

**Naval Dockyards Society Conference “We Stand on guard for thee.”  
Dockyards and Naval Bases in North America, the Atlantic and the  
Caribbean**

**Royal Museums Greenwich 30 March 2019  
Conference Abstracts**

**The Kingston Royal Naval Dockyard and Upper Canadian Hemp Supply,  
1822–33 Ross Fair**

My paper addresses the conference questions of dockyards’ financial burden and their dependence on the hinterland by analyzing an imperial hemp policy for Upper Canada devised by the Admiralty in 1822. It authorized the commissioner of the Kingston Dockyard to purchase hemp grown in Upper Canada for use on Great Lakes vessels if it was less expensive than ordering hemp from England. Furthermore, if the Upper Canadian product was of sufficient quality, and if it could be delivered to London at a price less than contract prices for Russian hemp, the Admiralty would authorize its use for one-quarter of the English dockyards’ annual requirements.

This paper assesses Commissioner Robert Barrie’s efforts to implement the policy and analyses its fundamental problems. While the Navy Board soon asked when several tons of Canadian hemp might be shipped to England, colonial officials tempered such expectations. There had been numerous attempts by imperial and colonial officials since 1800 to encourage Canadian farmers to grow hemp for export to English dockyards, but those had mostly failed.<sup>1</sup> Yet, the paper explains that some farmers did respond to the 1822 plan, including one colonist who constructed a hemp mill subsidized by the provincial government. My paper concludes that, while test reports of Upper Canadian hemp in the early 1830s indicated it to be strong but “foul” when compared to top-quality Russian hemp, this modicum of success was too little, too late.

By the time of the tests, the Kingston Dockyard was being closed down in response to revised plans for defence of the Great Lakes, and Upper Canadian hemp never became a resource for the Kingston Dockyard or England’s dockyards.

**Late Flowering Interest: The Naval Dockyards on the Great Lakes and the  
Rush-Bagot Treaty Ian F. S. Stafford**

Many vessels were built on the Great Lakes during colonial times; both by the French in New France which once contained the whole of the Great Lakes and by both sides during the various Anglo-French wars when opposing forces ranged on opposing banks. The space for naval operations on the Great Lakes reached its apogee during the War of 1812 when the British Empire and the United States of America controlled opposing shores.

The paper will look at the yards on the Great Lakes and place the position of their use of the Great lakes in historical context noting the difference before and after the War

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<sup>1</sup> I explored the results of imperial plans to encourage hemp cultivation, announced in 1800 and 1805, along with colonial efforts to do amplify such plans in Ross D. Fair, “A Most Favourable Soil and Climate: Hemp Cultivation in Upper Canada, 1800–1813,” *Ontario History* 96 (Spring 2004): 41-61. This paper proposal is derived from a monograph I am writing on imperial and colonial efforts to encourage hemp cultivation in Upper and Lower Canada, 1760–1833.

of 1812. Before that war Admiralty left the defence of the Lakes to the local Provincial Marine which was a seaborne wing of the Upper Canada militia.

The War of 1812 resulted in perhaps the first modern naval disarmament pact; the Rush-Bagot treaty. Yet naval yards and shipbuilding facilities continued to be maintained in spite of the treaty. On the Imperial side they were again activated during the Hunters Lodge and Fenian incursions. Though peace reigned for the rest of history the question of whether each side was violating the treaty by constructing naval vessels on the lakes continued through to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Admiralty began a belated interest in naval facilities the lakes in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the purpose of such might, in retrospect, seem to have been otiose.

This interest seems incongruous with the general withdrawal of forces from central Canada in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the general improvement in Anglo-American relations.

### **Anglo-American Co-operation 1940–1945: Shore Facilities for Maritime and Naval Aviation in the North Atlantic Roger Dence**

In Summer 1940, Britain's strategic position was acute. German successes in Northern and Western Europe from April to June 1940 gave its naval and air forces closer, more direct access to the North Atlantic. The long-running Battle of the Atlantic was at its peak between June 1940 and end 1943, the strategic, political and diplomatic contexts involved leading to wide-ranging developments in regional maritime and naval aviation facilities.

United States neutrality and domestic politics dictated a cautious approach to co-operation. From May 1940 onwards, Britain proposed granting base facilities to the US in some of its Western Hemisphere territories. Threats to US regional security from the possible loss of European possessions in the Western Atlantic and Caribbean led to the Destroyers-for-Bases Agreement in September 1940. Surplus US warships were transferred to Britain and Canada for Atlantic escort duties, the US gaining naval and air facilities in Bermuda, Newfoundland and Trinidad as well as air facilities in Antigua, British Guiana, Jamaica and St Lucia.

The US Lend-Lease Act in March 1941, the Atlantic Charter signed in August 1941 and US entry into the war in December 1941 all increased allied military, scientific/technical and industrial co-operation. Britain gained access to the new US base at Argentia in Newfoundland, as well as naval aviation facilities in Nova Scotia, Canada and at six locations in the Eastern US.

Additionally, diplomatic efforts sought overflight or access rights for maritime patrol aircraft in neutral Eire and Portugal respectively. Other Atlantic airfield developments took place at Ascension Island and Gibraltar, the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone and South Africa. Anglo-American naval and air co-operation on Atlantic bases provided a major contribution to the war's outcome and to the foundations of post-war military co-operation. A dual US/UK aspect underpinned the aviation dimension.

**Brooklyn Navy Yard New York – early Federal shipyard in 1801; pioneer in sustainable industrial development since closure in 1966 Celia Clark**

In 1801 the American Secretary of Navy Benjamin Stoddert purchased five sites to develop naval shipyards for the young republic, including John Jackson's shipyard on Wallabout Bay on the East River in New York, where the *USS Adams* had been the first naval vessel to be built in 1799. In response to British attacks the US declared war in 1812, and over the next 165 years Brooklyn Navy Yard developed as an engine of innovation and enterprise that helped shape the young nation's future. Matthew Perry established the United States Naval Lyceum in the Commandant's headquarters in 1833, a precursor to the US Naval Academy.

In 1838 Brooklyn Naval Hospital and other medical buildings were commissioned at the other end of the yard, where a quarter of naval patients were treated during the civil war. The Naval Laboratory of 1852 supplied pure quality drugs to the navy. In 1851 Dry Dock No. 1 was the largest of its kind. The Second World War stimulated Brooklyn Navy Yard's greatest expansion; the workforce increased from 14,000 to 70,000. Three battleships, five carriers, barges and lighters were built and 250 ships were converted for war duty.

But by 1950 the workforce had dwindled to 10,000; the hospital was decommissioned in 1948. Unlike what happens in the UK, residential development is prohibited. Since the 'yard had been a major source of local employment, the city of New York purchased it from the federal government in 1969, but early attempts to recreate jobs failed until the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation was established in 1981; but progress in job creation was slow. The city renewed the yard's infrastructure, its heavy investment matched by private funding. There are currently nearly 12,000 workers on the site in small and medium sized enterprises, which benefit from proximity to like-minded entrepreneurs. As well as being home to the Steiner Film Studios, the yard has become a showplace for green architecture and manufacture, in the process restoring and reusing huge and challenging industrial structures, retaining their embodied energy and their potential for sustainable new life.

### **'So Essential to Health...' Supplying Naval Hospitals at West Indies Dockyards, 1740–1820 Cori Convertito**

With the growth of Britain's North American colonies in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Royal Navy concentrated much of its efforts shoring up strategic locations in Canada, America and the West Indies. Reinforcing military presence in this region meant heavy investment in naval dockyard that allowed for routine and emergency ship repairs and ancillary buildings to service the fleet around the globe.

Fundamental to the Royal Navy's dockyard development was the inclusion of naval hospitals, as to not be reliant on local agents and rented sick quarters. Without naval-run hospitals in its North American colonies, sailors lay open to dangers of an unregulated medical staff, unclean and overcrowded buildings and substandard medical supplies. By creating hospital facilities within or adjacent to naval bases meant that Royal Navy officials could oversee the treatment and rehabilitation of sailors, while also controlling desertion rates.

This paper sets out to explore the role of hospitals in West Indies naval bases from 1740 to 1820. The intricate system of transporting supplies from Britain, purchasing necessities from local individuals, carrying medical practitioners across the Atlantic Ocean and hiring local men and women to administer care demonstrates how the

Royal Navy remained mindful of the value of healthy British sailors. Not only will this paper discuss the hospitals themselves in detail, it will delve deeply into the movement of supplies from Britain that brought vital medications and necessities to those on the hospitals' sick lists. Finally, it will examine how the hospitals' proximity to the naval dockyards influenced the level of care received by seamen on the West Indies stations and how the model of purpose-built hospitals was replicated along the Atlantic seaboard to maintain naval operations.

### **The Port Royal Heritage Project Jonathan Greenland**

Port Royal is a city rich in history, artefacts and memories. From the age of pirates to the richest city in the Western Hemisphere, through a catastrophic earthquake in 1692 that swallowed up a large section of the city, to becoming Britain's main naval base in the Caribbean for hundreds of years, Port Royal has immense heritage interest and potential for historical interpretation. There are numerous historic structures throughout the town and we have approximately 2,500 artefacts in the National Collection that have been brought up from the sunken city. It is a fascinating living museum as well as a proud fishing community with a wealth of memories and family histories. All of this deep history has never been properly interpreted and exhibited in museum form. Currently National Museum Jamaica has a small exhibition in our museum in Fort Charles.

National Museum Jamaica, in collaboration with the Jamaica National Heritage Trust, The Port Authority of Jamaica and other stakeholders, is embarking on an ambitious project to properly interpret the historic city to our many audiences, local and international. This will include a new museum in the Old Naval Hospital, a remodified Fort Charles, an archaeological museum on the old Lime Street and also a state-of-the-art C.G.I. exhibition of the sunken city. We are also training young Port Royalists in giving town and community tours.

This paper will explore these developments and also some of the many strategies and technologies we will use in order to properly interpret the city and its community for our many audiences. We will also discuss some of the dangers inherent in such a project. In the near future cruise ships will be returning to Kingston Harbour with the intention of passengers disembarking in Port Royal. It is recognised that large numbers of visitors will soon be coming to Port Royal and its historic area, often all at the same time. This has added extra impetus and resources to this long overdue project.