

Celia Clark



Conservationist, writer and academic, I grew up in a military family - based in Kuala Lumpur, Egypt, Berlin and Aden. I married a Portsmouth historic buildings architect who was responsible for the conservation of Southsea Castle and conversion of Clarence Barracks into the city museum. Living in Portsmouth since 1970 sparked my interest in finding positive futures for historic buildings. In response to the 'comprehensive redevelopment' clearances of much of the centre of the city I was a founder member the Portsmouth Society in 1973. We saved several buildings from demolition to sustainable new life, including the Theatre Royal, St. Jude's Church, the Palace Cinema and Rivers Street Hall Somerstown – which won the 1977 SAVE Britain's Heritage award. The Civic Trust (forerunner of Civic Voice) nominated me to the board of the Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust set up in 1975, which worked with the Society and a local secondary school to save and convert St. Mary's House, the Portsea Island Union Workhouse to house people off the council housing waiting list. The Society celebrated its achievements in *Maritime City Portsmouth 1945-2005* (Sutton Publishing 2005). As Education Officer of the Civic Trust from 1989-1991 my interest in school buildings developed in a local history diploma resulted in a report for SAVE Britain's Heritage: *Beacons of Learning; Breathing New Life into Urban Schools* (1995). My interest in oral history led to the recordings made in the 1980s of Portsmouth dockyard workers' experiences, including women who worked in the naval base in WW1. My MSc dissertation was about the transition of historic dockyard buildings from defence to civilian purposes in Portsmouth, Plymouth, Chatham - and Venice Arsenal. My study of European dockyards was published by the University of the West of England in 2000. My PhD thesis focused on the extent to which local and conservation interests are able to influence and benefit from the new land uses planned for ex-defence sites, reflected in the book I edited with Samer Bagaeen: *Sustainable Regeneration of Former Military Sites* (Routledge 2026) and in *Barracks, Forts and Ramparts. Regeneration Challenges for Portsmouth Harbour's Defence Heritage* (Tricorn Books 2020), as well as many articles and conference papers. The Naval Dockyards Society's focus is rightly international. I played an active part in EU defence heritage projects in Sweden, China and Greece. I continue to record contemporary history and to make the case for reuse and retrofit of standing buildings to the target of net carbon zero. Nearly 40% of global carbon emissions come from the built environment, with new construction responsible for about a quarter of that. Emissions from construction and the use of buildings are now a "bigger existential threat than nuclear war, just a lot less obvious or immediate." Every year 50,000 buildings in the UK are demolished and in 2022 222m tonnes of waste were produced, of which 138m tonnes, or 62% was construction, demolition and excavation waste. There is widespread agreement that this disposable culture needs to be swiftly addressed – and members of Civic Voice, the representative body of civic societies – I am a member of its expert advisory panel – play an active part in this vital process