes are 6½ and 13 inches diameter by 8 inch stroke. It used to operate at up to 624 rpm producing 162 HP and 14 knots. In operation the engine is manned by a petty officer stoker who responds to bell signals from the coxswain in the steering position. The engine room also houses the main condenser for converting the exhaust steam back into water for the boiler, circulating pumps for circulating the sea water for cooling the condenser and two engine-driven feed pumps for maintaining the boiler water supply.

The boiler room is a separate compartment and has a three-drum Yarrow-type boiler built by Thames Iron Works in 1898. Originally coal-fired, most of these boilers were converted to oil-firing in the 1920s. 199's boiler now burns diesel fuel through a modern Laidlaw Drew steam atomised burner. It normally takes over two hours to reach the operating pressure of 180 psi from cold. Temperatures in the boiler room and engine room can reach 55°C when steaming.

She is operated and maintained by the volunteers of Group 199. The group's chief engineer is a retired warrant officer marine engineering artificer who served on seven steam-powered warships. 199 is in good hands!

The Hotchkiss 3-pounder gun fitted to 199 was built in 1887 and still carries a readable proof plate from 1898. It was fitted on an armed yacht which was sunk at the end of WW2. The gun was salvaged by a trawler in its nets in about 1980 and taken to the Maritime Workshop in Gosport for cleaning and restoration. The combination of the boat's speed and the Hotchkiss' quick-firing ability made the steam picket boat a formidable defence against to the torpedo boat threat of the pre-WW1 years.

In 1949 she was sold out of the navy and stored in a boatyard at Forton Lake off Portsmouth Harbour. In 1952, she was bought by a private owner for conversion to a houseboat on the Thames. Her steam machinery was removed and replaced by a petrol engine. Renamed *Treleague*, she remained on the Thames as a family houseboat for some twenty years. She was later purchased by an antiques dealer as a restoration project but proved to be too expensive. The bare hull was then acquired by the Royal Naval Museum (as it was then known) in 1979 for renovation by the Steam Launch Restoration Group in Gosport under the guidance of the late Peter Hollins (who was awarded an MBE for his restoration work on old boats). A slightly older pinnace boiler and an engine from a similar steam pinnace were obtained from HMS *Sultan*. The admiral's barge counter stern was removed. The Restoration Group developed into the Maritime Workshop, which became responsible to the museum for the pinnace's maintenance, manning and management.

Until early 2012 she was moored in Fort Blockhouse (formerly HMS *Dolphin*) and was regularly seen at Navy Days, Naval Base Steam Days, the Old Gaffers Festival at Yarmouth on the Isle of Wight and the Southampton Boat Show (see Film Link 1 below). The volunteers wear authentic costume of the period and are versed in small-boat seamanship skills such as boathook drill.

In May 2011, 199 developed some boiler-tube leaks when being pressure-tested for her annual boiler certificate. Later that year a professional survey picked up some areas of the hull that needed attention and it was already recognised that the main engine and boiler bearers (supports) needed replacement. Considering that much of this was original build material, it was hardly surprising. There followed a fairly depressing period of attempted fundraising which met with very limited success. However, after some advice from a professional fundraiser and a lot of very hard work by the group, late in 2011 we were awarded £50,000 by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Friends of the Museum kindly donated a further £30,000, the Gosling Foundation gave £5,000 and we had two private donations. Not quite all the £92,000 we needed from our estimates and work plan but enough to press on with the work. We later had a range of other contributions.

In February 2012 she was towed around from her mooring in Fort Blockhouse to the Maritime



**At Fred Watts'  
boatyard, 1950.  
(Author's collection)**

Workshop, which is located in the grounds of what used to be the new entry training establishment, HMS *St Vincent*, and is now a sixth-form college.

Pinnacle 199's machinery space cover was craned off, followed by the main engine and boiler. Then the much-lightened pinnacle herself was carefully lifted onto a specially prepared wheeled trolley and man-handled into the covered workshop before being transferred to more traditional blocks and shores (see Film Link 2).

The main tasks then were descaling the boiler, cleaning up the machinery space bilges, removing the remaining pieces of machinery, identifying and removing the machinery bearer fixing bolts, removing the external hull paint down to the waterline, removing the copper keel sheathing, taking some critical machinery space measurements, placing datum marks on steel bulkheads and replacing part of the stem post, which was found to be rotten.

The boiler was checked by the boiler inspector and there was concern over some steam drum rivets which showed signs of erosion. The boiler was transported to Hythe where a restoration specialist oversaw the removal of the boiler tubes by Group 199 volunteers. Some weld repair was carried out to the inspector's satisfaction. The boiler was returned to the Maritime Workshop in October 2012 ready to be re-tubed.

Work on the hull, decks and structure was progressing well but re-tubing the boiler presented problems to the volunteer team. The process has been described as wallpapering your hall through the letter box because of the very limited access to the tube ends through removal plates on the sides of the water drums. A sensible decision was made that it was outside their capabilities and a search found Mark Filer, a steam traction engine specialist on the Isle of Wight. He and his team replaced the 860 tubes. It was difficult work and his first marine boiler. The project took much longer than expected but a boiler certificate was achieved. Sadly, Mark died a few months after completing the work – his widow said that it was the project of his lifetime. The boiler then had some fifty hours of steaming in the Gosport workshop. The main engine, condenser, feed water tanks, fuel tanks, auxiliaries and pipe systems had been removed from the vessel, stripped, inspected, scope of work defined, defects rectified, actions recorded, photographed and collated. Any major parts required were manufactured within the limited facilities of the boatyard workshop, or reluctantly the work was contracted out to an external facility.

Meanwhile the hull paint was stripped back to bare wood through multiple coats, sections of the hull had timbers replaced, including part of the keel and the hog, and several of the interior bulkheads were replaced. Several hundred brass screws in the hull were replaced with copper nails and roves; the engine beds and the supporting timbers beneath the boiler were removed and replaced by a more substantial structure that was designed to spread the 4-ton load of the engine and boiler more evenly through the hull; new bearers for both fuel tanks were fashioned and fitted. Following International Paints' survey and subsequent recommendations the timbers of the hull and the steel within the hull were prepared and painted according to their advice. The work on the hull was completed and she was relaunched in 2015. The engine and boiler were refitted into the pinnacle and major steam system pipes added.

**Pinnacle 199  
off Haslar seawall,  
2017.**



Shortly afterwards the Group were awarded two national prizes for volunteer restoration projects: the Institute of Mechanical Engineers Award for Volunteering in the Conservation of Industrial Artefacts (Film Link 3) and a similar award from National Historic Ships. In 2013 there had also been an award from The Transport Trust.

There followed an extended period of work on reducing leaks from the deck into the machinery spaces as she was worked up to a full machinery basin trial. This was achieved in July 2017 followed by a successful 'Report of Thorough Examination of a Pressure System' plus a 'Thorough Examination under Working Conditions', both complying with the Pressure Systems Safety Regulations 2000 and both certificates with no defects.

From this high the group crashed to a new low when it became apparent that the shaft had become seized. Efforts were then concentrated on having her lifted out to investigate the problem. A very generous offer was received from Serco, who operate the support craft around the dockyard out of their Round Tower complex – old salts will remember this as the PAS boats (Port Auxiliary Service) and RMAS (Royal Maritime Auxiliary Service) before the tasks were contracted out. Serco very kindly lifted us from their small dock and moved her into their large covered workshop area where she was chocked up.

Removing the propeller and extracting the 16-foot long shaft was assisted with a forklift truck and chain block to apply some pull – remembering that the shaft was seized. Serco engineering apprentices gained some training experience by performing an alignment check of the propeller shaft and found the 'A' bracket to be 18mm high, thus causing the shaft to be tight. The alignment check used a wire from the A-bracket that runs for'd through the stern tube to the engine coupling. This was corrected with new packing pieces under the A-bracket palms. Our sincere thanks to Serco for their generous help and assistance. The opportunity was taken for a full upper deck and hull paint and antifoul respectively. She awaits relaunch at the moment.

Film links:

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4gUP8perya8> The Southampton Boat Show,
  2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JID2nHic4wo> The refit starts,
  3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8YesyAkC1B8> Volunteer project awards,
- or search on YouTube for 'Steam Pinnacle 199'.

As a retired R.N. Commander (E)(ME)†, the author was slightly taken aback when he was invited to take a reversion to ordinary seaman to join the group but though hard work cleaning, painting and polishing brass (sounds like a Gilbert and Sullivan script), he has worked his way back to a midshipman as deputy coxswain. Group 199 has a lively monthly e-newsletter which is distributed to over two hundred volunteers, supporters and museum staff. If you would like to get involved. please make contact through the NMRN. Illustrated talks on the history of 199, the refit and steam pinnaces at Gallipoli are also available to groups in the area around Portsmouth in return for a donation to the 199 Fund.

**Commander Martin Marks OBE**

## Naval Dockyards for Shipbreaking?

In the nineteenth century, naval dockyards had been used for the break-up of 'wooden walls'; in 1904, the former royal yacht *Victoria and Albert* was broken up in dry dock at Portsmouth. After the First World War, presumably to provide much needed work for the labour force, the destroyers HMS *Roebuck* and HMS *Thorn* and several submarines were broken up in Portsmouth Dockyard.\*

The Rosyth Shipbreaking Company, Alloa Shipbreaking Company and then Metal Industries operated in Rosyth after the First World War, breaking up capital ships. The latter became one of the two big UK shipbreakers with its activities at Rosyth and indeed leased facilities there from 1926 to 1963, albeit with a break for 1939–45 war service from any significant work. Metal Industries' involvement followed the announcement in September 1925 that Rosyth Dockyard was to be put on a care and maintenance basis. The dockyard at Pembroke Dock was also closed at this time and some areas were leased to another shipbreaker, TW Ward.† Much later, after the closure of Sheerness Dockyard in 1960, the dry docks were used for shipbreaking by Italian owned Lacmots and others. Also, at Sheerness the hulk of the old wooden wall *Cornwallis* (launched 1813 at Bombay but used as a jetty and subsequently base ship at Sheerness from 1865) was dismantled with some difficulty. The breakers paid £1,000 for the hulk but discovered later the harbour company would have paid £11,000 for them to remove and demolish her!‡ Sid Dean, later to demolish the huge carrier HMS *Eagle*, was involved with *Cornwallis*.

After 1945, the UK government were keen to maximise steel production for rebuilding a shattered economy. There was a plentiful supply of naval ships, now obsolete, worn out by war service or simply not needed in peace time. Some were very large and had thick armour, making demolition for scrap more complex and time-consuming. Moreover, there were labour issues as well as a perceived shortage of berths where ships could be broken up. Consideration was therefore given to the utilisation of naval dockyards for shipbreaking, an unlikely proposition perhaps. The government was looking for the UK shipbreaking industry to increase its annual output from 180,000 to 350,000 tons of scrap. A Scrap Investigation Committee looked at this and other related issues in 1948 and concluded in its report of 23 June 1948:

It is appropriate here to refer to the second part of the Committee's terms of reference, viz, the possibility of use being made of the Royal Dockyards for shipbreaking. They have discussed this question with the First Lord of the Admiralty and Admiral Sir Charles Daniel, Third Sea Lord and Controller of the Navy. The view was expressed that such a proposal was quite impracticable at the present time; owing to the rapid reduction in naval personnel since the war, a large number of ships were temporarily immobilised and all berths at Naval dockyards were full. Even if berths could be made available for shipbreaking, the dockyards would have to call upon outside sources for technical experts and for a certain amount of equipment. The primary purpose of Naval dockyards was the repair and maintenance of warships; after these requirements had been met, they might be able to do a small amount of shipbreaking. Shipbreaking however required completely different layout, equipment and personnel and facilities for shipbreaking did not exist in Naval dockyards. Any attempt to use Naval dockyards for shipbreaking would result in considerable disorganisation which would interfere with the rehabilitation of the Navy and the normal maintenance of the ships in commission. Further one of the reasons why civil work was being undertaken in Naval dockyards was to enable a balanced labour force to be maintained. The introduction of shipbreaking work would completely upset the balance, since there was no scope for the employment of finishing trades in shipbreaking operations. Skilled men would therefore have to be discharged and it would be very difficult to build up a balanced labour force at a subsequent date, when the Naval dockyards resumed their proper functions.

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\* I am indebted to Ian Buxton for this information and general assistance with this article, although any errors are mine.

† See Ian Buxton, *Metal Industries* (World Ship Society 1992) for a full account of shipbreaking at Rosyth.

‡ Many thanks to David Hughes for this information.

**The battleship HMS  
Anson being broken up  
at the military port of  
Faslane, 4 March 1958.  
(TW Ferrers-Walker)**



The Committee feel there is a great deal of force in these arguments. Apart however from the objections from the Naval standpoint, the Committee are advised that there are equally strong objections from that of the shipbreaking firms. The level of wages paid to labour in shipbreaking yards is definitely lower than the pay of the workmen employed in the dockyards who are of an entirely different grade, and it has been suggested to the Committee that if the Naval dockyards were turned over to shipbreaking the immediate result would be a demand from labour employed by shipbreakers for an increase in wages to bring the rates up to Naval standards. It is the view of the technical advisers to the Iron and Steel Board that the shipbreaking industry is in a position to cope unaided with the programme of ships coming forward for breaking up, so far as this can be foreseen; indeed when the present Naval scrapping programme has been completed, in a matter of two years or so, it is by no means certain that enough ships will be available to provide the shipbreaking yards with full employment. The Committee therefore do not recommend the employment of Naval dockyards for the breaking up of ships.\*

It was not really surprising that the Committee came to this conclusion given the force of view from the Admiralty and shipbreakers. In addition, apart from Rosyth, none of the dockyards were close to steel mills that would take the scrap. Maybe the Admiralty was not keen on messy shipbreaking operations being conducted in otherwise pristine naval dockyards! There seems confusion in the report above as to whether the existing labour force in dockyards would be used in shipbreaking or, surely more likely given their greater training and experience, current shipbreakers' employees or contractors.

Although never of course naval dockyards in any sense, the military ports of Faslane and Cairnryan in Scotland had been constructed in the 1939–1945 war as emergency facilities in case other docks were heavily bombed and put out of action. With a plentiful labour force and deep-water berths, they were now seeking a fresh purpose in peacetime. Faslane and Cairnryan were leased respectively to shipbreakers Metal Industries (July 1946) and Arnott Young (April 1948) for shipbreaking. A large number of ships were broken up at Faslane until the 1980s by Metal Industries, and its successor Shipbreaking Industries. At Cairnryan the battleships HMS *Valiant* and HMS *Ramillies* were lightened and then taken up the coast to Troon for beaching and final demolition. Arnott Young were seemingly never keen on using Cairnryan due to its limited facilities and remote location. Although the Scrap Investigation Committee had envisaged Cairnryan could break up 50,000 tons of scrap annually, Arnott Young moved out as early as March 1950 and focused operations on their main base at Dalmuir on the Clyde.

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\* Report of Scrap Investigation Committee 23.6.48, TNA, PREM 8/878.

As a separate point, shipbreakers may sometimes position themselves close to naval dockyards in part to shorten delivery journeys of redundant naval ships for scrap, particularly if they are in a bad state. Examples are the TW Ward at Inverkeithing (close to Rosyth), the long-standing Pounds business at Tipner (Portsmouth) and Shipbreaking (Queenborough) Ltd at Queenborough (Sheerness/Chatham). For example in the case of the frigate HMS *Chichester* laid up at Chatham and ultimately broken at nearby Queenborough, the 1981 sale particulars mentioned: 'It should be noted that the vessel is in an extremely poor condition and towing of the vessel will therefore be limited to the Medway area'.\*

Shipbreaking (Queenborough) Ltd acquired the ship for £34,766, about half the normal price for a frigate probably because of this geographical advantage.

**Richard Holme**

## **Kronstadt – Home of Imperial Russia's Baltic Fleet: Part One**

The town of Kronstadt is located on Kotlin Island, 30 km (19 miles) west of St Petersburg near the head of the Gulf of Finland. Traditionally, it was the base of the Russian Baltic Fleet and, heavily fortified, guarded the approaches to St Petersburg. 'Take Kronstadt, and St Petersburg is at your feet, the Russian Navy exists no longer, and Russia is reduced to what she was before Peter the Great,' wrote Friedrich Engels.† Kronstadt was founded by Peter the Great, who took the island of Kotlin from the Swedes in 1703 during the Great Northern War (1700–21) in which he regained former Russian territory from Sweden. The first fort, Kronslot, stood up to Swedish squadrons in July 1704 and in June and July 1705.

After Peter built Kronslot, in 1703–4, the city of Kronstadt was actively developed. Peter at one time even considered moving the capital of Russia to Kotlin Island, evidence of his great affinity with his navy. This idea failed, but Kronstadt is, in many respects, similar to St Petersburg with a rigorous grid of streets and canals, dominated by classical buildings. Peter the Great had a three-storey palace in Kronstadt, but this was destroyed by fire in the late eighteenth century. For many years, the town was the main base of the Baltic Fleet, and sailors and their families still make up a significant part of the population. Warships continue to berth at the harbour's jetties, and the town is still dominated by the spirit of a naval/military base.

The educational establishments of the port town trained naval officers, geographers, oceanologists and electrical and mechanical engineers and others specialising in acoustics, hydrodynamics and optics. For many years Kronstadt was regarded as Russia's scientific capital where, amongst others, Alexander Popov (radio), Victor Fuss (astronomy) and Alexey Krylov (mathematics, shipbuilding and naval instrument design) worked.‡

One of the earliest buildings in Kronstadt, completed in 1724 to the design of Johann Friedrich Braunstein, was the Italian Palazzo for Peter's closest associate, Alexander Menshikov, hence its other name, Menshikov Palace. Italian masters took part in decorating the building. The Admiralty took over the building in the 1760s: the Naval Cadet School was located there from 1771 and later the navigator and engineer schools. There is no trace of Petrine baroque in the architecture of the current building because the palazzo was rebuilt in the nineteenth century, and in 1926 all the remaining eighteenth-century architectural details were irretrievably destroyed by fire. It is now a naval officers' club. The Italian Pond across the street from the palazzo was created concurrently

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\* MOD letter 12.1.81

† Yevsiukova, O., Makarova, A., and Shein, A., 2014, *The Kronstadt Naval Cathedral*, Kronstadt: The Kronstadt Naval Cathedral, i.

‡ Yevsiukova, O., Makarova, A., and Shein, A., 2014, *The Kronstadt Naval Cathedral*, Kronstadt: The Kronstadt Naval Cathedral, i.



Russian sailors pose in front of the Naval Cathedral on Victory Day, 9 May 2017: this day celebrates the end of the second world war (known as the Great Patriotic War) and is the biggest national holiday in Russia.

All images by the author except where stated.

**Interior of the Naval Cathedral.**



with the palazzo. It is connected with the Merchant Harbour, and was in the past used for the winter mooring of ships. Abutting the pond is the Dutch kitchen, built in 1804 to replace a wooden one constructed in 1720. Foreign and Russian cooks prepared meals here for their crews as it was forbidden to light a fire on sailing vessels in the harbour. Standing at the entrance to Peter's Canal is a white wooden lighthouse, built in 1888.\*

Kronstadt's most striking landmark is the massive St Nicholas Naval Cathedral, designed by architect Vasily Kosyakov, consecrated in 1913, and considered to represent a culmination of Russian Neo-Byzantine architecture. The magnificent design was modelled on the Church of St Sophia in Constantinople, although with a different configuration of parts. Able to accommodate a congre-

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\* Kronstadt History Museum, The History of Kronstadt, [http://en.visitkronshtadt.ru/kronshtadt\\_chronograph](http://en.visitkronshtadt.ru/kronshtadt_chronograph) retrieved 9.5.2018.

gation of six thousand, the cathedral explicitly represented the greatness of the Baltic Fleet. It was intended to celebrate the successes of the Russian Navy and to commemorate the sailors who had perished in the service, on wall-mounted marble plaques. This would be complemented by painted murals on the walls and dome. When structurally complete, but with much of the interior awaiting decoration, the First World War intervened and the work was still unfinished in 1918 when, following the Revolution, the cathedral was nationalised and given to Kronstadt Council. After use as a parish church it was closed in 1929 and all traces of ecclesiasticism were removed. The seventeen bells in the belfry were thrown down (only one of these originals survives today) and the decorations and plaques were plundered or vandalised. In the Second World War it was the main observation point of Soviet artillery, with a field of view of 45 km at a height of 70 m. In 1953 it was converted into a cinema and concert hall, and a false ceiling concealed the dome. By then the building was in a dilapidated state. In 1991 an Orthodox service was held, in the south gallery, after a gap of seventy-three years. In 2001 the cathedral was returned to the care of the Church (for joint use with the navy) and a restoration programme began in 2009, in which the interior was fully decorated as originally intended. The work was completed in 2013 with the beautiful exterior and interior displayed in their full splendour for the first time.\*

The south side of Kotlin island is dominated by Kronstadt's four main enclosed harbours, the westernmost of which is for merchant ships. Originally this served as the main commercial harbour for St Petersburg, and in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was Russia's major international port, but in 1885 the sea canal connecting the Gulf of Finland to St Petersburg was completed and most commercial shipping then used the docks in the capital. During the winter this part of the Gulf of Finland freezes completely. In the 1970s a flood barrier was built across the northern channel, linking the island to the mainland, and in 1988 a highway across it was opened. The barrier can be opened to allow the passage of ships.† The south shipping channel remains the main one, and cruise ships visiting St Petersburg pass very close to the harbours, forts and dockyard. The historic centre of Kronstadt and its fortifications are now part of the World Heritage Site Saint Petersburg and Related Groups of Monuments.

## Forts

The main problem St Petersburg faced when it was founded by Peter the Great was a strong Swedish Navy, which could raid the new city from the sea. The first fort, Kronslot, was built on Kotlin island, inaugurated on 18 May 1704, and a second was added in 1724. This latter fort, like many of the later ones, was a sea fort, constructed very quickly. Workers transported thousands of frames (made of oak logs) by horses across the frozen sea, placed them in cuttings made in the ice and filled them with stones. Later steel frames were used, filled with concrete. Thus, new small islands were created on sandbanks, and forts were erected on them, defending St Petersburg against attack by the sea.‡ Narrow and shallow, the gulf was very difficult to navigate. The two narrow navigable channels were guarded by the strongest forts. Kronstadt became one of the most fortified areas in the world and the strongest naval fortress of Europe. The two original wooden forts were rebuilt in stone or brick and Kronstadt was thoroughly refortified in the nineteenth century. Five three-decker forts constituted the principal defences and, during the Crimean War, defied the Anglo-French fleets which approached the island but did not attack because of the strength of the defences, but subsequent developments rendered these forts of secondary importance. Designed by Eduard Totleben, a new fort, Constantine, and four batteries were constructed (1856–71) to defend the principal approach, together with seven batteries to cover the shallower northern channel. All these fortifications were low and thickly armoured earthworks, powerfully armed with heavy Krupp guns in turrets. In total there were twenty forts by 1917, including five on the adjacent northern and southern shores of the mainland (the Kronslot fort had been destroyed by floods in 1824.) The southern waterway was and still is the most useful and the first forts were created here, including Kronslot

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\* Yevsiukova et al., op cit., 6-32.

† Saint Petersburg Dam, Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint\\_Petersburg\\_Dam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Petersburg_Dam) retrieved 9.5.2018.

‡ Kronstadt Forts, <http://www.visit-saint-petersburg.ru/forts/> retrieved 9.5.2018.

**Fort Peter I is one of the forts protecting the south side of Kotlin island. Built of wood in 1724 as the Citadel, following damage in the great flood of 1824 it was reconstructed in brick and stone 1828–1834 and renamed Fort Peter I.**



**The entrance to the Peter Dock, seen during a May snow flurry. Completed in 1752, the dock was in use until the 1980s.**



(1704), the Citadel (1724, renamed Fort Peter I in 1834), Milyutin (1808), Risbank (1850s, later renamed Fort Paul I), Grand Duke Constantine (1808), Alexander (1836–45), and the 1st and 2nd Southern forts (1853–55).

The northern channel was not so suitable for shipping and it was fortified only during the Crimean war (1853–1856) and before the first world war. Vessels in the mid-nineteenth century were able to use the northern fairway and in the Crimean War English and French squadrons threatened Kronstadt from the north. Rapidly constructed temporary batteries were later turned into seven forts armed with 9in and 11in guns, and two strong forts (Obruchev and Tottleben) were completed just before the First World War.

### **Dockyard**

Construction of the dockyard and naval base began in 1719, and work on the first dry dock, the Peter Dock, was started by three thousand soldiers who were brought from across Russia. The dock was reputedly designed by Peter the Great, who had studied shipbuilding and worked incognito as a carpenter for four months at the Dutch East India Company's shipyard in Amsterdam, after which he visited Deptford and Portsmouth Dockyards in 1698. He is said to have studied and passed a course in shipbuilding whilst in England. However Peter did not live to see his dock completed: construction was put on hold after his death in 1725 but was resumed under the supervision of Elizabeth I (r.1741–62) and completed in 1752. A dockyard basin was also dug out and slipways were erected around it. Originally water was pumped from the dry dock by wind pumps, but, from 1799 by a steam-engine which had been manufactured in Scotland. A second steam engine was built in 1791–n Kronstadt.\* When Peter returned from his European tour he commissioned the building (at the Olonets shipyard on the river Svir) of the frigate *Shtandart*, the first ship in his new Baltic fleet, which was to be based at Kronstadt.

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\* Kronstadt Forts, <http://www.visit-saint-petersburg.ru/forts/> retrieved 9.5.2018.



**The disused Machine Shop (1904) is one of many redundant buildings now outside the confines of the working dockyard.**



**Warships in the Middle Harbour at Kronstadt, May 2013. In the foreground is the submarine Saint Petersburg, and behind her is the destroyer Nastoychivyy.**

Following a decree by Catherine II in 1783 the construction of the Obvodny (or Circular) canal was initiated, with warehouses on its inner side, a rope factory, sugar plant, and workshops at Peter Dock. The facilities built by the Admiralty by 1797 included the tar works, the rope yard, the dried bread-making factory, provisions shops, the stone-built timber and coal stores, the bypass channel, several sail lofts, officers' quarters, seamen's barracks and the Admiralty buildings.\* The dockyard was complemented by a variety of naval and military establishments including the gunnery school, an arsenal (1836) and a naval hospital (1830s–40s). In 1858 the Steam Factory (later known as the Kronstadt Marine Plant) was opened, as an engineering workshop for the new steam navy.

In 1899 Fred T. Jane (the eponymous author of *Jane's Fighting Ships*) wrote following his visit there:

Kronstadt Dockyard is popularly supposed to be about as accessible to the world at large as Tibet. The thermometer in the winter may stand anywhere between freezing-point and thirty degrees of frost – degrees Centigrade, I believe; and there is always a wind over the gulf which creates a blizzard with the dust of frozen snow. In the arctic conditions prevailing at the time of my visit it was not very easy to tell what was land and what was sea; the ubiquitous snowdrifts covered everything, and perhaps made the place look larger than it really is.

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\* Kronstadt, <http://welcome2018.com/en/cities/saint-petersburg/kronshtadt/> retrieved 9.5.2018.

Kronstadt Dockyard is a fitting and repairing one. No ships are built here. There are at Kronstadt four large dry docks—the Alexander, 584 ft. by 85 ft. by 29 ft.; the Constantine, 490 ft. by 73 ft. by 29 ft.; the Nikolai and the Peter, somewhat smaller, but big enough to take most ships.

The dockyard . . . lies very low, and a fair amount of it can be seen from the roads and streets outside, or, at any rate, could be seen pretty well with a glass. Possibly, seeing that to use a camera or sketch in the streets of even St. Petersburg without permission renders a man liable to be ‘run in’, to attempt to view Kronstadt from the outside might lead to unpleasant enough consequences; still, some sort of viewing could be done.

The yard is enclosed by a low wall—in places outside the dockyard a mere palisade—in which are frequent doors guarded by police, who apparently have orders to detach a man to follow whoever enters. My cicerone here as elsewhere was a naval lieutenant, but when we went into the yard a policeman plodded silently along in the snow behind us. All this serves to give the place an air of mystery . . . I must confess that I could not view that plodding policeman with equanimity . . . The most ridiculous tales of unfortunate Englishmen suddenly seized and transported to quick-silver mines in Siberia suddenly came into my head, and assumed a most painful realism and probability.\*

The Peter Dock remained in use until the 1980s and, together with land adjoining some of the derelict buildings in older parts of the dockyard, is accessible to the public. The naval base and other parts of the dockyard are still in use, though inaccessible to the public, but are of subsidiary importance to the facilities at Kalingrad, which is ice-free all year round. From the public Petrovsky Park views of warships in the Middle Harbour are given. The dockyard areas still in use face onto the Middle and Forest Harbours. These are flanked by the Merchant’s Harbour to the west and the Military Harbour to the east. **(Part 2 will appear in the next *Dockyards* in 2019.)**

**Dr Paul Brown**

A version of this article has appeared in the *Journal of the Britannia Naval Research Association*.

## **The heritage of Lt James Cook and the Endeavour River, Queensland, 1770**

In July 2018 I visited Cooktown, the northernmost town on the east coast of Australia, meeting Cooktown Local History Centre and Cooktown Re-Enactment Association, and visiting the James Cook Museum and Cooktown Botanic Gardens. Together, they tell remarkable stories of the forty-eight days Cook spent on the Endeavour River repairing HM Bark *Endeavour*: 17 June–4 August 1770. They also give a voice to Cooktown’s Indigenous people, the Guugu Yimithirr.

### **Lt James Cook’s first Pacific voyage, 1768–71**

The avowed purpose of Lt Cook’s first Pacific voyage was to improve ‘astronomy, on which navigation so much depends’, by observing the Transit of Venus across the sun south of the equator. The Navy Board recommended a ‘cat-built vessel’ as ‘their kind are roomly and will afford the advantage of stowing and carrying a large quantity of provisions so necessary on such Voyages’. The Whitby-built collier *Earl of Pembroke*, length 97.5 feet, was surveyed, prepared and sheathed at Deptford Dockyard. The renamed *Endeavour* left on 21 July 1768 with three boats, receiving more guns at Devonport Dockyard in August.† *Endeavour* carried ‘94 Persons’: Cook as first lieutenant and commander, naval personnel, marines, Joseph Banks’s civilians, and ‘near 18 M<sup>o</sup> Provisions 10 Carriage & 12 Swivel Guns with good Store of Ammunition & stores of all kinds.’‡

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\* Jane, F. T., 1899, *The Imperial Russian Navy*, London: Thacker, 366-389.

† C. Knight, ‘H.M. Bark *Endeavour*’, *The Mariner’s Mirror*, 19:3 (1933), pp. 292-302.

‡ TNA, ADM 33/447, *Endeavour* Pay List; James Cook’s Journal 1768–71, TNA, ADM 55/40, fol. 10.

Admiralty Additional Instructions directed Cook to explore the coast, noting 'Latitude and Longitude'. He was to chart and draw 'Such Bays, Harbours and Parts of the Coasts as may be useful to Navigation' and collect minerals and 'Seeds of the Trees, Fruits and Grains'. Also, 'with the Consent of the Natives', he was to 'take Possession of Convenient Situations in the Country in the Name of the King of Great Britain'. If the country was 'uninhabited', he was to 'take Possession for his Majesty by setting up Proper Marks and Inscriptions, as first discoverers and possessors.'<sup>\*</sup> *Endeavour* reached Tahiti on 11 April 1769. Cook observed the Transit of Venus on 2–3 June, then circumnavigated New Zealand, proving its two islands were not part of the 'Great Southern Continent'.

## Australia 1770

Cook reached the east coast of New Holland (Australia) on 20 April 1770. During his northward survey he made thirteen landings (29 April–23 August 1770) in modern NSW and Queensland.<sup>†</sup> From 29 April to 16 May he surveyed Botany Bay, noting that it was 'tolerably well Shelter'd from all winds'. Cook, Joseph Banks and Dr Solander landed to collect plants but had limited contact with the Indigenous population. When they and Tupia, the Tahitian chief, priest and navigator accompanying them, approached an Indigenous group on 29 April, they could not understand their language because it was unrelated to that of the Polynesians of the central Pacific islands and New Zealand. One group 'made off except for two men who seem'd resolved to oppose our landing'. Rejecting presents, 'all they seem'd to want was for us to be gone'. Cook flew the British flag ashore daily and inscribed the ship's name and date on a tree near the watering place.<sup>‡</sup>

Proceeding north, Cook landed at Bustard Bay (Agnes Water/1770) on 23 May, near the south of the Great Barrier Reef, unseen by him because he was following the mainland. On 11 June *Endeavour* struck a coral reef near the named Cape Tribulation, 'because here began all our Troubles.' The crew lightened the ship but needed three pumps to clear the water. A sail prepared with sheep dung and oakum to 'fother' the hull was passed underneath to seal the hole. They found a river mouth on 14 June and Cook buoyed a safe channel. On 18 June *Endeavour* was warped to a safe careening site on the south side of the river. Here began the European story of Cooktown. Cook spent 48 days in the Endeavour River making temporary repairs so *Endeavour* could reach Batavia (Jakarta).

On the 22nd a large piece of coral, pieces of fothering and stones were found wedged into a hole on the starboard side. *Endeavour* had lost sheathing and part of the false keel. The carpenters repaired all the planking they could reach by 26 June. Cook could not raise the hull further in the time available. He needed to leave Australian waters while south-easterly monsoon winds could take *Endeavour* to Batavia, before they became north-westerly in September. He hove off on 6 July and took on stores.

During Cook's forty-eight days on the Endeavour River, the Waymburr Warra (Cooktown) clan instigated six meetings with Cook, Banks and the crew, but many other sightings and encounters occurred. Cooktown Re-Enactment Association explained that the Waymbuurr Warra clan land on the south shore of the Endeavour River (Waalumbaal Birri) was a meeting place of the clans of the Guugu Yimithirr and Kuku Yalanji Nations, where disputes were settled, women gave birth and initiations and celebrations occurred. Guugu Yimithirr lore stated that no blood might be spilled intentionally on Waymburr. This was one reason why Cook's men were not offensively attacked. Strict hunting and gathering rules maintained sustainable food supplies throughout the year. 'Aboriginal Australians have the longest continuous living culture in the world.'<sup>§</sup>

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\* Secret Instructions for Lieutenant James Cook, 30 July 1768, National Library of Australia, MS 2, [https://www.foundingdocs.gov.au/resources/transcripts/nsw1\\_doc\\_1768.pdf](https://www.foundingdocs.gov.au/resources/transcripts/nsw1_doc_1768.pdf)

† Cook's Journal, TNA, ADM 55/40, fols 124, 127. All quotations are from Cook's Journal, with dates from N. J. L. Wharton (Ed.), James Cook, *Captain Cook's Journal during His First Voyage Round the World Made in H. M. Bark 'Endeavour' 1768–81* (London: Elliott Stock, 1892), chapter 8, 'Exploration of East Coast of Australia', <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/c/cook/james/c77j/chapter8.html>.

‡ Cook's Journal, TNA, ADM 55/40, fols 127–130.

§ Who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples? Australian Human Rights Commission, <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/questions-and-answers-about-aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-peoples>.



**Stone marking Cook's landing place.**



**Endeavour River with the North Shore centre and right.**

On 1 July Cook allowed the men 'to go into the Country knowing that there was no Danger from the Natives.' On the 14th Lt Gore shot a wallaby.\* Cook tried to communicate with seven or eight men, who 'took such Trifles as we gave them'. Conflict arose on 17 July when the crew caught three turtles, totalling twelve onboard. On the nineteenth, ten or eleven Wayburr Warra came aboard and tried to seize two turtles. When prevented, they attempted to throw items overboard, then set fire to the grass. Cook fired and struck one man. Cook, Banks and crew members followed them, seizing six or seven darts. When a clan elder intervened, the clansmen laid down their darts and the crew returned the captured darts, 'which reconcil'd everything', although some later set fire to woods. Cook's retention of the turtles to feed the crew was not understood by the clan, who viewed all resources as common, but primarily used non-contact methods to persuade the crew to share resources and leave.†

Caulking and fresh supplies were ready on 28 July, but south-eastern gales prevented departure. Cook climbed nearby Grassy Hill to plot his route through sandbanks. On 4 August the ship was warped out, Cook staying overnight on Lizard Island on the 12th to study the channels. He could see the outer edge of the Barrier Reef. On the 13th he followed a channel between Lizard and Eagle Islands and cleared the outermost reefs the next day. On 16 August easterly winds drove *Endeavour* towards reefs, so Cook sent Lt Hicks to investigate a reef gap which they entered on the 17th: Providential Channel. They passed Cape York, the northernmost part of Australia, on 21 August. Landing on Possession Island, Cook 'took Possession of the whole Eastern Coast . . . by the name of New South Wales together with all the Bays, Harbours, Rivers & Islands, situate upon the said Coast' in the name of George III.‡ He then headed through the Torres Strait for Batavia. Cook had sailed two thousand miles along the Australian coast, always torn between his desire for further discovery and the need to preserve *Endeavour* and his men.

### **The Endeavour River after Cook**

Lt Phillip Parker King RN explored the Endeavour River during his 1817–22 Australian circumnavigation. He 'occupied the very place that Captain Cook used', 28 June–12 July 1819.§ George Dalrymple's 1873 government survey was overtaken by the discovery of alluvial gold in 1872 in the

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\* Cook's Journal, TNA, ADM 55/40, fols 146, 149.

† Cook's Journal, TNA, ADM 55/40, fols 148–49; Personal communication, Cooktown Re-Enactment Association Committee, 6.7.2018 and 17.10.2018

‡ Cook's Journal, TNA, ADM 55/40, fols 157–61.

§ Phillip Parker King, *Narrative of a Survey of the Intertropical and Western Coasts of Australia: Performed between the Years 1818 and 1822* (2 vols, London: John Murray, 1826).

Palmer River, eighty-seven miles south-west of Cooktown. Prospectors travelled first overland from other goldfields, but on 25 October 1873 SS *Leichhardt* arrived, bearing a gold commissioner, a road engineer, mounted police and ninety-six prospectors. Within a month the new settlement was the entry port for the Palmer River goldfield.\*

Prospectors swelled Cooktown's population to forty thousand in the 1870s. Chinese, miners, market-gardeners and businessmen, outnumbered Europeans. In 1885 a railway line to Laura, extended in 1891, improved the 135-mile journey to the goldfield. Cooktown construction peaked in the 1890s, but the goldfield and the railway became unprofitable. The port and the community declined from the 1890s. The Second World War boosted the railway briefly, but it closed in 1961. By then it was using rail motor cars, one called Captain Cook.†

In 1942 a military airfield and the town supported operations in New Guinea and the Coral Sea, but the port deteriorated further afterwards, the population reduced to 350. To encourage tourism in 1949, the Queensland government dredged the harbour and weekly passenger boat services ran until 1975, when the state-funded Mulligan Highway from Mareeba made road transport economic.‡ Tourist facilities were improved in the 1960s and 1980s, with occasional cruise ships. Caravan parks cater for 'grey nomads' and hostels for backpackers, but these contribute less income than Asian mass tourism, which has declined.§

Current overland trips from Cairns to Cooktown via Cape Tribulation use the unsealed (non-asphalt/concrete) Bloomfield Track, requiring a 4WD vehicle. They emphasise 'outback experience' rather than *Endeavour*. In the wet season (November–April), flooded creeks, fallen trees and landslips can close the inland sealed route. Cooktown has a range of hotels and motels, many boat, fishing and Aboriginal cave tours, a few good restaurants and cafés and a large supermarket. A charming outback atmosphere prevails.

**Cooktown Botanic Gardens** (1878) includes the historic **Solander Garden** with living specimens of the 325 unique species collected by Joseph Banks, Dr Daniel Solander and Herman Spöring on the Endeavour River. Nature's Powerhouse Interpretive Centre featured *A Botanical Endeavour*, *Sir Joseph Banks Florilegium* exhibition of engravings by Sydney Parkinson and plants collected by Banks and Solander made by Frederick Polidore Nodder and others, with companion paintings by Vera Scarth-Johnson (1912–99).

**Cooktown Local History Centre** occupies the oldest surviving building in Charlotte Street, Cooktown's first post and telegraph office (1875). It is run by the Cooktown and District Historical Society (1935), which aims to portray 'the story of Cooktown'. Reflecting community priorities, the first buildings erected in 1873 were the police station, the racing club and the bank. Continuing the 1788 principle of *terra nullius* (land belonging to no one), because the Aborigines were nomadic with no permanent structures, the colonial government released land for sale and issued mining leases.

The Centre's fascinating exhibition, *Cooktown Through the Years*, depicts the community, the railway and the Palmer goldfield. The archive contains 9,000 photographic images of Cooktown and the Palmer goldfields from 1873, watercolours from Phillip Parker King's 1819 expedition and HMS *Rattlesnake*'s 1848 voyage to the Torres Strait. Thirty members maintain databases and catalogues

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\* A. Allingham, 'Pioneer Squatting in the Kennedy District', *Lectures on north Queensland History*, Second series, B. J. Dalton (Ed.) (Townsville: James Cook University), pp. 77–96, <https://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:241808>.

† Peter Ryle 'Decline and recovery of a rural coastal town: Cooktown 1873–1999' (PhD thesis, James Cook University, 2000), Introduction, pp. 1–3, 6, 7, <https://researchonline.jcu.edu.au/19585/2/02Introduction.pdf>; chapter 3, [https://researchonline.jcu.edu.au/19585/5/05Chapter\\_3.pdf](https://researchonline.jcu.edu.au/19585/5/05Chapter_3.pdf); chapter 9, [https://researchonline.jcu.edu.au/19585/11/11Chapter\\_9.pdf](https://researchonline.jcu.edu.au/19585/11/11Chapter_9.pdf).

‡ Peter Ryle, 'Decline and recovery of a rural coastal town', chapter 7, pp. 206–18, 231–5, 241, 246–7, [https://researchonline.jcu.edu.au/19585/9/09Chapter\\_7.pdf](https://researchonline.jcu.edu.au/19585/9/09Chapter_7.pdf); Introduction, pp. 1, 4, 6–9, <https://researchonline.jcu.edu.au/19585/2/02Introduction.pdf>.

§ Peter Ryle, 'Decline and recovery of a rural coastal town', chapter 6, pp. 195–203, [https://researchonline.jcu.edu.au/19585/8/08Chapter\\_6.pdf](https://researchonline.jcu.edu.au/19585/8/08Chapter_6.pdf).

**A building in Main Street, Cooktown.**



and develop individual projects. It has published fourteen booklets on aspects of Cooktown's history. Databases cover Council Rate Books, Births, Deaths and Marriages, Shipping Registers, old Council Minutes for Daintree and Cooktown, Botanic Gardens Committee Minutes, School Registers, Almanacs, First World War volunteers and Cemetery burials.\* It is a marvellous repository.

**Cooktown Re-Enactment Association** (1959) was formed 'to grow the economy of our community' but has 'broadened the events for a wider appeal to potential visitors, bringing more interest to our community.' The annual June Discovery Festival re-enactment of Cook's landing depicts the unique events occurring on the Endeavour River in 1770. It is based on a close study of the journals of James Cook, Joseph Banks and Sidney Parkinson by Eric Deeral, the first Indigenous person elected to the Queensland State Parliament in 1974. The re-enactment includes local Indigenous traditions which link the communities. It was revised in 2009 and continuously updated, keeping the story as true to historical events as possible, to entertain, educate and enlighten visitors to the festival. In the Boathouse, the Association's home, an exhibition of murals entitled *48 Days – A Shared History* (opened in 2015), depicts the story of the forty-eight days. Painted by local artist Jane Dennis, they illustrate cultural encounters. The Association's logo, *Two Cultures – One People*, aims to reflect the feelings of everyone involved in its work.

The Association's November 2011 Symposium raised awareness of the unique interactions between James Cook, Joseph Banks and Sydney Parkinson and the local Guugu Yimithirr bama (people), whose territory extends from the Annan River in the south to the Jeanie River in the north and west to the Normanby River. It works with Cook Shire Council to increase signage of significant sites, such as Reconciliation Rocks and the first shooting and eating of a gangurru (wallaby), which was also drawn by Parkinson. During the 2013 NDS tour of Captain Cook Birthplace Museum, Marton, Middlesbrough, we viewed the painting of the 'Kongouro' by George Stubbs from Parkinson's drawing, commissioned by Joseph Banks and loaned by the National Maritime Museum.

President Loretta Sullivan and Alberta Hornsby, Vice President and Waymburr Warra Traditional Owner, aim to promote Cooktown as Cook's most significant Australian site. He named 106 places on the east coast of Australia, 83 in modern Queensland waters. The Endeavour River represented his longest stay in Australia, where he made the first meaningful contact with Indigenous people, made the first notation of their language (Sydney Parkinson recording 156 words and phrases), and ate the first 'kangaroo' (wallaby).

According to Guugu Yimithirr stories, the clan speculated that the ship carried their ancestors returning from the east, as they were expecting white-skinned people to return but were confused because it was an all-male group. They wanted to show their authority when they arrived, therefore

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\* Personal communication, Cooktown and District Historical Society, 4.7.2018 and 13.8.2018

raised their fishing spears. It is recognised that colour is important in Guugu Yimithirr art: yellow and black mean envy and contention, white spirituality and mourning, red excellence and fertility. To 1770s British naval personnel, however, red meant warning, danger, defiance (used by mutineers) or battle signal, so red would have made the seamen wary. The Association seeks more information about Deptford Dockyard, where *Endeavour* was fitted out for the circumnavigation, and further archival sources for Cook and his ship.

## Conclusions

This short account contextualises global aspects of naval dockyards, their impact on other communities and their continuing relevance to present-day society.

Ryle observed one result of Cooktown's economic decline: 'the preservation of its heritage. Many historic buildings survived, albeit in a neglected state, rather than being replaced. With tourism "now the staple industry" of the town, government funds have assisted in their renovation.\*' The river's north shore is virtually unchanged since Cook's time, protected within the Endeavour River National Park (1975). The history of Cook and *Endeavour* is well interpreted, supplemented by numerous information boards in the main street.

*Cooktown 2020: A Shared History* (17 June–4 August) will celebrate Cook's arrival, scientific discoveries and cultural interactions. The town is on the cusp of development which will gradually transform its outback atmosphere. It is a fascinating place to visit before that happens.

**Dr Ann Coats,**

with grateful thanks to the Cooktown Re-Enactment Association  
and Cooktown and District Historical Society.

## **An evaluation of *The Georgian, Magazine of the Georgian Group*, Issue 1 (2018) – Naval Architecture**

Charlotte Ward, 'Naval Architecture in the eighteenth century' and Will Palin, 'Fortitude & Beauty Dockyard Church Sheerness' in *War and Wealth: Our Georgian Maritime Heritage, The Georgian, Magazine of the Georgian Group*, 1 (2018), 38-42; 50-53. (1186)

The Georgian Group ([www.georgiangroup.org.uk](http://www.georgiangroup.org.uk)) is to be commended for publishing two articles on dockyard naval architecture. Its magazine is aimed at those fascinated by and professionally engaged in the preservation, restoration and decoration of Georgian architecture, and owners of Georgian properties, but these two articles and a feature on SAVE Britain's At Risk Catalogue demonstrate that the Group is not concerned solely with stately homes.

Charlotte Ward, in 'Naval Architecture in the eighteenth century', starts from the premise that the 'romantic age of sail' has provided a rich foundation of national pride and fiction. She situates naval architecture – of both ships and buildings – within 'wider Georgian society'. Highlighting the evolution of successful eighteenth-century British ship design to fit naval strategy, she spotlights *Bellerophon* and *Victory* as exemplars. The theoretical knowledge of British and French naval architects are compared, Ward citing assertions that eighteenth-century British shipwrights were lacking, although this view was reversed by the 1780s.

Ward identifies Sir Thomas Slade, appointed Navy Surveyor in 1755, as the 'dynamic' designer who effected this change, thirty-three of his designed ships fighting at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. She does not, however, pinpoint how Slade's training differed from that of previous naval surveyors, to inspire him to be more innovative than his predecessors. He was trained traditionally as a shipwright apprentice, albeit benefitting from the experience and patronage of his Plymouth Master Shipwright uncle Benjamin Slade, who had adapted French prizes successfully as 74-gun frigates. Progressing through the dockyards as Master Shipwright, Thomas Slade was championed by Lord of the Admiralty Rear-Admiral George Anson in the 1750s to become naval surveyor. J. P. Hemingway's

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\* Ryle, 'Decline and recovery of a rural coastal town', Chapter 5, p. 190, [https://researchonline.jcu.edu.au/19585/7/07Chapter\\_5.pdf](https://researchonline.jcu.edu.au/19585/7/07Chapter_5.pdf); Chapter 6, p. 204,

thesis, 'The work of the surveyors of the navy during the period of the Establishments 1672–1755' (2002), shows the varied routes to this position. Furthermore, Ian McClaughlan's *Sloop of War 1650–1763* (Barnsley: Seaforth 2014, pp. 268–79), makes it clear that Slade's predecessors Sir Jacob Acworth and Joseph Allin were no slouches in ship design, despite mid-eighteenth-century Admiralty prejudice against these Navy Board designers.

To what degree the confluence of politics and patronage in this period of military/state-building ensured Slade's appointment as surveyor and promoted his designs throughout the six dockyards, and how innovative that circumstance, would require a larger article to assess. Richard Harding's *Seapower and Naval Warfare, 1650–1830* (London: Routledge, 1999) considered that his innovative approach 'had a major impact on the fleet.' To counter the French navy in mid-eighteenth-century global naval warfare required faster hulls, better seakeeping and more gun power. Slade's designs delivered these criteria and he was knighted in 1768 for his role in achieving British naval dominance. His First Rates like *Victory* and his 74-gun large two-deckers dominated the line of battle beyond 1815, his designs enduring after his death.

Ward then turns her gaze on dockyards as 'excellent examples of Georgian architecture during the "Great Rebuilding"'. She focuses on officer housing, with 'interiors that reflected the rank of the occupants, with the grandest living in some considerable style, much in the same way as wider Georgian society'. She states that workers were housed, although housing was provided only for officers, to be onsite twenty-four hours a day to monitor docking and undocking procedures. Portsmouth is presented as 'one of the navy's most important bases', evidenced by the rebuilt St Ann's church and the innovative Haslar Hospital. She cites investment on slips, dry docks, and 'other buildings . . . to accommodate the dockyard's other key functions, such as living and entertaining', but overlooks the accompanying outlay on specialist workshops, storehouses, ropehouse and offices.

Chatham is noted as 'less important than Portsmouth', but Ward quotes Defoe that its buildings were large and beautiful. Other naval administrative buildings, the Admiralty, the Royal Naval Hospital and Somerset House, were also considered, as designed by eminent architects. She makes the thought-provoking comment that the Admiralty building was 'the first purpose-built office block'. The article mentions Woolwich, Deptford and Plymouth in passing, but omits Sheerness. While this aesthetic vignette skilfully conveys a picture of the naval state embodying architectural legacy and enterprise, Ward gives no indication that these sites were the largest industrial sites and most valuable state infrastructure in Britain.

To this NDS reader the article is attractive but unsatisfying, an appetiser without a main course. To characterise Georgian naval architecture in five pages is impossible, but this article is at times so superficial as to be misleading. For instance, St Ann's Church was not 'rebuilt', but a new church built in 1786 to replace the original dockyard chapel, built in 1702 and demolished when still sanctified, when the new Commissioner's House was built in 1784–87. The use of quotations without sources is irritating.

To balance Ward's omission of Sheerness, Will Palin, in 'Fortitude & Beauty: Dockyard Church Sheerness', is well placed to write about this dockyard, as he has been influential in refurbishing the Georgian officers' residential quarter and the Dockyard Church. He characterises Sheerness as 'England's forgotten Naval Dockyard, steeped in history, dotted with beautiful buildings, but rarely visited.' The article focuses on the church, contextualising its origin in the rebuilding and expansion in 1811–29 by engineer John Rennie Snr and naval architects Edmund Holl and George Ledwell Taylor. The residences followed the dockyard model and the church was designed in an 'austere' neoclassical style. Palin chronicles the 'unnoticed' destruction by the commercial port owners, following the dockyard closure in 1960, of important Georgian buildings such as Admiral's House and the Quadrangular Store, followed by neglect. The church was gutted by fire in 2001, but Palin saw its refurbishment as 'the key to the revival of the historic dockyard.'

Palin traces remediation of this neglect, lauding the refurbishment of the officers' residential quarter by Spitalfields Historic Buildings Trust, begun in 2011. The long campaign against an inappropriate planning application for the residences by many organisations and residents was reported in 'Widespread Public Support for Heritage Conservation is Vindicated: "Sheerness Dockyard Battle to Preserve Regency Close Won",', *Dockyards*, 16(1), May 2011, pp. 1–6. He also records the revival of the listed extra-mural Naval Terrace houses by their 'sympathetic' owners. The Sheerness

Dockyard Preservation Trust, of which Will is Chair, has now secured a major Heritage Lottery Fund grant to stabilise the church and eventually reinstate Ledwell-Taylor's exterior, its reopening planned for 2021. This, enhanced by the display of the original working dockyard model (see 'Two views of the society's visit to Fort Brockhurst on 22 October 2005', *Dockyards*, 11(1) November 2005, pp. 10–12), is hoped to be a catalyst for the wider regeneration of Sheerness. Planning permission for the Trust's church's refurbishment was granted in August 2018 (reported in this issue).

Perhaps this publication venture could preview a series of in-depth dockyard articles?

**Ann Coats**

## **Featured Book**

### ***The Portsmouth Dockyard Story* by Paul Brown**

NDS secretary Paul Brown has produced a sumptuous book of 204 pages with a large number of excellent and often unusual illustrations. It should appeal not just to the dockyard enthusiast but also to the general reader who might visit the Dockyard. With a price of £20, it will hopefully sell well. Arranged in roughly chronological order, the book covers dockyard history and related issues comprehensively.

There is ample coverage of labour issues in the dockyard such as the emerging role of women and apprentices and pay and conditions as well as information on the various dockyard buildings. The poor current state of some of these is rightly mentioned.

Ships built in the Dockyard are listed and discussed such as the revolutionary HMS *Dreadnought*, a full chapter is devoted to this secret and vital project, with detailed information on design, construction programme, process and launching process and ceremony and fitting out. Like many parts of the book, the very good photos are often taken from the collections of the Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust and the Portsmouth Royal Dockyard Historical Trust. Beyond construction, there are interesting sections of repairs and refits, some of which almost amounted to creating a new ship.

The local *Portsmouth News* lauds the book as a 'masterpiece' which 'should be on every bookshelf in every home in the city and such praise is fully justified in my view.

**Richard Holme**

#### **DATES FOR THE DIARY**

##### **30 March 2019**

Annual Conference at National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

'We stand on guard for thee'

Dockyards and Naval Bases in North America and the Caribbean.

##### **17–24 May 2019**

Trip to Antigua.

##### **Spring 2020 (date to be agreed)**

Working title for Annual Conference – 'Indian Ocean Dockyards'.

##### **Spring 2021 (date to be agreed)**

Portsmouth based international conference.

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