

**“What does one do with a historic dockyard?”
Defence heritage sites repurposed as exemplars of regeneration**

Celia Clark PhD



Portsmouth Harbour

Shaun Roster

Abstract

Portsmouth Harbour on England’s south coast has one of the densest concentrations of specialised defence establishments in the UK. Its extensive area, narrow entrance from Spithead within the shelter of the Isle of Wight and proximity to our rivals on the high seas made it ideal for development as one of the country’s most important naval ports. For many centuries fleets and armies sailed from the county’s premier dockyard to fight in turn the French, Spanish, Dutch, Americans, Germans and Russians, to defend the UK’s interests and to supply and garrison the global British empire.

Around the harbour a complex system of military, naval and air force support facilities to the dockyard developed: gunwharf, victualling and ordnance yards, hospitals, barracks and airfields. These were defended by successive

rings of fortifications. In the nineteenth century the government feared the threat of a French invasion, with the dockyard as a particular target, so the ‘ring fortress’ of twelve land and sea forts was constructed. Until after WWII many local defence installations were guarded by a substantial army presence. During wars, for every uniformed person in action, there were thousands of men and women and a substantial portion of the nation’s material and financial resources committed to supply and equip them. Barracks were constructed to house these soldiers and marines – and later, sailors too.

Communities around Portsmouth Harbour have a strong sense of identity – particularly identification with the country’s defence and the armed forces. We are witnesses to national events, and to the harbour’s national role. Portsmouth Naval Base continues in its premier role in the country’s defence. In WWII twenty-five thousand people worked in Portsmouth Dockyard, but from 1960 this number was reduced, and a steeper decline set in in 1981, when Minister John Nott MP downgraded Portsmouth Royal Dockyard into a Fleet Maintenance and Repair Base. In recent years many of the harbour’s support facilities have become redundant and available for adaptive reuse. Crucial to future use are the terms on which defence sites disposed of. The UK’s Treasury-led system prioritises sale to the highest bidder, with financial returns accruing to central government – which results in high return end uses such as high-end housing and retail.

Understanding each site’s history and how it came to be how it is now is an essential stage in determining appropriate futures for it. Our book does not offer detailed histories, but short accounts of these diverse places and how they came to be preserved and new uses found for them. We celebrate the extraordinary creativity that is giving them new and diverse life – as they continue to evolve. Challenges to beneficial reuse include longterm rundown, poorly maintained historic buildings, contamination, poor transport links, loss of skilled employment, failing local economies and these secret sites’ absence from local plans. Who pays to remove military contamination, for example lead bullets and other missiles left at Tipner firing range, the shore of which was used for poison gas experiments? Who cleans up the remains of shipbreaking at Pounds Yard, hydrocarbon left by military vehicles and fuel storage or ordnance materials contaminating Priddy’s Hard? Is it the Ministry of Defence or the subsequent civilian developers? Driven by the government’s housing targets – unrealisable for an offshore island – Portsmouth City Council plans to build a large number of homes on the Tipner peninsula, but reclamation of the harbour mudflats there would disturb dangerous sediments, not to mention disturbance to the important and heavily protected wildlife in the harbour.



The last steel casting Portsmouth Dockyard 1982

Celia Clark

An underlying theme of the book and this paper is who are the stakeholders? Who has the power to change these spaces into something new, to transform them into their extraordinary variety of new uses, and who benefits from the new activity? Within these dense and varied case studies contained in this small area, how much local benefit have formerly defence-dependent communities gained when they were redeveloped? What happens to the workforce? Closure leads to loss of jobs and income and contraction of the local economy, often long dominated by government policy. Renewal strategies need to involve them, but how are new jobs to be created to re-employ them? How do planners consult local people? Positive and sustainable reuse requires creative vision, proactive planning authorities and local communities and substantial financial investment. New long lasting economic, social and cultural benefit to meet the needs of ex-defence communities can be measured by the creation of new skilled employment, adaptive reuse of surviving structures and the building of new facilities to provide housing, education, employment, offer new public open space and the development of new economic and social activities.

Within the dense and varied case studies contained in this small area, how much local benefit have formerly defence-dependent communities gained when they were redeveloped? Much depends on developers and designers' creativity but the private sector cannot do everything. Public investment is required, especially for renewal of services and infrastructure. How is the transformation

to civilian life funded? Can we learn from accumulated experience, rather than each site remaining only a one-off?

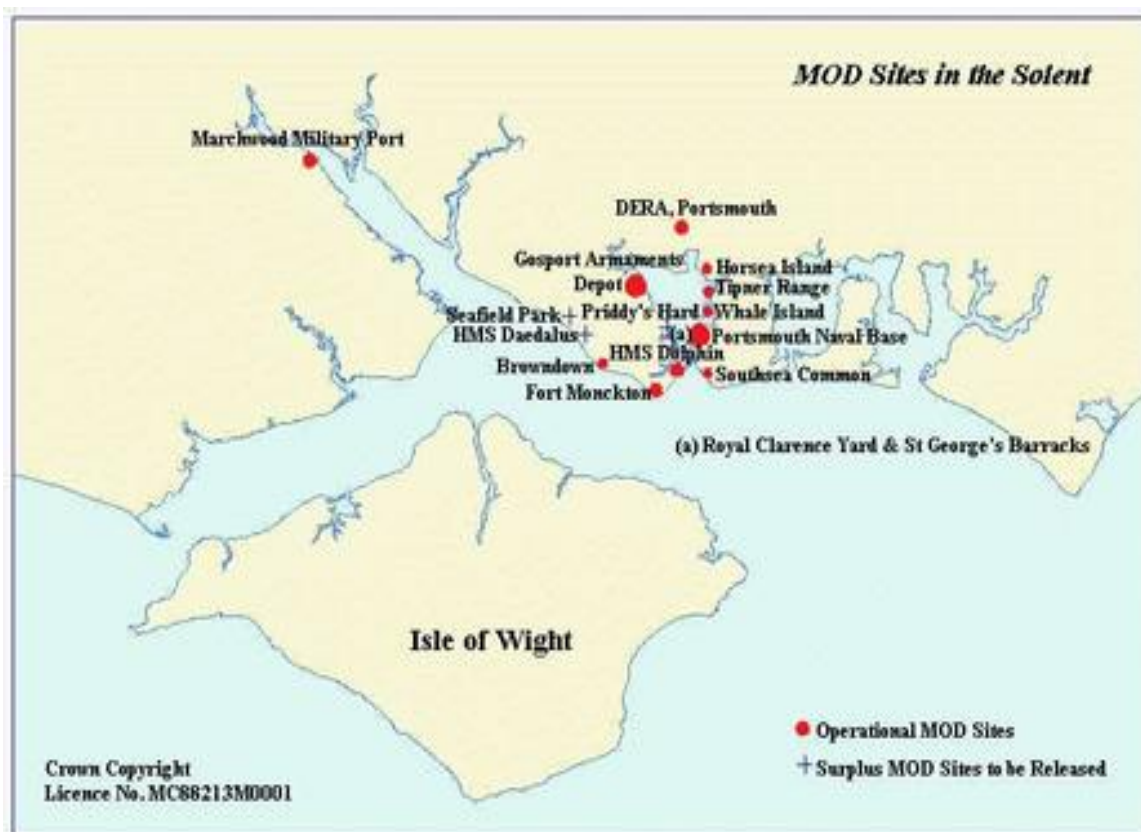
Introduction

We focus on the experience of reuse of defence sites around Portsmouth Harbour - for the excellent reason that most of the challenges to the restoration, adaptation and reuse of our rich historic defence legacy are demonstrated within this one small area. As it's publicly owned land, there's a public expectation that there will be public benefit when it's disposed of, but how is the public interest defined? Is the benefit national: money from its sale added to the national exchequer - or local gains? Who are the successor owners: commercial, non-profit or local authorities? We examine the conflicts that arise in the transformation process, what the actors' motivations are and whose view of these special sites' future prevails - because most of the challenges to the reuse of our rich historic defence legacy are demonstrated within this one small area. Together they offer a microcosm an outstanding exemplar of how similar sites around the world can successfully be brought back to new sustainable civilian life.

As the wheel of time turns, it takes with it the living memory of how these extraordinary transformations from military to civilian life were achieved. As participants and observers living within this military framework to our lives for fifty years, Celia Clark and Martin Marks decided to document the complex transition these physical survivors of the harbour's rich military and naval past are experiencing as they move on to new, civilian futures. We drew on first-hand accounts by people who played key parts in the process, offering a snapshot of what has been achieved by the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century in our book *Barracks, Forts and Ramparts: Regeneration Challenges for Portsmouth Harbour's Defence Heritage* (Tricorn Books 2020). We focussed on more recent events - apart from the late nineteenth century releases of defence land, focusing on detailed accounts of changing use from the mid-twentieth century onwards. Detailed chapters explore reuse in housing, education and research, industry, museums and open space. Of course it's a challenge to document a moving picture. This new updated account includes events that have happened since the book was published. In such a broad canvas and long sweep of time there will be omissions and mistakes – which we fully acknowledge and are happy to have supplemented and corrected. We are grateful for permission to use the many illustrations from various sources, which are acknowledged. Other photographs are by the authors.

In a rapidly changing world of killer robots and ‘intelligent’ drones – both in the air and underwater - when the armed forces’ energy footprint is unquantified but must be significant, the likelihood that many more historically significant defence properties will no longer be needed to defend the country continues to increase. If reused, their embodied carbon will not be wasted. Repurposing them creatively is a significant strand in the NDS’s activity. Further land releases are proposed by the Ministry of Defence to reduce defence costs and to provide sites for new housing. NDS member Paul Brown’s key additions about repairs to major buildings in the naval base are now included, while important issues are added: especially rising sea levels, which crucially affect future land uses, and new government initiatives about the value of built heritage.

Defence land releases



MOD Sites in the Solent

Why and how were these establishments, so often important in national history, declared redundant and no longer needed? This significant land-use change is also occurring in many other parts of the world in response to geopolitical and economic change, defence cuts or expansions in military spending and to developments in military technology. More and more military land and facilities are becoming surplus to countries’ defence. In the UK and in many other

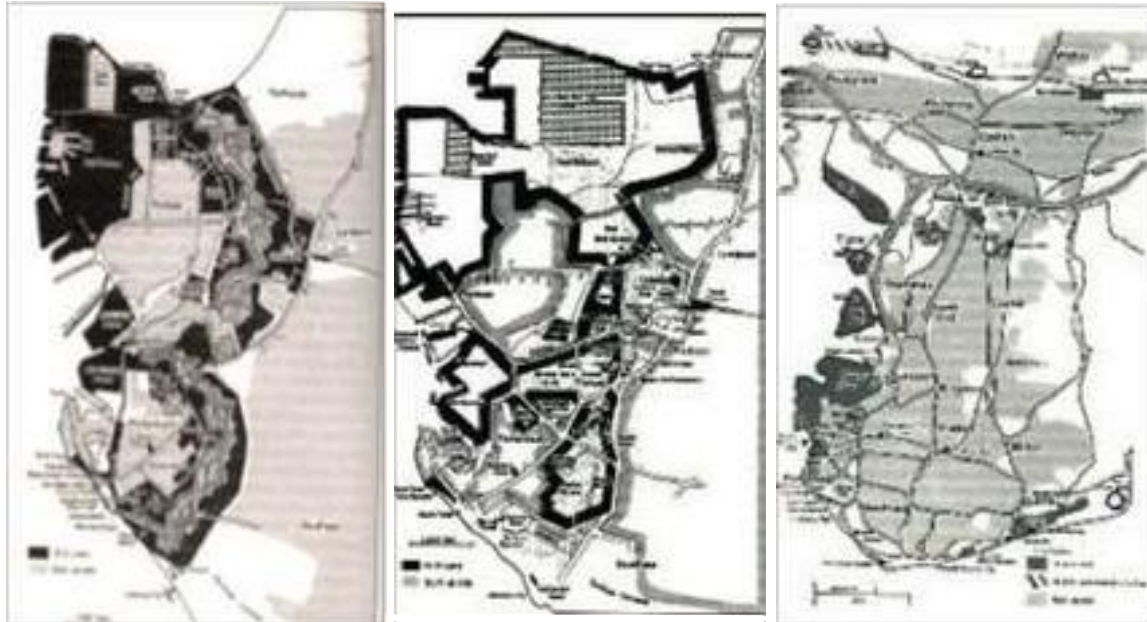
countries, redundant ex-defence land release has gradually accelerated. Since 1979 the UK government has sold some two million hectares of defence, health and transport land to private owners – or about 10 per cent of the entire British land mass.¹ Defence land is released for defence-related or for civilian reuse.

The UK's current system for the disposal of surplus state property is set out in the Treasury's 1996 rules: sale at maximum value within three years of closure. Government departments disposing of historic areas are recommended to take into account that maximisation of receipts should not be the over-riding aim in cases involving the disposal of historic buildings. Sites should be considered as a whole to preserve settings, using other methods than sale on the open market or competitive tender where these will increase the chances of securing appropriate ownership and use. Early consultation with all interested parties to help to overcome any difficult or controversial issues is recommended. Clearly, from our local experience, this does not always happen.

In his essay in *The Geography of Defence* Professor Ray Riley documented this process on the Portsmouth side of the harbour via maps of 1840, 1910 and 1986. The importance of this seminal book, the first to examine how national defence shapes land use was reflected in its republication in 2016.² The redundancy of former defence sites and their redevelopment which is taking place in many countries is as yet under-researched. Different countries have contrasting systems of disposing of redundant government land – from free transfer to meet community needs (the United States) to sale to the highest bidder (the UK and Germany). These differences influence how the land is subsequently used. Celia Clark and Samer Bagaen's book *Sustainable Regeneration of Former Military Sites*, published by Routledge in 2016 was the first to explore the complexity of this transition in different countries. Its case studies identify some of the factors that contribute to sustainable regeneration of these very special places. Celia Clark's NDS paper *Doing things differently: how do countries dispose of their surplus defence land? Do these differences offer losses or gains to ex-defence communities and sustainable reuse of historic structures?* in NDS Transactions 18 explored this topic in more detail. In planning civilian futures for a significant subset, defence land, especially when it contains physical heritage, there are considerable challenges to reusing it. As yet there is little specific research into the conversion of airfields, depots, barracks, dockyards, training grounds and fortifications into civilian uses in the UK, which leaves significant gaps in our knowledge about the effect of base closures and the prospects for civilian uses.

Locally, sites become surplus for several reasons. Defence cuts coinciding with rising defence costs, reductions in the size of the navy³ and privatisation of public services including management of the dockyard and the MOD's research

arm QinetiQ have all contributed to the redundancy of former specialised supply facilities.



Military land use in Portsmouth 1910 and 1986 and Portsea 1860

The Geography of Defence, Routledge, 2015, p. 56

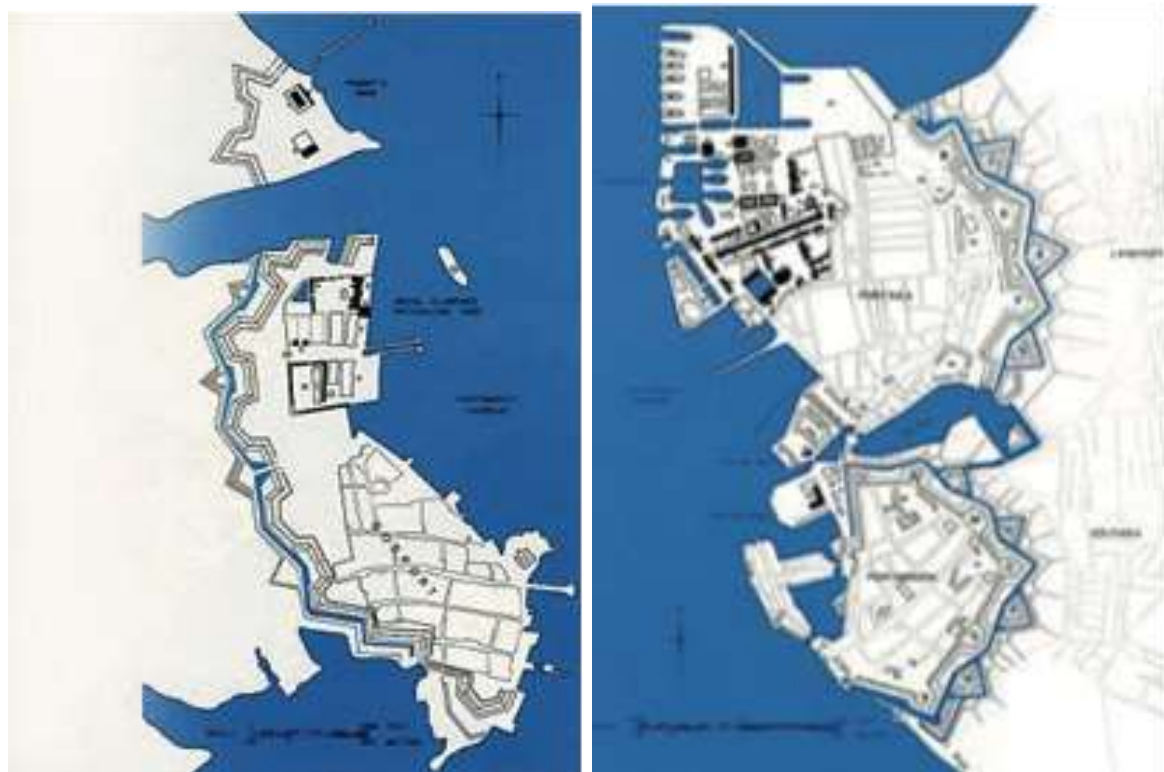
Cartographers Portsmouth Polytechnic

In *War and the City* Professor Greg Ashworth – also originally a Portsmouth geographer – identified two possible routes for historic defence structures: Demolition or Preservation, leading to Reconstruction or Conservation of Defence Heritage.⁴ Critical to reuse is the properties' state of maintenance. Until 2006 in the UK, the Ministry of Defence was exempt from civilian regulations requiring owners of historic property to keep it in good repair and usable condition: the 'Crown Exemption'. Even since its abolition the MOD does not necessarily maintain historic structures it has no operational use for. Another factor is that sustaining the complex infrastructure of historic defence sites for civilian futures requires careful longterm provision once this is no longer the responsibility of the defence budget. To take just naval sites, maintenance of dock walls, culverts, basins, caissons, cranes and other infrastructure was previously separately funded, via a sinking fund - which service charges to the new occupiers would not cover.

NDS member Paul Brown's sustained Freedom of Information scrutiny of the condition of key structures in the naval base has yielded welcome news of the MOD's investment in restoration and repair of the dockyard's key defence heritage, and in some cases, its reuse for different functions – as detailed in the section below on HM Naval Base.

Research

Over the centuries the development of the dockyard and its associated establishments stimulated research and innovation into technological development in many different fields – and also into conservation of the physical legacy of this specialised past.



The Royal Dockyards, 1690-1850: Architecture and Engineering Works of the Sailing Navy J B Coad
Scholar Press/The Royal Commission on Historic Monuments (England) 1989 Historic England Archive

Jonathan Coad's magisterial books about the Royal Dockyards are essential sources for their history and development over time – and his scholarly text is matched by the skill of cartographers in maps which document the extent of the UK's defences, including those defending Portsmouth harbour, adding immeasurably to our knowledge and understanding of this complex physical legacy.⁵ Most of the ramparts shown in Portsmouth – on the right – have disappeared, except for a short seaward stretch in Old Portsmouth, while the southernmost Bastion No.1, the ramparts around Royal Clarence Yard and those at Priddy's Hard to the north of Forton Creek survive in Gosport on the left.

Examples of the local sites of technological advances stimulated by defence include the Royal Clarence Victualling Yard in Gosport which was one of the first places to mass-produce food on an industrial scale. It supplied the navy with fresh water, salt meat, biscuits and rum. Pioneering inventions in food

production and preservation took place here in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁶ Modelling the design and performance of ship hulls on a miniature scale to test a ship's behaviour and other physical characteristics before building it is a key stage in the design process. At the invitation of Isambard Kingdom Brunel, William Froude (1810–79) pioneered the study of what is now called fluid mechanics. He devised the Froude number, by which the results of small-scale ship model tests could be used to predict the behaviour of full-sized hulls, based on a sequence of models at different scales. Behind a high red-brick wall parallel to the Royal Naval Hospital Froude's son Robert supervised the building of the testing tank. Work expanded to all types of ships and submarines under the title of the Admiralty Experiment Works. Wax models were towed through the water by an overhead carriage running on rails. Further work on fuels and oils was undertaken from 1902 as the Admiralty Liquid Fuel Experimentation Station (ALFES), soon to become the Admiralty Fuel Experimentation Station (AFES). As part of war reparations in 1947 No. 2 Cavitation Tunnel was brought by the Admiralty from Germany to Haslar. A cavitation tunnel is similar in function to a wind tunnel but water-filled. The 270m long Towing Tank is by far the largest in the UK. The whole complex, which includes Brunel's Gunboat sheds, is now owned and run by the MOD's privatised research agency, QinetiQ, which has another base on the crest of Portsdown Hill above the harbour near the site of the former Admiralty Surface Weapons Establishment (1952–97) which was demolished in 2010–11.

Developing new weapons systems continues to be significant in the harbour area, including QinetiQ's defence research into underwater warfare, while astrophysics research and many other fields continues at Portsmouth university. Medical innovation also takes place at Queen Alexandra Hospital – founded as a military hospital. Portsmouth University's Institute of Marine Sciences by Langstone Harbour researches humans' impact on marine ecosystems, how materials react to different marine environments and the effects of plastic pollution and human drugs upon marine life. Its clients include Qinetiq, the defence contractor Thales and the Research Council of Norway.

Relevant to the subject of this paper, building conservation and marine archaeology research is based at Historic England's national Centre for Archaeology at Fort Cumberland (1747–1812) at the entrance to Portsmouth's other harbour, Langstone. Historic collections are repaired or conserved, archaeological finds are researched and conservation policies are drafted there in converted military buildings, while the Centre for Marine Archaeology in a casemate in the fort researches marine archaeology and trains marine archaeologists. Respite care for military veterans is offered in another casemate – while a distillery producing Fort Rum and Gin was set up by former naval officers (<https://theportsmouthdistillery.com>).

Rising Sea Levels in the twenty-first century – a critical factor in the reuse of coastal sites



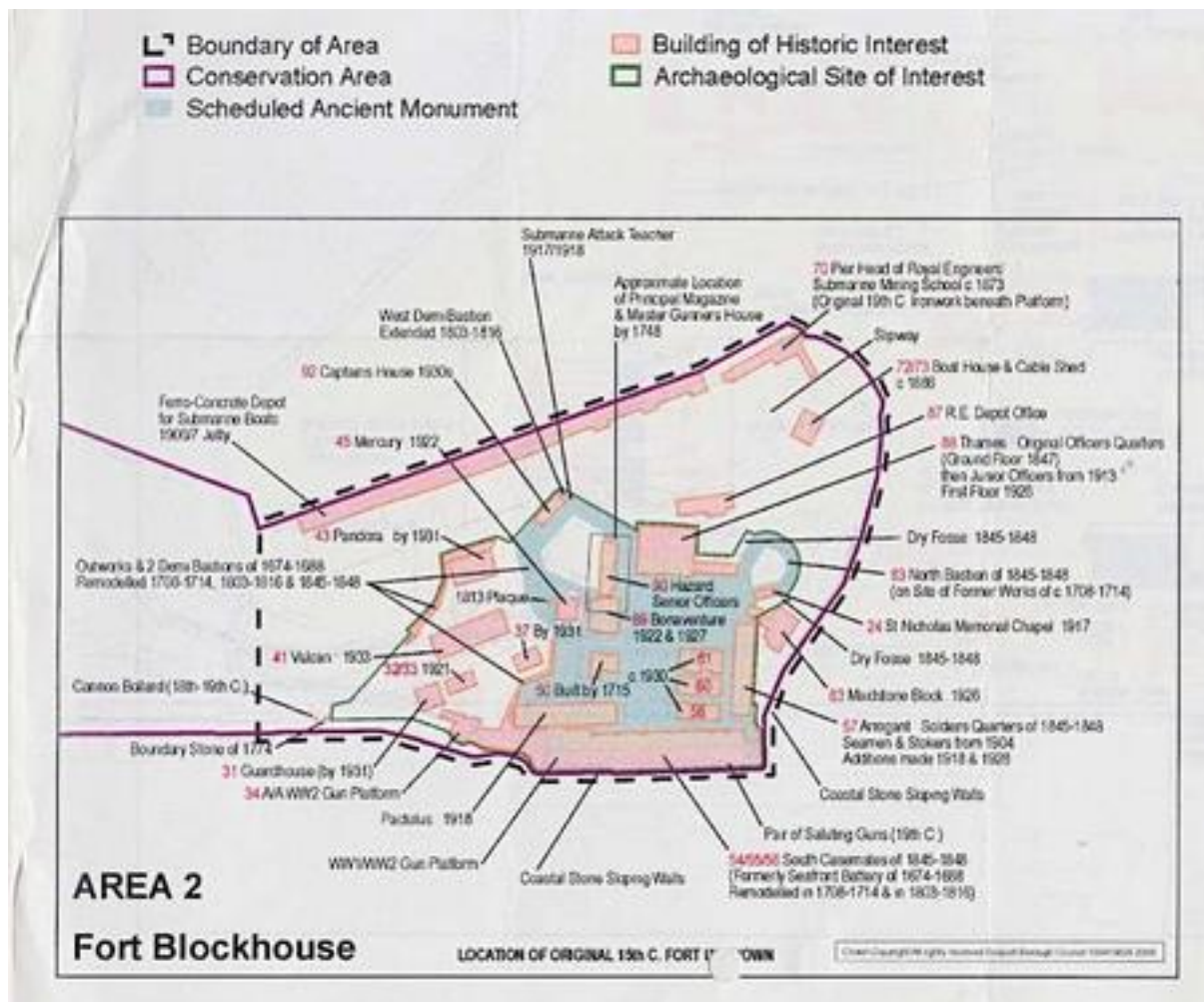
Flooding on Southsea Common by Storm Roger landward of Portsmouth War Memorial
March 2020 Celia Clark

The threat of rising sea levels to coastal communities and to local defence heritage has risen to the top of the government agenda since we put together the Portsmouth Harbour book. In 2016 the Ministry of Defence identified the top five threats to England: climate change was one of them. Climate change affects every aspect of armed forces operations. Rising temperatures are already reducing the ability of British warships and armoured vehicles to operate efficiently in increasingly harsh conditions for armed service personnel.⁹ In August 2023 the Defence Select Committee emphasised that the UK's armed forces will have to respond to the impacts of climate change, especially since the MOD produces more than half of the total of UK government's emissions. Rising sea levels are inevitably and increasingly a threat to local naval installations. What measures the Naval Base Commander has planned or has already implemented to defend the naval base with its many quaysides and two basins as well as the heritage area from rising sea levels are not known. It was only in 2023 that he commissioned a flood risk assessment for the dockyard

with its extensive dock and quaysides. Details await responses to Paul Brown's Freedom of Information request.

As the main area of Portsmouth is a coastal island and the Gosport peninsula on the other side of the harbour has an extensive coastline, the whole shore including defence heritage sites is vulnerable to sea flooding and to storm surges. The effects of climate change are expected to increase this risk further over the next century. Anticipating further sea rise is a hugely expensive task. In 2015 the existing sea defences were assessed: they were not expected to last more than 10 years in their current condition. The government acknowledged Portsmouth's unique vulnerability as a low-lying island and coastal city by financing new sea defences around the coast of Portsea Island, mainly by raised concrete walls and bunds. The first contract was for the Southsea Coastal Scheme, designed to reduce the risk of flooding to more than 10,000 homes and 700 businesses. "The policy here is 'Hold the Line' which means we need to keep the coastline in the same place" – as the on-site notice says. The Environment Agency and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is spending £160m on raising Portsmouth's seafront defences from Old Portsmouth, Southsea to Eastney to protect these areas from the sea for the next 100 years. This contract is also unique in working in an environment of historical and natural significance. The new sea defences impinge on several important local historic defence sites: including three scheduled monuments: Long Curtain Moat and Southsea Castle and 74 listed structures. Long Curtain Moat's seventeenth century seawall - broken though by a storm – was raised and encased in new concrete walls embedded with stone panels, while the triangular Spur Redoubt was extended seawards and its Marker sculpture was reinstated further out. Sea-sculpted historic limestone and granite paving which clad the sea-slopes – already reused once – has yet to be incorporated in the engineers' designs. The Naval War Memorial of 1920/4 is to be enclosed in the raised seafront road on the new seawall. In January 2025 the other monuments including the column commemorating the Crimean war and the Victory anchor were removed and stored while the raised road was built. De Gomme's late 17th century triangular ravelin which was part of Southsea Castle's defence was discovered and investigated by archaeologists. The engineers' design for the 'theatre of the sea': raised concrete steps that sweep around the castle had to be altered to incorporate and cover the redoubt, creating a new viewing platform echoing its outline, with interpretation requested by Historic England to explain its significance.⁶ Poet Laureate Simon Armitage who was taught geography by NDS founder Ray Riley composed a sonnet about the view of Spithead from the castle. It is to be inscribed on the steps in brass letters. To protect the rest of Portsea Island's shoreline a further £85.9m is being spent on raising seawalls to protect North Portsea including the historic Hilsea Lines, Eastern Road and Kendall's Wharf in 2022-4 and Eastney in 2026. This extensive engineering

project is the largest local authority-led flood defence scheme in the UK. Whether these very large government investments will keep out the rising sea is a challenge which will confront future generations.

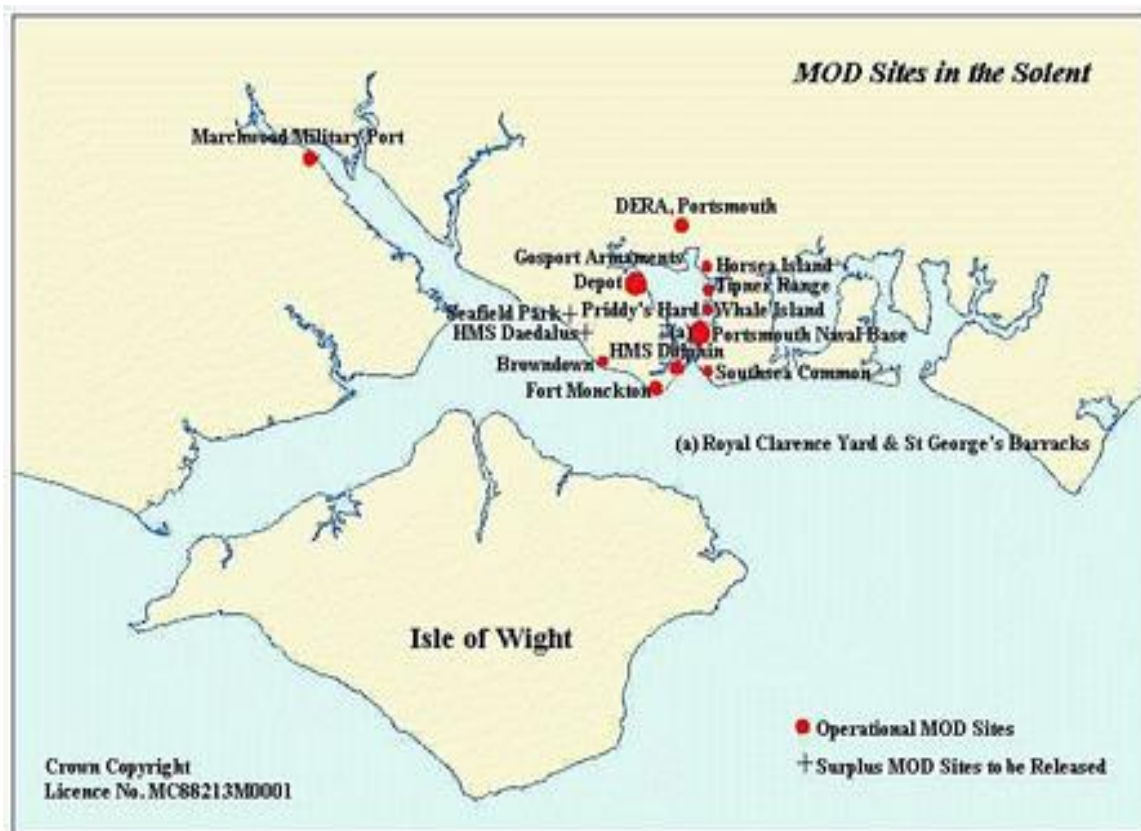


Gosport Borough Council Planning Department

Maintenance of sites still in active use but on the disposal list is crucial. In Gosport where the Ministry of Defence put Fort Blockhouse up for sale, its failure to repair a potentially disastrous breach in the seawall between Haslar Hospital and Fort Blockhouse put the whole harbour at risk. Erosion of the Hamilton Bank on the western approach to the harbour entrance is a side effect of the dredging for the two supercarriers based in Portsmouth naval base. This serious weak point in the Haslar seawall was identified by the former captain of HMS Dolphin and NDS member Chris Donnithorne. The consequent foreshore erosion and storm damage caused partial collapse of the seawall and potential undermining of the fort itself,⁴ a matter of considerable concern to the Naval Dockyards Society and to Gosport Borough Council. The Defence Infrastructure Organisation of the MOD which is responsible for defence site disposals resisted acceptance of Captain Donnithorne’s research which

identified the serious threat to the function and future of Portsmouth Harbour if ongoing deterioration of the Fort Blockhouse sea-wall was not repaired and reinforced.⁷ But as the DIO plan to market the sites on the Blockhouse peninsula, they are having to acknowledge that potential commercial developers will not respond until this ‘elephant in the room’ and the resultant negative equity are first tackled. In October 2023 the Ministry of Defence applied to undertake seawall repairs at Fort Blockhouse.⁵ Unless this work is carried out to a robust standard it’s unlikely that any developer would take on the site. The new occupants of Haslar Hospital may also have a large bill to pay to repair their section of the seawall. In 2023 the Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust offered DIO consultants help find new uses for the adjoining site. It contains the water filled Grade II Submarine Escape Training Tank where submariners were taught how to escape safely from the pressurised environment of a submarine – a local landmark. They proposed to explore how sustainable development on the surrounding land might fund the upgrading of the tower for its original use. But not only the vulnerable seawall but also the poor road access to the Gosport peninsula may deter potential investors.

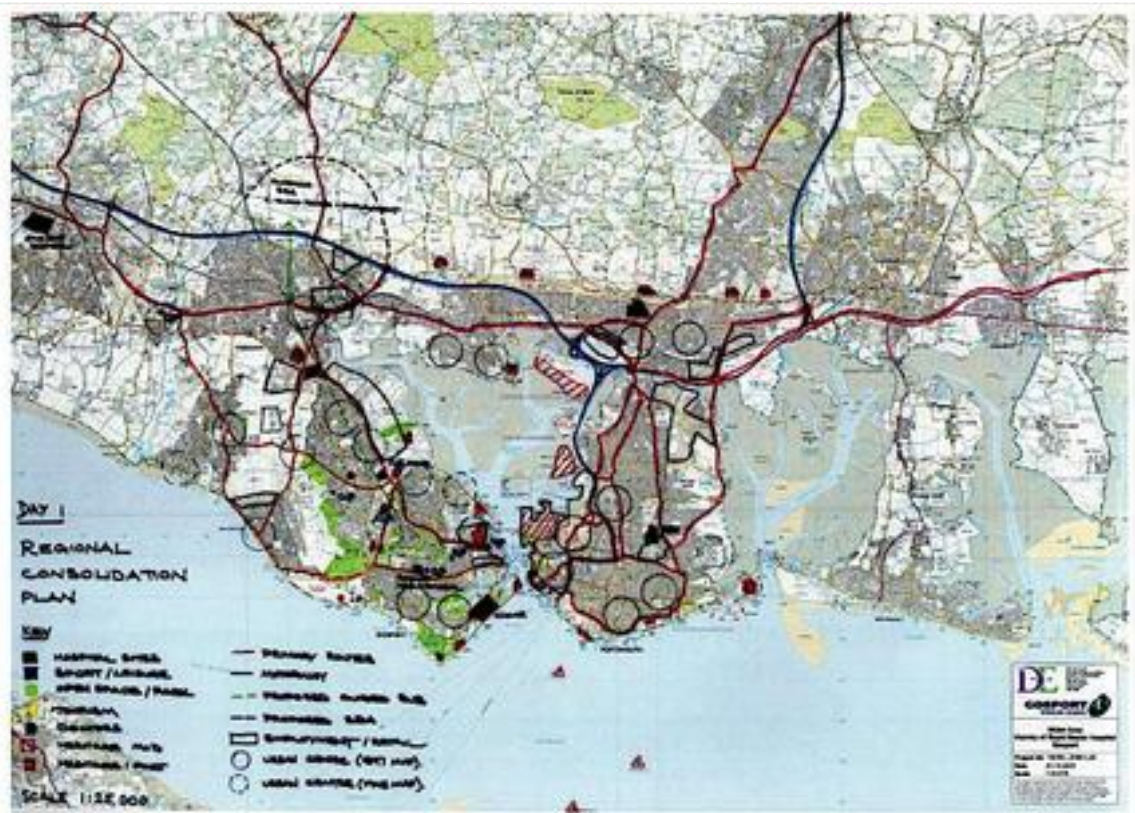
Defence land releases



MOD Sites in the Solent



Naval installations at Portsmouth Historic England Archive



Regional Consolidation Plan Prince's Trust Enquiry by Design 2008. Prince's Trust

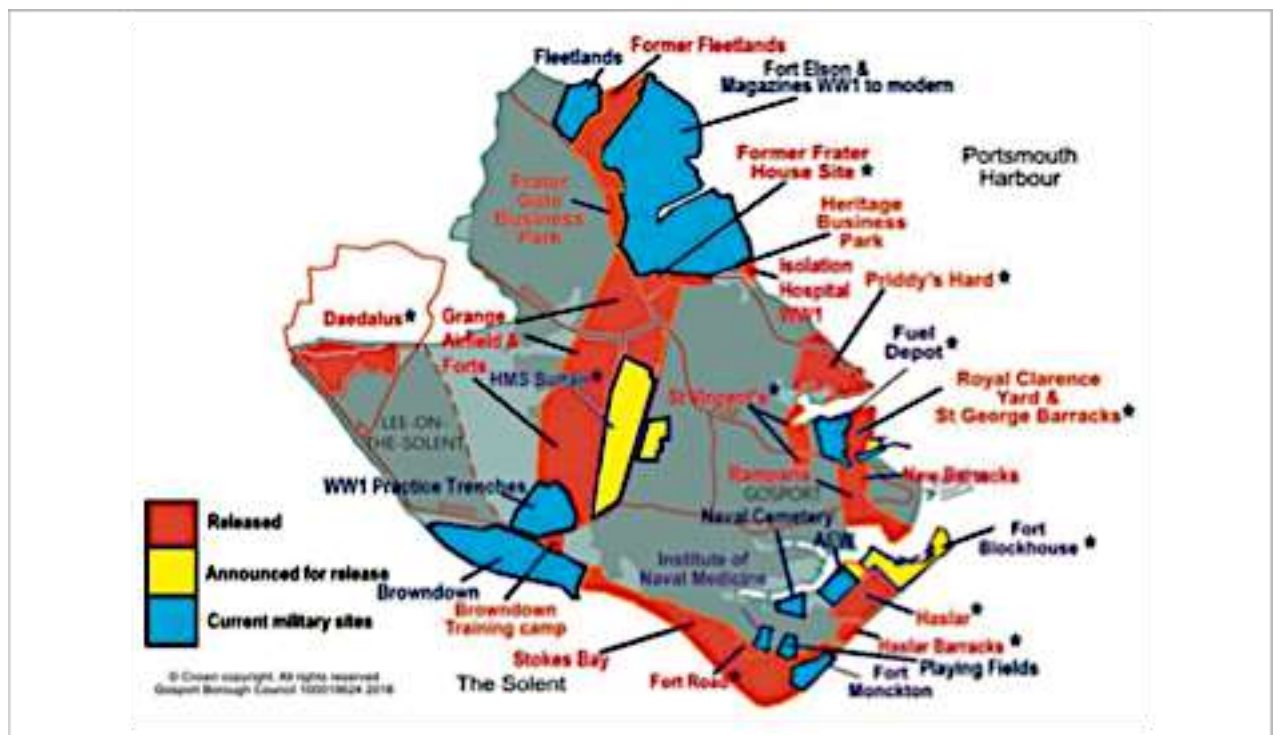
Establishing which sites are on government departments' disposal list and when they will be released for civilian development is both difficult - and often subject to changes of mind. New wars and developing military technology may rescind or delay planned disposals. This uncertainty causes difficulties for local authority planners and for defence dominated communities.

Further defence sites were said to be released, raising nearly £2bn for investment in the remaining MOD estate and to provide land for up to 55,000 new homes. In January 2016 the MOD announced that they were selling twelve military sites, including HMS *Nelson* wardroom in Queen Street Portsea Portsmouth in order to generate £500m to reinvest in defence and to provide land for fifteen thousand new homes as part of the government's initiative to build a hundred and sixty thousand new homes by 2020. This was the first part of an MOD plan to reduce the defence estate by a third. Disposal of the wardroom was later postponed... The Defence College of Logistics, Policing and Administration, formerly based at the historic Southwick House just north of Portsmouth opened in its £300m new headquarters at Worthy Down north of Winchester in May 2021, but the MOD has retained 'Southwick Park' where it was formerly based. They wanted to take the D-Day map with them - there is a Military Police Museum in Southwick which includes accounts of D-Day - but after extensive lobbying from locals the map was listed as part of Southwick House (also listed) and therefore remained in situ. Mark Thistlethwayte who owns the surrounding village and much land along the M27 has continued to ask for the estate to be offered to him as the Crichel Down rules stipulate, but so far without response. The Ministry of Justice, too, announced that they were disposing of Gosport's Haslar Barracks of 1802, last used as a detention centre for refugees, only to change their minds in 2020 as successive Home Secretaries planned to hold immigrants who arrive by small boat securely to investigate their claims for asylum.

The UK defence spending review research briefing was published in December 2024.¹⁰ The terms of reference of the Strategic Defence Review 2024-2025 were announced in summer 2024.¹¹ They included consideration of the defence estate and "how it can be modernised and streamlined to support both defence outputs and wider HMG objectives on housebuilding and net zero." To date the UK has committed £7.8bn in military support for Ukraine out of a total of £53.9bn spent on defence. However, "The Ukraine situation all disposals have been put on ice indefinitely. They talk about reconsidering their requirements in the next Defence Spending Review but this is really just avoiding giving an answer" on future disposal plans.¹²

Planning historic defence sites' future in the twenty-first century

As town and country planning is map-based, the harbour planning departments' conservation officers took the process of mapping releases of MOD land and the designation of conservation areas forward into the twenty-first century. These two maps were produced in 2017 for Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust's seminar on Futures for Defence Heritage exploring the issues that arise with planners, conservation officers, academics and community representatives. Gosport's economy and 30 per cent of its land area were until comparatively recently dominated by defence, but as the maps show, the MOD land area has gradually reduced.



Gosport Borough Council Planning Department 2017



MOD and Related Sites (including other government land releases 2017 Portsmouth City Council

Portsmouth City Council Conservation Officer’s map indicates which sites were announced for release (red), already been released (green) and retained as operational (blue).

The challenge is how to reuse the legacy of important buildings and specialised structures in a sustainable way which also brings benefit to communities which may have lost their major employer. Once released, these specialised and complex sites offer opportunities to the communities around the harbour, but challenges to their reuse include long-term rundown, poorly maintained historic buildings and infrastructure, contamination, poor transport links, loss of skilled employment and failing local economies. As secure sites, their absence from local plans and the need for new connections to the surrounding civilian infrastructure complicate their reuse. As the government has made deeper and deeper cuts to local government over the past thirty years their ability to influence new land uses via planning and building conservation has diminished. In recent years developers have been in the driving seat. Should the surviving buildings be demolished and the site reused – or should they be conserved and repurposed as standing structures? What levels of legal protection do they enjoy? Who are the parties to the process, and what relative influence do they have over the transition process and the land use outcomes? Who should pay for cleanup of military contamination? Is the new use related to a site’s history – or unrelated? Do local communities benefit from the new uses?

Heritage Protection, Losses and Uncertain Futures

Two fundamental questions are: who defines military heritage, and how is it protected from damaging change – or indeed, demolition? Historic England is the conservation agency in England and like its equivalents in Scotland and Wales it recommends to the government whether to list or schedule historic structures. Do older properties cost more to maintain than modern buildings? The American Department of Defense established that for the US DoD ‘on a per square foot basis, the costs of maintaining Historic Properties are frequently comparable to the costs of maintaining non-Historic Properties.’ It is however true that the longer a building is left unused and unmaintained, the more expensive it is to repair and convert – and, additionally, if you take into account its embodied energy, a new build consumes far more of the earth’s resources.

Our book describes the development of national built heritage conservation policy - and local responses, particularly focusing on historic defence structures. There are more recent developments in conservation policy at both national and local levels. In December 2024 the Department of Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee chaired by the MP for Gosport, Dame Caroline Dinenage launched a Public Inquiry into how to protect built heritage and prevent the loss and decline of historic buildings and other heritage sites ‘amid warnings of the serious financial and practical challenges many face.’ In making the announcement she said in the local newspaper that “the perilous state of old buildings on military property is illustrative of what can happen when historic assets on public land are subject to managed decline.”¹³ Historic England’s Heritage at Risk Register identified 4,891 historic buildings and sites at risk of neglect, decay or inappropriate change, with 155 added to the register in 2024. The heritage sector contributed £44.9bn to the UK economy in 2022, while directly employing 201,000 workers and supporting more than 500,000 jobs across the economy. Built heritage is important to economic regeneration and to communities’ sense of identity. According to heritage organisations ‘immediate and structural changes are needed ‘to protect heritage assets from being sold off or closed to the public. With funding from local councils in decline, the inquiry will look at whether current finance models are suitable and accessible. This will include examination of how funding is distributed by the biggest providers including the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic England.’ ‘Managed decline on publicly owned land’, the availability of skilled conservation workers, and the ‘policy issues arising from net zero targets and planning policy’ are amongst the practical and regulatory challenges’ the inquiry will examine.¹⁴

As heritage plays an essential role in shaping community identity, individual wellbeing and the conservation of our shared history, in November 2024

Historic England announced a five-year research project to identify ‘evidence-based insights that can support long-term, sustainable wellbeing outcomes through heritage-led interventions... and where gaps remain’ to create policies that maximise heritage’s positive impact on communities.’¹⁵

Caroline Dinenage MP lives in the Surgeon Captain’s house in Haslar Hospital. She specifically raised that ‘the perilous state of old buildings on military property’ which ‘is illustrative of what can happen when historic assets on public land are subject to managed decline.’ ‘There are around 250 buildings and sites in the Gosport constituency on the National Heritage List for England (NHLE), a register of all nationally protected historic buildings and sites in England - listed buildings, scheduled monuments, protected wrecks, registered parks and gardens, and battlefields. Meanwhile, sites like Fort Rowner, Fort Blockhouse, and Fort Grange – part of the Victorian Palmerston Forts network - sit only partially used on Ministry of Defence estate. These assets hold great economic and social potential... Fort Brockhurst, which is owned by English Heritage, is already host to a summer festival as well as events by Gosport Heritage Open Days.’ 26 luxury homes are being built at Fort Gilkicker, but the potential of Fort Blockhouse ‘which has huge potential for our community’ is held up by significant obstacles imposed on regeneration.’ Whether these include the DIO’s delayed response to repairing the seawall is not known.¹⁶

The effect of closure, especially of historic military sites, now defined as ‘defence heritage’ has been a local issue for the last forty or fifty years. The removal of the Crown Exemption from civilian legislation in 2006 in theory means that from then on, the Ministry of Defence should maintain its historic estate in good repair with regular inspections and funding, finding appropriate new uses where necessary. But this does not necessarily happen – and if a building is within an active base, the Crown Exemption from the duty of repair still applies. In 2023 in response to increased security threats in a more dangerous world where wars are raging, the decorative gates inside HM Naval Base between the Navy Pay Office and Boathouse 6 separating the heritage area from the active naval base were replaced and the periphery of the boathouse reinforced by thick rolls of barbed wire. Victory Gate’s wooden doors were taken for repair, their replacements temporarily supported by steel bars bedded in studded concrete blocks. However, as explored in the section on the dockyard, the Naval Base property team have recently had a major change of heart by investing millions of pounds in restoring long-neglected historic buildings such as the Parade and the base’s Command Centre, stimulated by the presence of private contracting firms servicing the supercarriers.



The Parade or Long Row 1718 for chief civilian officers, converted to offices in mid-1980s. Portsmouth Royal Dockyard Historical Trust

Defining the public interest in public site disposals: is it national or local?

There is an expectation that publicly owned land would be used to public and local benefit. Have military priorities excluded local people and decision makers from including them in the local plan-making process? At a tour of Royal Clarence Yard before it was redeveloped the leader of Gosport Borough said to Celia Clark that he'd lived in Gosport all his life, but he had never been onto the site before. A 2009 report by the Ministry of Defence identified a lack of community benefit from disposal of defence land, except for Julian Dobson's study 'In the Public Interest? Community Benefits from Ministry of Defence Land Disposals', commissioned in 2010 by a Portsmouth charity, the Bill Sargent Trust.¹¹ He found 'a lack of overarching academic research and little to suggest the issue has been high on the national policy agenda' and 'minimal interest in the issue from central government'.¹⁷ He researched how to reconcile the two seemingly irreconcilable approaches, maximum cash return to the Treasury versus local gain in jobs, new facilities, open space, housing. He identified a perennial tension between short-term budgetary exigencies of the public bodies selling land and the long-term needs of the local community. Community benefits tend not to correlate with sale price or 'value for money'. In his chapter in our 2016 book, Dobson added that choices have to be between the desire to maximise capital receipts from public land disposal and using it for social benefit. It was not surprising that benefit to local communities

was ignored by the Ministry of Defence in favour of maximum financial return to the defence budget.¹⁷ Treasury guidance on asset ownership issued in 2008 defines value for money as ‘optimising net social costs and benefits... based on the interests of society as a whole.’ But of course, it is one thing to articulate a definition of value designed to encourage creative and long-term thinking about the future of land and property assets, and another to put this into practice ‘in the hurly-burly of negotiations with developers, target-setting by central government and continuing cuts in public finances.’¹⁸

The rationale had been increased efficiency of resource exploitation - but evidently this has not necessarily been the result, if the scandalous selloff of service family housing to Annington Homes in 1996 for £1,662bn in 1996 is anything to go by. Brett Christophers’ 2018 book, *The New Enclosure: The Appropriation of Public Land in Neoliberal Britain*, sets out in detail this and other massively poor returns on government land disposals.¹⁹ Most MOD properties were leased back on 200-year underleases, leaving the Ministry responsible for maintaining and upgrading them, costing at least £2bn more than Annington paid for them, a terrible deal for the state and for the taxpayer. This selloff affected large areas of local service housing in Rowner, Hilsea, Farlington and Eastney. The local newspaper reports that sailors’ families are living in damp, mouldy homes. Christophers says that there have been no in-depth examinations of what public land disposal in Britain has meant specifically for those living in the vicinity of disposal sites. Twenty-eight years later - in December 2024 - Annington agreed to surrender its 999-year lease on service homes including those in Portsmouth and Gosport for £5.99bn.²⁰

How are local people consulted? Who takes part in planning new futures for these sites? Who benefits from the new land uses?

25,000 people worked in Portsmouth dockyard in WW11, but from 1960 this number was reduced, and a steeper decline set in in 1981, when Minister John Nott downgraded Portsmouth Royal Dockyard to a Fleet Maintenance and Repair Base. Closure of defence establishments leads to loss of jobs and income and to contraction of local economies long dominated by government policy. This is particularly true of the communities around Portsmouth Harbour. Renewal strategies need to involve them. One underlying theme of the book is - who has the power to change these spaces into something new, to transform them into the extraordinary variety of new uses they have found – and who benefits from the new land uses? As the local ex-defence community has the most to gain or lose from the new civilian uses these sites are transformed into, how are they to be consulted? Renewal strategies need to involve them. Will

their views actually influence what happens? Twenty thousand Gosport people demonstrated against the closure of the Royal Naval Hospital Haslar, the largest local demonstration ever, but the hospital still closed. Public participation in planning is a long-established stage in local plan-making, but in my long experience it is often just a tick-box stage in the process with little influence on the land-use outcomes.



Sustainable Conservation Trust Heritage Open Day September 2024 at the Slaughterhouse, Royal Clarence Yard Victualling Yard Gosport SCT

“The importance of local community participation in historic building conservation has not been fully adopted by policymakers.”²¹ Inquiry by Design and Community Action Planning are two of the ways in which people have a say in planning the future of ex-defence sites, sometimes led or paid for by the MOD, local authority, developer or local authority. Community Action Planning was twice used to explore the future of Royal Clarence Victualling Yard with the local community.²³ Open days at the Slaughterhouse²² and the Rum Store in 2024 were held to gather local responses to future plans for them.

Much depends on developers’ and designers’ creativity, but the private sector cannot do everything. Often public investment is also required, especially for renewal of services and new infrastructure. How is the transformation to civilian life to be funded? How can the many parties to this complex process learn from accumulated experience and build on good practice, rather than the redevelopment of each site being a one-off?

Defence disposals and their regeneration are so important to the southern region that as mentioned above there have been three local seminars on the subject arranged by the Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust: in Oxford in 1996, Winchester in 2002 and Burseldon Brickworks in 2017 with the southern region

of the Royal Town Planning Institute, to examine what was happening to the many sites coming onto the disposal list and to identify good practice by the MOD, local planning authorities and developers. In 2017 the Trust gathered evidence from local authorities across the county on defence site disposals and their subsequent civilian transformations - in order to raise the issue with the Defence Select Committee and to enter into a dialogue with the MOD's Defence Infrastructure Organisation, responsible for maintenance and disposal of MOD property – but so far without response.

Economic, social and environmental interests converge in decisions about the transformation of the former defence sites around the harbour. An extraordinary range of people and groups have risen to the challenge of what to do with these specialised places and have taken action in the process, from schoolboys, specialist developers, local civic groups and Prince Charles, to charitable trusts and campaigning heritage bodies. Stephen Weeks was a sixteen-year-old boy who petitioned the Minister of Housing to stop the demolition of fifty-six listed historic buildings by Gosport Borough Council between 1947 and 1965 in order to build blocks of council flats. People who anticipated the release of local defence sites include Councillor Freddie Emery-Wallis, a far-sighted politician and leader of Hampshire County Council who initiated the exponential growth of local defence heritage tourism. Visionary architect Hedley Greentree developed the Millennium Project on both sides of the harbour. Military architecture experts Jonathan Coad, David Evans and Wayne Cocroft added immeasurably to our knowledge of these specialised places. The Palmerston Forts Society researched and restored local Victorian forts. The Portsmouth Society, a local civic group, criticised plans for a new naval headquarters on Whale Island facing the harbour as ‘an ugly great lump’ – which caused outrage in the Admiralty, but led to a complete change of design. In 1996 the Portsmouth Society arranged a public tour of HMS *Vernon* as it closed. They also campaigned for local people to have a choice of Southsea's sea-defence designs which included Long Curtain Moat, Southsea Castle, Lumps Fort and Fort Cumberland. Instead in 2023 new concrete walls were built. The Historical Divers Society, determined to celebrate achievements underwater through the centuries, developed a nationally recognised new museum in No. 2 Battery in Stokes Bay Gosport. Rob Harper, Gosport's determined conservation officer anticipated Ministry of Defence disposals and worked with their property arm, Defence Estates, later the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), to prepare agreed conservation plans for Haslar Hospital, Fort Blockhouse, Royal Clarence Victualling Yard and Haslar Barracks, in order to ensure that key structures survived their disposal and redevelopment. The Gosport Society's vision to transform a depressed and inward-looking town led to their being national pioneers in opening defence sites for Heritage Open Days. Their emphasis on history and built heritage stimulated Historic England into creating the defence-

themed Heritage Action Zone of 2019 to 2023 in partnership with the Society and Gosport Borough Council. SAVE Britain's Heritage supported the Portsmouth Society's campaign to save the dockyard's Boathouse 4, which was threatened with demolition. QinetiQ, an ex-government research agency, continues to test ship hull design research in Haslar's pioneering ship-testing tanks, but Brunel's gunboat sheds are still unrestored, inaccessible and unused, caught in a limbo between QinetiQ and the Gunboat Yard.

Volunteers are crucial to many of the museums and historic sites around the harbour, but as active participants we are aware of the occasionally fraught and sometimes dynamic interplay between the historic resource, the trustees or governing bodies and the many volunteers whose passion is the collection, services to visitors or the conservation of the collection, ship or site. While the governors or trustees hold the legal and financial responsibility, volunteers, with their investment of knowledge, expertise and time, often feel they are the spirit of the collection, ship or place. In the best-run museums and galleries both parties have clearly defined and interlocking roles and work creatively together. But this is not always the case; volunteers' roles may be downgraded or even eliminated, sometimes justified by new regulations such as health and safety rules. In our view volunteers bring museum collections and heritage sites alive, particularly in times of staff shortage, so losing them may be both to the detriment of the attraction and to the visitor experience. In the Naval Base Property Trust's 20 Year Report published in 2006 the enormous debt of gratitude owed to those who have given and continue to give their time freely in helping to achieve its ambition is spelt out. 'The value to the Trust of the professional time and skill of its volunteers cannot be overestimated'.²²

In addition to the right to comment on current planning applications, as far as more extensive local public consultations were concerned, two methods were used for local sites: Community Action Planning and Enquiry by Design. Berkeley Homes paid for two Community Planning Events run by John Thompson Architects held on the future of Royal Clarence Victualling Yard Gosport in the Slaughterhouse.²³ Local people were encouraged to paste up their local knowledge and dreams on Post-It notes – though there was no commitment to use their ideas to shape the final plan. Berkeley Homes converted the major buildings into flats and houses, adding new blocks in the same style; the cooperage houses small businesses but the ground-floor commercial enterprises have not materialised. A marina was developed on the harbour frontage. A significant gain is that there is full public access to the site.

Gosport Defence Heritage Action Zone



Gosport Heritage Action Zone: Naval and Military Features. Copyright © Historic England 2020. Contains OS data © Crown Copyright and database right 2020

As mentioned above, in 1992 Gosport was a national pioneer in opening its rich heritage of defence heritage sites for Heritage Open Days. In 2021–23 working closely with Historic England, Gosport had two Heritage Action Zones – on defence heritage and on the High Street. Historic England offered substantial repair grants such as £399,993 awarded to Hornet Services Sailing Club to repair the former police barracks at HMS *Hornet* on 14 April 2021. The Historic England Chief Executive said that ‘by investing in Gosport via the Heritage Action Zone, we are using the rich historic environment as an anchor to support the town’s regeneration to benefit the local community.’ The sites for action are identified on the map (above), and the table (on page 70) identifies the progress made. On 5 September 2023 a new conservation area ‘to trace the path of the town’s historical inland fortifications’, the Gosport Lines, to include Trinity Green and Walpole Park was announced, and a review of the Priddy’s Hard and Royal Clarence Yard Conservation Areas.²⁴ This table documents what has been achieved on Gosport’s defence sites by July 2023.

Project number and	Status	Update
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name		
		Business innovation interest from a local company. Discu
P2 Review of Ft Blockhouse assets		8 Listings and 1 scheduled monument record update.
P3 Blockhouse Masterplan	In progress	Working Team had a presentation by JLL with stage 1 res A Conceptual Masterplan is deliverable by March 2024.
		Funding secured for a feasibility report through OPE. Con
P5 Daedalus Wardroom		
	In progress	Drainage Investigation report submitted and reviewed. CA consultation to come.
P7 Regeneration of Priddy's Hard		
	In progress	Stokes Bay Conservation Area Notifications have now go process. Draft report review of Anglesey & Alverstoke an consultation to come.
P9 Conservation Management Plan RCY	In progress	Awarded to Alan Baxter Ltd with a view to commence in August 2023.
P10 Browndown Trenches	In progress	DIO agreed in principle to one interpretation board at the with University partners and Cultural Strategy.
	In progress	Incorporated in the above project. Digital interpretation of Solent project.
P12 Gosport Diving Museum		The Museum has received funding from Historic England
P13 Haslar Barracks site	Cannot commence	Site has been transferred to Home Office in preparation of Centre again. No new use can be achieved during the life
P14 Area W of Fort Brockhurst		Discussions with English Heritage have begun.
		Walk through and discussion has taken place. Community
P16 Daedalus Seaplane		Daedalus Development Company have submitted their pla

Square		
P17 St George Barracks (Pavilions)	Complete	Community has completed restoration of the Grade II listed
P18 Publication	Complete	Published in January 2023 and now available for purchase
P19 Education & Apprenticeships	In progress	Opportunities with Fareham College have emerged. We are establishing links with St Vincent's College
P20 Heritage events	In progress	This will make up part of the Council's Programme of Events for summer. Sunset Festival will have a Heritage Action Zone
P21 Haslar Guardhouses (Hornet)	In progress	Police Barracks has been removed from the At Risk register

New owners – public and private

Even within a comparatively small compass around Portsmouth Harbour, the new uses include schools, university facilities, hotel, student hostel, industrial and residential estates, museums, art gallery, arts cinema and multi-purpose auditorium, artists' studios, film locations, shopping centre, squash court, leisure facilities, traditional boat-building and restoration training, yacht marina, conservation laboratory, archaeology and marine research centre, riding stables, luxury hotels, rifle range, veterans' centre, distillery, band practice room, boxing gym, ship recycling yard, squash courts, storage for historic military vehicles and hovercraft, nature trails, open air arena, climbing wall, fitness trail, rose garden, public open space . . . and this conversion process is still ongoing. Some sites have found successive new uses.

Portsmouth Harbour offers examples of institutional experiment by the government in the transfer to subsequent owners – but, significantly, in these cases, without the necessary 'dowry' to tackle the cost of decontamination, or the backlog of repair of the buildings and infrastructure and to finance adaptive reuse. Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust took on the most historic area of the dockyard without sufficient funding; Priddy's Hard was transferred free to Gosport Borough Council, but without the necessary dowry or funding to tackle the backlog of repair and conversion of the buildings.

In 1983 following the precedent in Chatham dockyard, the Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust (PNBPT) was set up to take on the waterfront area inside the Victory Gate. This was designated the dockyard Heritage Area, a small part

of the wider still active naval base. It included significant historic buildings with unfulfilled repairs and maintenance. The new trust rejected the government's initial endowment offer of £1.5m merely to make them wind- and weathertight. A professional survey estimated that £12.5m was needed to put the buildings into a proper state of repair – but in the event PNBPT accepted £6.4m, plus half a million to build a fence separating it from active naval operations with the associated police posts. The trust was granted a ninety-nine-year lease by the MOD, under which it offers leases to its tenants, the Royal Naval Museum (now the National Museum of the Royal Navy), the four preserved ships: the *Mary Rose*, HMS *Victory*, HMS *Warrior 1870* and *M33*, all of which have their own trusts. The pressure to operate commercially caused by the MOD's inadequate dowry led to large rent increases over the years which were fiercely resented. The NMRN is the only national museum to pay rent for what is still a government building.

In 1993-4 Boathouse 7 raised on timber piles over the Mast Pond was restored and converted by the city conservation officer as a restaurant, Nauticalia shop, the Dockyard Apprentice exhibiton by the Portsmouth Harbour Historical Trust of former dockyard workers and a play area for children, winning the Portsmouth Society Best Restoration award in 1995. The clocktower, cupola and war-damaged northern wing of No 10 Storehouse of 1776 were restored by the same architect, winning the trust the Europa Nostra prize. When the historic area was divided off from the active dockyard Boathouse 4 of 1939-40 was due to be replaced by a commercial building. The Portsmouth Society supported by SAVE Britain's Heritage applied to list it. This was refused, but the Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust found it too useful to demolish it. Its renovation by architect Michal Cohen was supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the EU Regional Growth Fund. It was repurposed as a Heritage Skills and Boatbuilding Centre; a mezzanine was added to display the small boat collection and a harbour view restaurant added above lecture rooms and workshops.

In 1994 Gosport Borough Council was 'gifted' the twenty-three acres of highly contaminated and heritage-laden site of Priddy's Hard and the Naval Ordnance Museum Collection – but without a dowry to pay for the high costs associated with regenerating such a complex and historically important property. English Heritage noted that: 'The defences of Priddy's Hard, along with the adjacent length of fortifications behind Royal Clarence Yard, are the best surviving lengths of 18th century fortifications around Portsmouth Harbour . . . Whilst only the core buildings and earthworks are protected by listing and scheduling, the whole complex can be considered to be of national importance.'¹⁶ Berkeley's redevelopment of Royal Clarence Victualling Yard was conservation-led because Gosport's conservation officer had initiated research and archaeological

investigation used to set conservation policies in place, so that buildings were restored, reused and in one case replicated in the residential conversion – which is also open to public access. It is ‘the most completely preserved ordnance depot from the era of gunpowder to TNT.’ David Evans’ *Arming the Fleet: The Development of the Royal Ordnance Yards, 1770–1945* sets Priddy’s Hard within its historical context. In 1998 the deeply contaminated area around the Hard’s ramparts and north of Forton Lake was protected as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC): a habitat for several protected species. To offset the absence of any dowry, seven hundred new flats and houses were built inside the ramparts on the western part of the site, including a facsimile of the old Officers’ Residence, bringing a financial return to the council.

In 2009 the undeveloped remainder of Priddy’s Hard: 23-acre, containing 26 listed buildings was acquired from Gosport Borough Council by the Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust, with a view to "developing the site, refurbishing the historic buildings and bringing them into new beneficial use." It is at the northern end of the Millennium Promenade, which links together defence sites on both sides of the harbour. Since the early 1970s the massive Grand Magazine of 1771 has housed the Explosion Museum of Naval Firepower, part of the National Museum of the Royal Navy, as well as a brewery in E Magazine and waterfront café. When the Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust acquired the seaward part of the Hard from Gosport they dredged a new channel in Forton Creek and added a link span for their ferries to bring tourists to and from the Historic Dockyard. In 2000 the Millennium footbridge across Forton Creek was built to help development of the site – though its opening mechanism to allow boat access to Forton Creek failed. The Camber, a small harbour, is silted up. In 2016 the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded the trust £1.9 million as part of the Heritage Enterprise programme for “projects creating new sustainable economic uses for derelict historic buildings” in order to help bring seventeen listed buildings back into use, alongside those occupied by the Explosion museum. In 2024/5 proposals for restoring the remaining historic buildings at Priddy’s Hard are being developed, which might include hotel and conference facilities, food and drink outlets, small offices and craft workshops and education or community uses. ‘Carpenters’ Yard is being transformed into a dynamic hub of creativity and culture, providing studios for artists and the development of new public space.’²⁵

In 2023 Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust was renamed Portsmouth Historic Quarter, aiming to “pull down the wall’ – for local people to see it as a destination for all, not just for tourists, in order to engage creatively with the community. Free entry was reinstated. There are plans to restore and convert Storehouse 9, while the Navy Pay Office, where John Dickens, father of Charles – who was born in Portsmouth – once worked, is licensed to the Sustainable

Conservation Trust and Ankle Deep, a creative hub linked to the university. Current challenges to care of the historic buildings in the heritage area are both rising energy costs, rising sea levels and financing repairs.²⁶

Hampshire County Council was responsible for a symbolic reuse linking a former defence building to the local community at their most intimate moments. Milldam House in Portsea is now the Portsmouth Register Office. Owned by the city of Portsmouth, deaths and births are registered there and marriages, civil partnerships and new citizenships are celebrated. It was built in 1825 as the drawing office of the Royal Engineers, who designed the docks and infrastructure of the dockyard and many other military buildings including barracks around the harbour. The porch has the Royal Engineers' monogram. Built over the milldam which once separated the towns of Portsmouth and Portsea, its foundations were severely damaged. Hampshire County Council underpinned and restored it, and created a lovely garden behind it for wedding photographs.

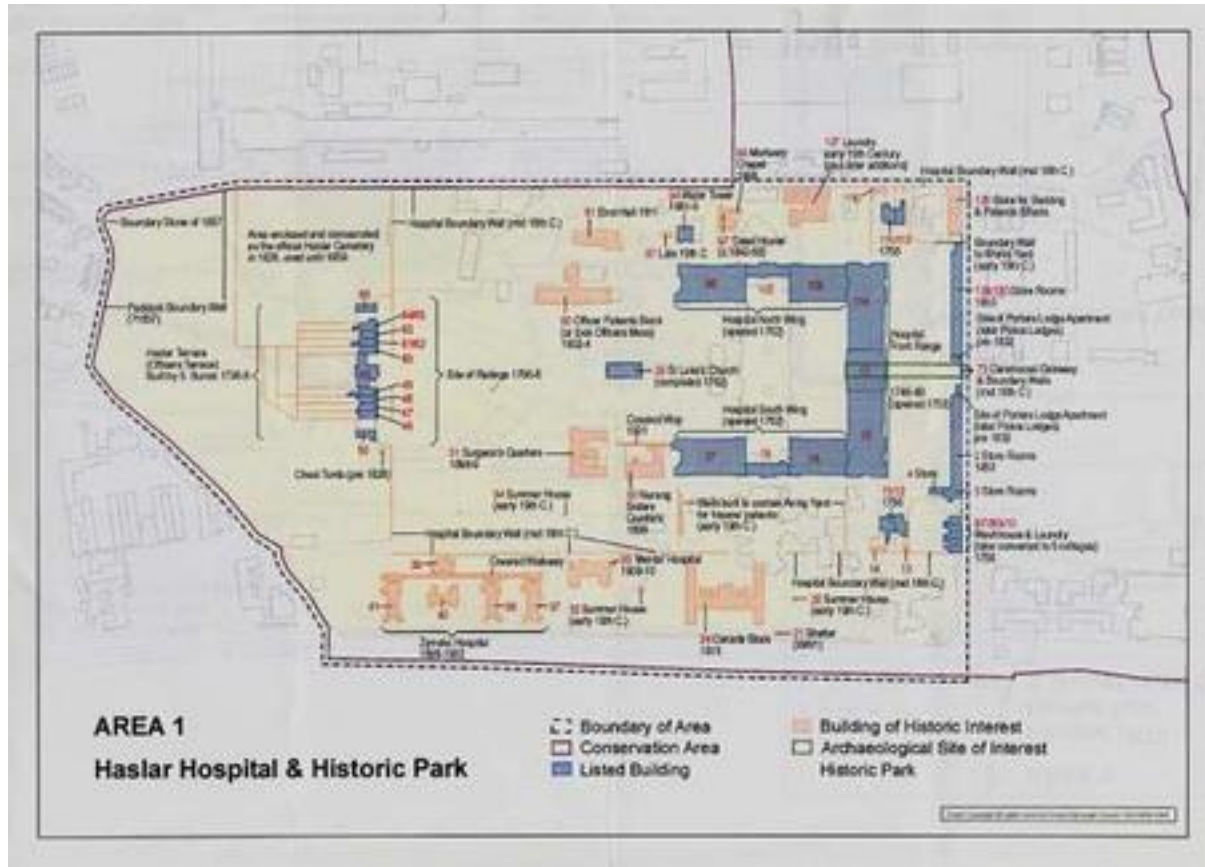
Berkeley Homes redeveloped two sites on either side of the harbour: Gunwharf between Old Portsmouth and the dockyard and Royal Clarence Yard in Gosport.



HMS Vernon/Gunwharf redeveloped. Beeston Bastion centre
Maritime City Portsmouth 1945-2005 Portsmouth Society 2005

While most of the buildings in the former HMS Vernon – renamed Gunwharf had earlier cleared, prompted by Gosport's conservation officer and opposition

provoked by the loss of many reusable buildings at Gunwharf, in contrast to what happened on the east side of the harbour, Berkeleys paid for two public workshops at Royal Clarence Yard in Gosport to ask local people what they would like to see happen to the buildings on the site. Another developer took on Haslar Hospital also in Gosport.



Gosport Borough Council Planning Department



Haslar Naval Hospital work starting on main block July 2024 Celia Clark



North wing 'Trinity House' Celia Clark



South wing converted Celia Clark 2024

The redevelopment of Haslar Hospital, designed in 1754 and once the biggest naval hospital in Europe is a quite different story. It was decommissioned in 2007. Gosport needed to replace the skilled jobs lost by its closure as well as replacement medical facilities. The public campaign against closure failed, but in November 2008 the MOD paid for the Enquiry by Design to work out its future. This was run by the Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment. Stakeholders included local community representatives, the MOD and Kit Martin, who converted the Royal Naval Hospital in Yarmouth and was also

involved in the potential development at nearby Fort Gilkicker. They worked together over three intensive days to build a masterplan for a sustainable community, focused on reuse of the many listed and other historic buildings within the hospital. Potential sites for new buildings were identified, the importance of features of the Registered Historic Landscape were considered, types of uses identified, provision made for vehicular and pedestrian access in and around the local area – all drawing on the experience and knowledge of the key stakeholders. A masterplan for mixed residential and care home space and possible affordable housing was worked out.

In summer 2009 the Veterans' Village, an inspirational vision to continue the strong historical connection and therapeutic use of the site for the armed services, was announced. It was planned in conjunction with Chelsea Hospital with City of London financial backing, and it proposed to reuse all the buildings to house Royal Navy, RAF and merchant navy veterans. The plans had taken two years to put together and had royal backing from Prince Charles and Prince William. But to the dismay and consternation of those who saw it as an entirely appropriate future for a very important site - the hospital instead was sold in late 2009 to Our Enterprise (Haslar) Ltd. for the low price of £3.5m. The new Irish owner was not party to the recommendations of the Enquiry by Design workshop, which had been supported by Gosport Borough Council and English Heritage; nor was there any commitment to implementing the Veterans' Village. The valuable officers' houses at either end of the site were sold off first, the largest one where Dame Caroline Dinenage MP for Gosport now lives. From 2014, five years after the purchase, complex planning permissions were negotiated for a £100m development of private housing, a care home, retirement homes, restaurant and hotel. But progress towards reusing the whole site with its many historic buildings has been glacially slow.

By 2022 only fifty rather than the projected fifteen hundred people were in residence. It was not until then, fifteen years after it changed hands, that flats in the converted Canada Block were marketed. Work to restore the main hospital building only began in 2023, and unlike Royal Clarence Yard there is no public access to the site. By summer 2024 only the seaward facing Haslar Terrace, Goodrich House and Canada House had been converted and sold as private flats. A huge hole once occupied by the demolished Brutalist Crosslink in the central square of the three-sided main hospital has yet to be filled with an underground carpark and landscaped - as illustrated, but not yet realised, in the sales brochure. Work began to restore and convert the seaward wing of 'Trinity House' the main hospital, to 146 one, two and three-bedroom apartments. "The enormous Georgian building now known as Trinity House has been named for Theodore Jacobsen, who was also the architect of Dublin's Trinity College. The seven-acre Quadrangle structure remains the largest listed building

at Royal Haslar and retains its palatial Georgian style, with an open colonnaded arcade at ground level and central pediment carved in Portland stone, and views over a spectacular central garden piazza.^{[1][1]}^{[1][1]} With many exquisite original architectural features having been retained, homeowners at Trinity House will be living within a piece of history, while also benefiting from an abundance of natural daylight and fresh coastal air thanks to Florence Nightingale's design principals that advocated chamfered window arches to increase light and ventilation levels... Work on communal facilities, including a lounge and library, start this August, with plans for the creation of a magnificent Romanesque-style health spa in the vaults with gym, pool, steam room and sauna, underway. Prices at Trinity House start from £220,000 and at Canada House from £265,000. All homes come with tele-support emergency call as standard with a wide range of additional services also available."²⁷ Many other historic naval buildings apart from St. Luke's Church, the sites' centrepiece looked after by Haslar Heritage with its poignant memorials to Dr. William Beatty and HM Hospital Ship Uganda still stand empty and deteriorating. This privately occupied gated community is far from the original vision of a seaside haven for naval veterans and their partners.

As indicated by the success of Gosport's Heritage Action Zones which attracted Historic England funding to restore their historic buildings, there's a continuing contrast to the weight given to conservation and reuse of buildings on the two sides of the harbour. While Gosport's conservation officer worked closely with the MOD to prepare conservation policies before defence sites such as Royal Clarence Yard, Haslar Hospital and Fort Blockhouse were sold, conservationists in Portsmouth were dismayed by demolition of HMS *Vernon's* underlying archaeology and most of the historic buildings, despite it being a conservation area, now known as Gunwharf, a mixed retail and gated residential development. The Ariadne wardroom, Donegal Lodge, gunboat sheds, Defiance, Florence Nightingale Sick Bay, and Warrior Block were just some of the buildings that disappeared; only the few listed or scheduled buildings remain. Berkeley Homes' redevelopment was based on a similar mix of uses by an associated firm in the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront in Cape Town. Portsmouth planners were more interested in the creation of a new retail/residential quarter of the city. Gunwharf was the centrepiece of the Millennium Renaissance of Portsmouth Harbour project. The tower of the Admiralty Experimental Diving Unit of 1921 had already been pulled down by the navy. The new centrepiece was to be the new Millennium Tower which opened five years late and had to be financed by the council. The 1709 seawall was encased within the enormous underground car park.



Customs House pub Gunwharf

Carl Dearing

The early 1790s office block survives as the Customs House pub and the Vulcan block, derelict for fifty years, was restored by Michael Underwood of Hedley Greentree Partnership for residential use; its north wing and clocktower were reconstructed and the Aspex Gallery was created inside the south wing. But restrictions to public access to the housing area now make the gallery hard to find. Berkeley's made so much profit at Gunwharf, for example the £6m price of the penthouse flat on the top of the 'Lipstick' tower, that under the Treasury's clawback rules they twice had to repay the Treasury some of the vast excess profit they have made, compared with the purchase price they originally paid to the MOD. Gunwharf shopping centre, cinemas and bowling centre make it a popular regional destination.



Rum Store 1758 proposed restoration and conversion 2024 Prichard Architecture

The ‘last piece of the jigsaw’ around the harbour, the southernmost part of the Royal Clarence Victualling Yard in Gosport was only recently sold by the MOD. It contains which the navy’s oil fuel jetty as well as important buildings such as Samuel Wyatt’s 1758 Rum Store and the Grade II Tank Store for the storage of water. The MOD rejected the Naval Base Property Trust’s proposal to buy it for £1 plus 50% of the development value after deduction of all costs associated with the development. The trust planned to use the cooperage for its original purpose, since there’s increased demand from the English craft industry for English oak barrels; the only operational UK cooperage was in Scotland. They proposed to demolish the remains of Queen Victoria’s Railway Station and relocate it. There was a precedent for this when her Railway Shelter in the dockyard was shifted on rollers to a new position on South Railway Jetty.

Instead, in 2019 the MOD sold the site to UK Docks based in Tyneside who plan to expand their maritime servicing and repair business on the renamed Victoria Quay. Yachts and equipment were stored between the buildings. A planning application was made to convert the Tank Store into a café.²⁶ In June 2024 architect Giles Pritchard arranged a tour for NDS and Gosport Society members to the mainly roofless huge Rum Store, to hear about ambitious plans to convert it, and in October initial £22m plans were announced to create nearly 7000 sqm of mixed-use employment space, mainly for maritime businesses such as yacht brokerage and naval architects, retail and leisure and a possible rooftop terrace bar and restaurant with views across the harbour. The second floor, demolished after World War II bomb damage would be reconstructed. Gosport council’s bid for £18m ‘Levelling up’ funds from central government included ‘support for public realm improvements along the waterfront to encourage more residents and visitors to discover the attractions and businesses, creating new physical links to help more people access the waterfront, telling the story of our heritage through wayfinding, public art’. Funding for the development would be matched by funding from site owner UK Docks. Gosport’s successful funding bid of £18m, when combined with UK Docks’ contribution to the Rum Store, represented £30m total investment in

revitalising the town's economy.²⁷ This considerable central government financial support demonstrates the vital role public investment plays in these complex revitalisations of historic defence sites.

Defence heritage tourism



Fort Cumberland Guard Re-enactment 2005

Celia Clark

After historic defence sites lose their prime warlike purpose, tourism – in complete contrast to their earlier functions – or specifically ‘defence heritage tourism’ is often seen as the most appropriate new use for them. To preserve and celebrate these complexes as symbols of a national military or naval past including specialist museums means that they can continue to embody national identity, albeit in a new economic role which may or may not celebrate their history. Internationally, tourism is now the world’s largest export as well as one of the world’s most important sources of employment – 2 per cent of total global GDP.

The concept of ‘defence heritage tourism’ was first codified in 1979 in Hampshire County Council’s report commissioned from the Dartington Amenity Research Trust entitled *An interpretive strategy for Portsmouth and the surrounding region*.²⁸ Tourism was identified as a key activity for the surviving defence heritage resources in south Hampshire: ‘For almost two thousand years, the Hampshire coast and the Isle of Wight have been a focus for invasion and defence of the Kingdom, and of counter-attack against the enemies of the realm . . . The long saga of naval and military activity in the area has left a remarkable heritage of castles, fortifications, historic ships, guns, artefacts,

documents and heroic stories . . . These relics have a power to stir the imagination of the residents of the region and of visitors from Britain and abroad. Some of the historic sites are open to the public; and the public response to them shows a continuing growth of interest in the historic heritage . . . Portsmouth City Council has sought to diversify the economy of the city to reduce its historic dependence upon the navy. At the same time, the City Council has been actively engaged in conserving the historic defence- works . . . [It] now wishes to consider how these properties, and this investment, might be put to fuller public use, in order to bring recreational and educational benefit to its own residents and visitors from further afield and to assist the economy of the city through tourism.’

In the same year Hampshire County Council published the policy document *Hampshire’s Heritage – A Policy for its Future*, which set out a policy framework for the whole county.²⁹ All the districts and the two cities of Southampton and Portsmouth adopted it. It was based on an illustrated, in-depth survey of the historic resources of the entire geographic county area, including the military legacy. With the Hampshire Treasures Survey by the parish councils it represented a ‘Domesday Survey’ of all the local features, listed or not, which local people felt were worthy of protection. ‘Together, these documents put Hampshire, its districts and cities, very much in the van of historic conservation strategy in UK and was part of the political momentum which saw Portsmouth later taking the lead in the preservation and conservation of the historic dock- yards.³⁰ The legacy of historic defence buildings is the focus of heritage tourism, a considerable sector of the local economy, whether we’re talking about the Historic Dockyard, the Submarine Museum at Haslar, Priddy’s Hard’s Explosion Museum or Southsea’s rebuilt seafront.

The Millennium walkway on the Portsmouth and Gosport shores of the harbour entrance links many former Ministry of Defence sites together. Defence heritage tourism is a huge sector of local employment. In 2015 Portsmouth welcomed 9.2m visitors to the city’s attractions. In 2014 they spent about £463.5m – an important part of the city economy. Income from overseas visits to the UK in January 2017 was valued at £2,010m; Britons exploring their own country were valued at £104.9bn in 2013. Visit England’s count of overseas day visitors in 2018 ranked Portsmouth/Southsea in position 20 for the whole country, with 95,000 trips and 46,000 holiday visitors in 2016. The prime attraction is the Historic Dockyard, the largest tourist attraction on the south coast of England. Its evolution from part of the active naval base is explored in two chapters of our book: the establishment of the Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust and the National Museum of the Royal Navy and the history of individual buildings, basins and dry docks, historic ships and boats. Portsmouth Historic Dockyard provides 2,750 full time jobs. Over 860,000 visitors to the

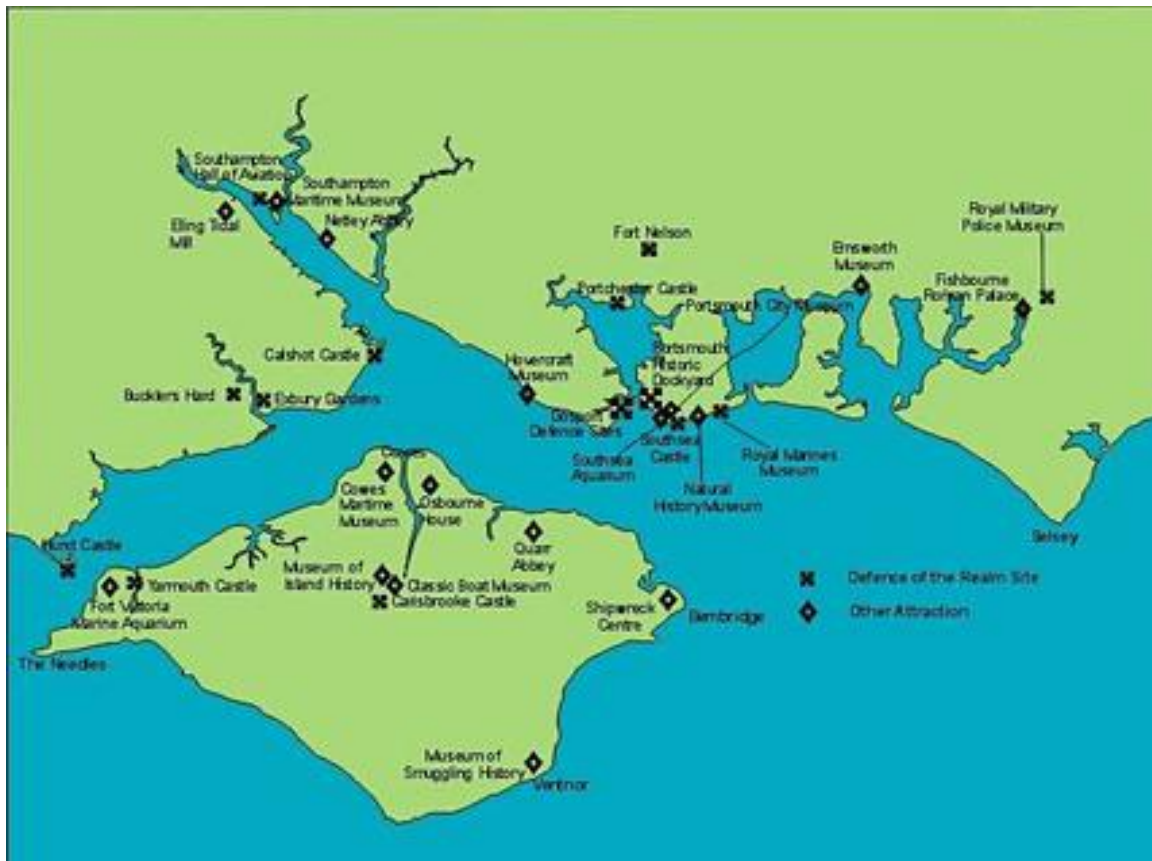
National Museum of the Royal Navy were recorded in 2014 and its ‘national reach’ was said to be over 1.2m visitors in 2020, although these figures included the other museums under its umbrella. In 2018 this rich combination attracted 950,500 visitors, contributing £110.4m to the local economy.

Inevitably the 2020–22 Covid-19 pandemic had a heavy impact on tourism. Many countries introduced travel restrictions to contain the spread of coronavirus, airlines cut staff and fleets and museums and heritage attractions closed. In June 2020 the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Hospitality and Tourism’s report ‘Pathways to Recovery’ revealed that just 11 per cent of hospitality businesses in the UK had been able to operate normally during lockdown, highlighting the scale of the damage done.

The closure in March 2020 of the Historic Dockyard and all its attractions including the National Museum of the Royal Navy in line with government advice on the epidemic was unprecedented – and the effect on the museum, historic ships and boats was incalculable as it faced its deepest financial crisis in a generation. All but three of the Historic Dockyard staff were furloughed as were those of the museum, except for those working from home and others performing essential tasks such as security checks and keeping insect infestation of the *Victory*’s timbers in check. Those still on site continued to maintain the museum’s buildings, ships and collections and the museum’s digital channels were refreshed. On 23 July 2020 the NMRN announced that the closure had crippled the museum’s revenue, effectively wiping out the entire summer season, when most of its yearly income is generated. The museum was days away from declaring itself insolvent after losing £6.35m when the Treasury approved an emergency rescue fund of £5.3m to save it from bankruptcy. It would no doubt also have taken the Portsmouth Dockyard Property Trust a long time to recover from the loss of income over a prolonged period, but by prudent planning they were better placed than many to weather the storm.³¹ In October 2020 the trust was granted £698,000 by the government from the Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage and the Heritage Stimulus Fund to upskill its volunteers and carry out essential maintenance work. The Mary Rose Trust was given £655,304. These grants highlight the financial vulnerability of the country’s heritage assets. Once funding and distancing decisions were taken, the Heritage Area reopened with online booking only on 24 August 2020. The dockyard closed again for the second lockdown in November. The Naval Base Heritage Area had to be bailed out by a large government grant. Huge rises in energy costs have also somehow to be met and the Naval Base Property Trust had to reinvent boat-building and repair in Boathouse 4 after the International College of Boatbuilding became bankrupt. Instead a Marine Academy directly linked to maritime industry was developed.

Post-Covid visitor numbers are strong. The Association of Leading Visitor Attractions 2022 figures for PNB Heritage area are 718,990, ahead of the Imperial War Museum London, the *Titanic* Belfast, Greenwich Naval College, Hampton Court, *SS Great Britain*.³² The Historic Quarter Pass to the Heritage Area is free; 70,000 people took it up. Development of a Night Time Economy is planned, extending the opening hours. As already discussed, the trust sees the Heritage Area as a destination, not just an attraction. Opening in the evening would include the restaurant in Boathouse 4. In 2024 Lloyd's Register and the Lloyds Register Foundation sponsored the SHE_SEES exhibition there to raise the profile of female shipping and maritime expertise. But what do visitors really come to see? Our rich concentration of defence heritage – or the navy's ships coming and going?

Museums



Defence museums on southern Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

The National Museum of the Royal Navy is only one of several museums in former defence buildings. Other museums and galleries in military premises include No. 4 Boathouse in the dockyard heritage area, Portsmouth City Museum, Southsea Castle, the Submarine Museum at Blockhouse Gosport, the Hovercraft Museum in Lee-on-Solent, Fort Cumberland, HMS *Sultan* Marine

Engineering Museum, the Aspex Gallery in Gunwharf, the Hot Walls and Round Tower in Old Portsmouth, the WWI Remembrance Centre in Bastion 6 at Halsea Lines – and of course, English Heritage’s keep in Portchester Castle. The naval museum has continually expanded from its base in Storehouses 11 and 12 – across the road to South Office Block, to include HMS *Alliance* submarine museum and the Explosion! Museum of Naval Firepower at Priddy’s Hard, HMS *Caroline* in Belfast and HMS *Trincomalee* in Hartlepool. The museum management has had to deal with physical decay and wear and tear from tourist traffic in the storehouses as well as installing modern services. They inserted a glass lift and high-tech storage in Storehouse 12, a challenge I explored in a previous paper for the NDS.³²

The harbour’s other national museum is in Fort Nelson on the western crest of Portsdown Hill. The Royal Armouries are custodians of the United Kingdom’s national collection of arms and armour, national artillery and national firearms, one of the largest in the world. As it expanded the Tower of London became too small to house it all. In 1988 the Royal Armouries took a lease on Fort Nelson, the large nineteenth-century artillery fort on Portsdown Hill, to house their collection of artillery –but, redundant for many years, the fort might not have survived at all. Estate agents King and King suggested demolishing it to provide hard core for the M27 being built below. Alerted by Deane Clark and at the initiative of Cllr. Freddie Emery-Wallis, Fort Nelson was sold to the county in 1988 for £50,000.³³ Volunteers including the founding members of the Palmerston Forts Society spent years clearing trees and scrub, revealing the fort’s Victorian construction.



Clarence Barracks demolition. Late 1960s. Left: City Museum and City Records Office converted 1970-3

Maritime City Portsmouth 1945-2005 Portsmouth Society 2005

In 1972 Portsmouth City Museum was developed in the exuberant Victoria Barracks (1893) which has a ‘fantastically irregular outline with circular turrets, gables and sharp roofline seemingly influenced by the images of romantic German castles or Scottish baronial halls’ according to architectural historian David Lloyd. Next door the former NAAFI was adapted to house the City Records Office, but this use’s heavy loadings broke its back – it was built over the underlying town defences – and it is likely to be demolished. But these are the only survivors of the area’s military past. The other substantial blocks through to Pembroke Road were demolished in 1967 and replaced by private housing.

The economic benefits of defence related heritage tourism are evident to the local economies of both Portsmouth and Gosport. As a focal point in the 1944 Allies’ invasion of Normandy, Portsmouth gained immensely by arranging regular commemorations of the D-Day invasion. To celebrate the fortieth

anniversary: 6 June 1944, the city commissioned a new building: the D-Day Museum designed by city architect Ken Norrish and constructed in only ten months. A circular gallery houses the Overlord Embroidery of 1978. This 272-foot long (83m) textile was a tribute to the sacrifice and heroism of those men and women who took part in Operation Overlord, the Allies' operation to liberate Europe during the 1939–1945 war. Designed by the artist Sandra Laurence it took twenty women of the Royal School of Needlework five years to complete. Successive commemorations of D-Day have increased exponentially in size, making use of the large seafront space of Southsea Common. On the fortieth anniversary security was light, so local residents were able to shake President Clinton's hand and those of other politicians, but when President Trump came for the seventy-fifth, four thousand troops and police were involved in expensive heavy security guarding him inside a military style fence; a larger number than the Allied troops who landed on D-Day.³⁴ Portsmouth was again the centre of the UK's 80th national commemorations of D-Day in June 2024. Visiting dignitaries including King Charles and the few surviving veterans attended the ceremony on Southsea Common, before they crossed the channel to Normandy along with thousands of enthusiasts in their preserved military vehicles. Portsmouth's twin city Caen hosted them; the Abbe aux Dames put on a special exhibition about the Allies' invasion of Sicily and a sound exhibit of personal memories of the Allies bombing of the city in July and August 1944 recorded by local schoolchildren. In December Portsmouth's D-Day Museum invited service veterans to a display of large format photographs of themselves and their colleagues in old age with captions recounting both their D-Day experiences and their postwar careers. To seaward of the D-Day Museum, is Southsea Castle (1544–45, 1680s, 1814) restored in the 1970s as a museum with a celebrates Henry VIII in the keep.

The dynamic Diving Museum in the Browndown fortifications has gained international recognition and substantial grant funding. The Science Museum's loaned the museum the Deane brothers' first diving helmet. Closure for two years from October 2023 will enable the museum to tackle the serious damp problems in the seaward casemates and to expand the collection.



No. 6 Boathouse Portsmouth dockyard Heritage Area

Celia Clark

The planned move of the Royal Marines Museum from Eastney Barracks to Boathouse 6 in the dockyard did not happen after failure of the Lottery bid to finance it, so the museum collection is currently dispersed to different locations including the Science Museum's store at former RAF Wroughton, Wiltshire. Another lottery bid by the NMRN is raising funds to match another bid to recreate the museum in Boathouse 6 inside the dockyard heritage area. If successful, the popular arts cinema in Boathouse 6's auditorium will have to find another home; the screen will be removed to accommodate the Royal Marines band, which is based in the naval base.

HM Naval Base



Ropery in 1956: Attic storey demolished; internal floors removed
Deane Clark



Ropery south façade

Deane Clark 1956

Leaving buildings empty and unused is never a good idea. Historic England publishes a Historic Buildings at Risk Register every year. In southeast Hampshire the greatest number are always those belonging to the MOD. Inevitably there are conflicts between military and heritage priorities. The list's purpose is to stimulate owners into repairing their neglected buildings, but the MOD tend to say that they are not funded to keep buildings they no longer need

in good repair – their budget priority being defending the country. While the dockyard is an important and active naval base, it also contains the highest concentration of historic defence buildings in southern Hampshire. Not all this specialist heritage has survived nor, if unused, is it in good condition. The dockyard Ropery of 1770, No. 18 Store/Building No. 1/62 in Anchor Lane was ‘eviscerated’ in the 1950s – before conservation protection legislation was enacted. It was converted into a three-storey storage space but only a small section is in use. It’s in poor condition and has dry rot. The adjacent No. 9 Storehouse has been underused for many years.



No. 3 Ship Shop^[1]_[SEP]

National Monuments Record Swindon

The navy destroyed the majestic No. 3 Ship Shop: the largest structures on the harbour until the new ship halls by No.3 Basin and the Fleet Headquarters (1992-3) were built.



No. 6 Dock

Sarah Roberts

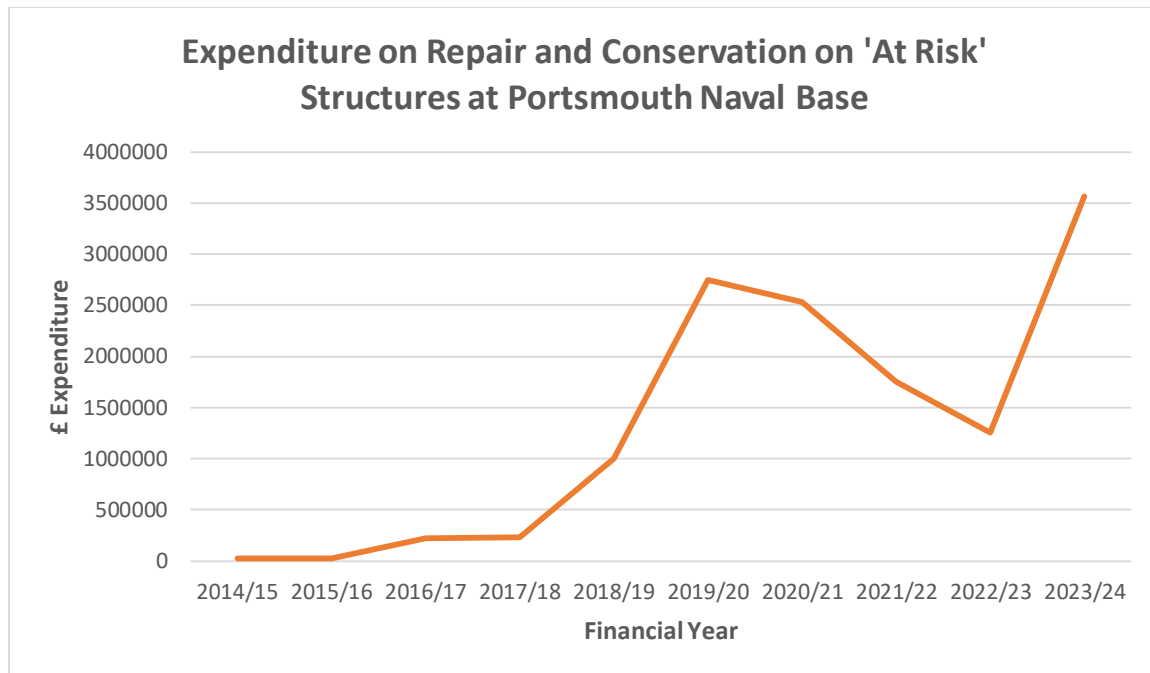


Leaking caisson

Sarah Roberts

In 2009 twenty-eight of the MOD's buildings were on English Heritage's Buildings at Risk Register. Within Portsmouth Naval Base were No. 6 Dock, 2–8 The Parade, the Iron and Brass Foundry, No. 25 Store and the Grade I Block Mills – which has been on the Register since it began in 1998. Historic England, the Naval Dockyards Society and other groups put continuous pressure on the MOD to repair and reuse these important structures. What is not acknowledged is that the cost of eventual repair and reuse escalates during years of neglect and inaction. Impetus for the work was also provided by NDS lobbying in 2017. The very welcome news ascertained by Paul Brown is that decaying heritage buildings and docks in Portsmouth Naval Base are receiving a lifeline through large spends on their renovation for reuse. Through Freedom of Information requests to the Ministry of Defence, NDS has been monitoring repair and conservation work on eight listed structures in Portsmouth Naval Base that were listed as 'At Risk' by Historic England. These structures were mostly disused and neglected, and their condition had deteriorated badly over time, leading to NDS highlighting the need, and lobbying for, remedial and conservation work to be undertaken. The structures concerned are: The Old Naval Academy, Block Mills, The Parade (Long Row), the Iron & Brass Foundry East Wing, No 25 Store, No 1 Basin, No 5 Dock and No 6 Dock.

As can be seen in the chart there has since been a considerable increase in expenditure on these structures, from 2018/19 onwards, with expenditure peaking at £2.75m in 2019/20 and £3.57m in 2023/24.³⁶



Fuller details of the work, and background to the projects was reported in *Dockyards*, vol 26, no. 2, pp 4-7 (Nov 2021) and this article provides an update. The huge, and very welcome, increase in expenditure has largely come from the £100m allocated for the upgrading of the naval base infrastructure which is associated with the basing of the two new aircraft carriers at Portsmouth. The latest data for financial year 2023/24 shows total expenditure of £3.57m, the highest ever annual expenditure. It includes work on the two largest projects at that time: Renovation and conservation of No 25 Store (£648k), and the replacement of the entrance caisson in No 1 Basin (£2.655m). The total expenditure in 2022/23 was £1.253m. In these two financial years there was no further expenditure on The Parade (Long Row) following the completion of the renovation and conservation of No.1 The Parade and limited remedial work on the other properties.

No. 25 Store is to house the Fleet Command Team and RN Innovation hub. No.1 The Parade was to be used to accommodate visitors and conference activity. Two historic dry docks, No.5 Dock, the Great Stone Dock originally built in 1698, rebuilt in 1769, and No. 6 Dock which opens to the harbour, were constructed in large blocks of tooled, coursed, squared, Portland stone with Roman numerals indicating water levels. They have stepped sides with flights of steps and haulage slides. They are Scheduled Monuments but they are in poor condition. No. 6 is suffering from rotation, open mortar joints, water penetration and spalling stonework. It was flooded when the caisson gates to the harbour failed. No 5 was flooded due to failure of the gates; it is vulnerable to algal growth and saturation of the stonework with a risk of accelerated decay.³⁵

Scheduled Monument Consent was granted to repair the caisson gates which allowed for future conservation repair work to the dock and mitre gate. No 5 Dock was flooded due to failure of the gates; it was vulnerable to algal growth and saturation of the stonework with a risk of accelerated decay.³⁵ Following replacement of the No 1 Basin caisson the gates to Nos 4 and 5 Docks were to be replaced. The cofferdam pre-civils surveys and installation report totalled £638k. Scheduled Monument Consent was granted to repair them; work on the cofferdam for No. 6 Dock was listed in 2022/23.

Since 2018 the cumulative sums spent on the three largest projects are as follows: Renovation and conservation of The Parade £5.14m; Renovation and conservation of No 25 Store £2.56m; and Replacement of entrance caisson in No 1 Basin £3.21m. In total the spend on the eight ‘at risk’ structures has totalled over £12 million. This figure excludes the minor reactive repairs since 2021/22 because these activities are no longer reported individually under the replacement contract for hard facilities management. Routine surveys and inspections are also excluded.³⁶

To add more detail to Paul Brown’s report, in November 2023 plans were submitted to Portsmouth City Council to revamp Nos. 24 and 25 Stores on Main Road opposite the Mary Rose Museum. The 25 storehouse is grade II*-listed while 24 is grade II. The storehouses were constructed in 1792 and have undergone many changes throughout the years. In 1874 No. 25 evolved to include a mould loft, storehouses, small offices, and a workshop in the courtyard, housing a carver’s pound and a moulders’ shed for building. No. 24 was used as an office space, while No. 25 was vacant; its most recent use was also as office space. “Whilst 24 store has some maintenance issues it is clear from site inspections 25 store is in very poor condition with evidence of water ingress from leaking gutters causing damage to lintels, trusses and the external brick walls as well as damage to the remaining areas of timber floor from damp”. The works involved the installation of air-handling plants and building a roof over an existing courtyard, with a mezzanine, to create additional floor space which will ensure the “long-term continued use of the buildings for the Ministry of Defence”: No 25 Store is to house the Fleet Command Team and RN Innovation hub. Toby Paine Royal Navy: Empty Portsmouth Naval Base buildings could be refurbished and brought back into use.³⁷



The Parade façade and landscaping restored. 2022
Dearing

Carl

NDS members saw the beginning of major restoration at The Parade – a row of nineteen former officers’ terraced houses and one of the oldest Dockyard structures, built in 1715-9. In 2019 work started to stabilise and repair the exterior walls. 220 sash windows were replaced, downpipes removed, repaired and reinstalled, and the roof structure repaired and insulated to enhance sustainability performance. New services were laid in a trench along the rebuilt access road in front, the trees were trimmed back to prevent blockage by leaves to the terrace’s gutters, and the historic paving was repaired using lime mortar (rather than cement). Lead was re-smelted in the Midlands and re-laid to a high quality. The Naval Base’s resident historical expert, Rick Bolger, provided advice and support throughout restoration in accordance with direction from Louise Forsyth (Historic England). In 2022 restoration of No. 1, the end house was awarded the Portsmouth Society’s Best Restoration Award. It is used to accommodate visitors and for conference activity. However, in the two subsequent financial years there was no further expenditure on The Parade (Long Row) following the completion of the renovation and conservation of No.1 and limited remedial work on the other properties. As a result of these works, the Naval Base has invested c. £8m in heritage roof repairs and c. £7m in refurbishment of The Parade, securing a downgrade from Category A to Category F on the Heritage at Risk Register (HARR).³⁸ Together, this collection of restored buildings will provide a mix of naval residences, offices and conferencing facilities was to form a Maritime Command and Innovation Hub. Both 14 and 15 Dock have been refurbished and enhanced, £18m has been spent to modernize the adjacent central workshops, and construction completed

on a Combined Heat and Power (CHP) Plant that provides energy supply to the carriers when alongside. In 2021 NDS members saw newly refurbished offices, drill-hall, and training facilities at the Semaphore Tower in support of HMS King Alfred Reservists. Major works had commenced on two listed buildings, the Old Iron Foundry and Storehouse 25.

However, work on other major buildings is not in prospect. The NDS remains very concerned that key historic buildings stand empty and deteriorating, with no apparent plans for their restoration or reuse in sight: the Old Naval Academy, the Ropery, the storehouse parallel to it, the former Naval School for Superior Apprentices, Building 25 and Block Mills. In 2022/23 and 2023/24 no work was done on the Block Mills, and the only expenditure on the Old Naval Academy was £69k for asbestos removal in 2023/24.



Horizontal boring machine Block Mills Portsmouth Royal Dockyard Historical Trust



Block Mills original machinery in situ Block Mills 2016

Celia Clark



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Block Mills

Celia Clark

The most important is the Grade 1 Block Mills, the centrepiece of the 2006 bid to inscribe Portsmouth Harbour onto the World Heritage List. As long ago as the early 1990s the Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust was negotiating to take on the unused building of 1803-5 where Marc Brunel, Henry Maudeslay and other brilliant engineers pioneered the steam powered manufacture of the

hundreds of thousands of wooden pulley blocks needed for rigging the navy's sailing ships and gun carriages by the invention of metal machine tools – some of which are now in the Science Museum. Fireproofing methods were introduced, and for the first time in the world steam power was used on a significant scale to operate machinery for mass production. The building incorporated a steam engine which pumped water in and out of the docks from a reservoir underneath it.

The English Heritage chairman Sir Neil Cossons visited the building in 2003 and 2005 and so did the chief executive in January 2006. English Heritage published Jonathan Coad's book on the Block Mills, launched on site in 2005. Jonathan Coad lamented that as an internationally important Grade I building, the proposal to transfer Block Mills to the care of English Heritage failed; this would have taken it off the books of the MOD. In 2016 the boundary of the Historic Dockyard was to be extended northwards. This would have enabled the Naval Base Property Trust to restore Block Mills and the oldest dry docks in the yard. As a charity the trust would be eligible for grants not available to a government ministry. A new lease was fully drafted and the level of the endowment – £13.5m – was also agreed. The trust had long-term plans to develop a new Museum of the Dockyard in Storehouse 9 or in Block Mills to tell the story of the of the men and women who spent their working lives in the dockyard through peace and war, to complement the naval story told by the Royal Naval Museum and the historic ships. The new museum's collection was to display the collection of tools, artefacts, equipment and documents collected by the Portsmouth Royal Dockyard Historical Trust, much of which is stored in their workshop on the first floor of Storehouse 10. Sadly, the Property Trust did not win the hoped-for Millennium grant because the Commission said they did not wish to fund another museum. In 2019 the NDS wrote to the Second Sea Lord and Deputy Chief of Naval Staff and Portsmouth Naval Base Commander, asking 'for new and appropriate uses to be found for these buildings, "so that operational budgets could also finance conservation."' In their view, this was the best way to secure their conservation and future. Block Mills remains empty, inaccessible and unused – and so does the former School of Naval Architecture, facing the commandant's house of 1815-17 probably designed by Edward Holl, Architect to the Navy Board. Severely classical in buff brick, two storeys, fifteen bays: end bays brought forward, stone porch with Doric columns, it's listed but it is unused, empty, deteriorating.



Old Naval Academy from Admiralty Quarter point block 2013

Celia Clark

Another key building in very poor condition is the Old Naval Academy, “the city’s best piece of early C18 architecture” according to Charles O’Brien editor of the South Hampshire volume of the *Buildings of England* published by Yale University Press in 2019. The Royal Naval Academy was established in 1733 in Portsmouth Dockyard to train officers for the Royal Navy. The founders' intentions were to provide an alternative means to recruit officers and to provide standardised training, education and admission. In 1806 it was renamed the Royal Naval College and in 1816 became the Royal Naval College and the School for Naval Architecture. It was closed as a training establishment for officer entrants in 1837. A scheduled monument and Listed Grade II* it has been unoccupied since 2006. The roof was repaired in 2019 and asbestos removed, but the decay in its overall condition continues to accelerate. It is on Historic England’s Building at Risk Register: no definite future use is proposed. Perhaps release of the Academy to the Naval Base Property Trust for development as a hotel has not happened because of security problems, as it is next door to Admiralty House, the official residence of the Naval Base Commander. The Academy continues to deteriorate, leaving some way to go despite recent investment - before restoring the Royal Navy’s ethical and official reputation for care of its historic estate. As the NDS says, their refurbishment would meet the naval ethos as well as conservation and operational requirements. Refurbishing the former Royal Naval Academy and the Parade were logical projects to provide naval officers’ accommodation if the wardroom in Queen Street is sold. HMS Nelson, the officers' wardroom in

Queen Street is to be sold by 2031. Reportedly, the main option being considered to replace its function is the Academy, but the cost of upgrading the Academy's small 'cabins' in its rear wings, its catering facilities and its public rooms to modern hotel standards would be considerable.



Naval Pay Office

Celia Clark

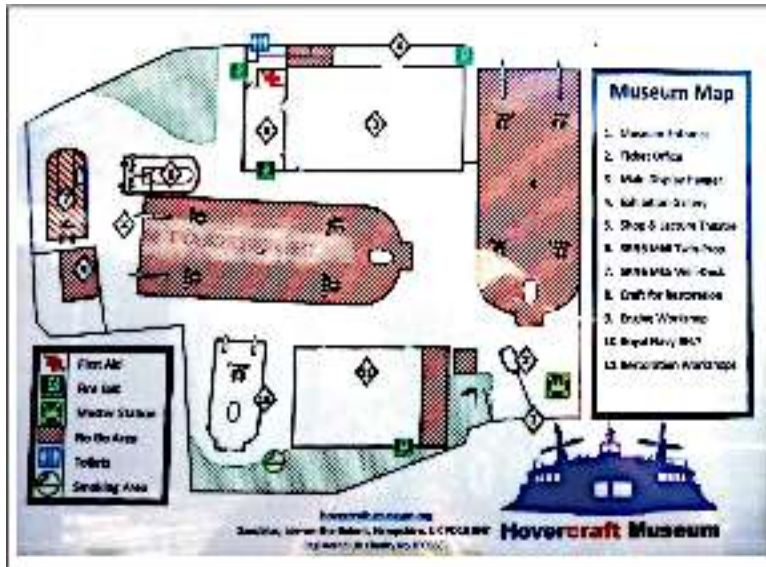
Inside the Heritage Area, the Navy Pay Office, originally a two-storey building, fireproof to protect the safe where dockyard wages were stored, has unusual swelling fluted columns in the vaulted interior. Reduced to a single storey in WWII it suffers from damp damage to the roof and exterior walls.

Early flight to a civilian airfield

To turn from naval shore establishments ('stone frigates') to naval airfields, there were two significant historic airfields near Gosport: Grange and Daedalus. Grange was important in very early flying days, whilst HMS Daedalus had a long career as a Royal Air Force and naval airfield throughout both world wars. Post-war, it played a major role in naval flying and hovercraft development. In 1910 the Hampshire Aero Club successfully negotiated with the War Department for the use of site near Fort Grange 'for experiments in aeronautical science': use of a hand-towed glider and model flying. In 1910 Grange Airfield, already in War Office ownership and manned by the Royal Artillery, was developed on flat land between Fort Rowner and Fort Grange for experiments in heavier than air flight, using a towed biplane built at the United Services College Windsor. The wind tunnel in Fort Grange was used to test aircraft stability curves on aerofoil sections.

Key developments in flying training by 60 Squadron at the School of Special Flying were based not on avoiding potentially dangerous manoeuvres as had been the previous practice but on exposing the student to them in a controlled manner so he could gain confidence and skill and learn to recover from them: the 'Gosport system'. To prevent the many deaths because instructors and student pilots at the controls could not communicate, the 'Gosport tube', a rubber speaking tube, was invented to connect their flying helmets. Throughout World War I the Aircraft Torpedo Development Unit (ATDU), also known as the Royal Naval Air Station Gosport, remained at Grange until 1956 when it became a centre for a squadron of Sikorsky R4 helicopters beginning the Royal Navy's expertise in this field.

HMS *Daedalus* was developed from 1912; the Royal Flying Corps took it over in 1914. In 1917 it was a temporary naval seaplane pilot training school to address the shortage of pilots for anti-submarine patrols in the face of the growing U-boat threat. In June 1920 the station re-activated for seaplane flying and aerial navigation training. In 1936 the HQ of RAF Coastal Command was established there. By 1918 there were just under five hundred staff and sixty-nine seaplanes and flying boats, but they were dispersed after the Armistice in November 1918 and facilities were gradually run down; in December 1919, the station was placed into care and maintenance. In 1920–21 the School of Naval Co-operation and Air Navigation was renamed RAF Seaplane Training School, Lee-on-the-Solent. In 1923–24 it was renamed the School of Naval Cooperation and then the Fleet Air Arm (FAA) of the Royal Air Force – soon abbreviated to Fleet Air Arm – HQ Coastal Command. Work on the aerodrome began: several aeroplane sheds were constructed as well as stores, barrack blocks, offices, galleys, sick quarters and dining halls. In 1937 the Inskip Award recommended that the Royal Navy should no longer be an adjunct of the RAF but should have full control of its air assets. This led to the official founding of the Fleet Air Arm. To coincide with the construction of the runways in 1942, a new Admiralty designed control tower was built. During the early war years, twenty-three hangars were added. Lee was at the very forefront of fighting activity as a key naval aviation base in WWII, especially for the D-Day landings. It was considered the spiritual home of the FAA. The poignant war memorial commemorates the service's many dead.



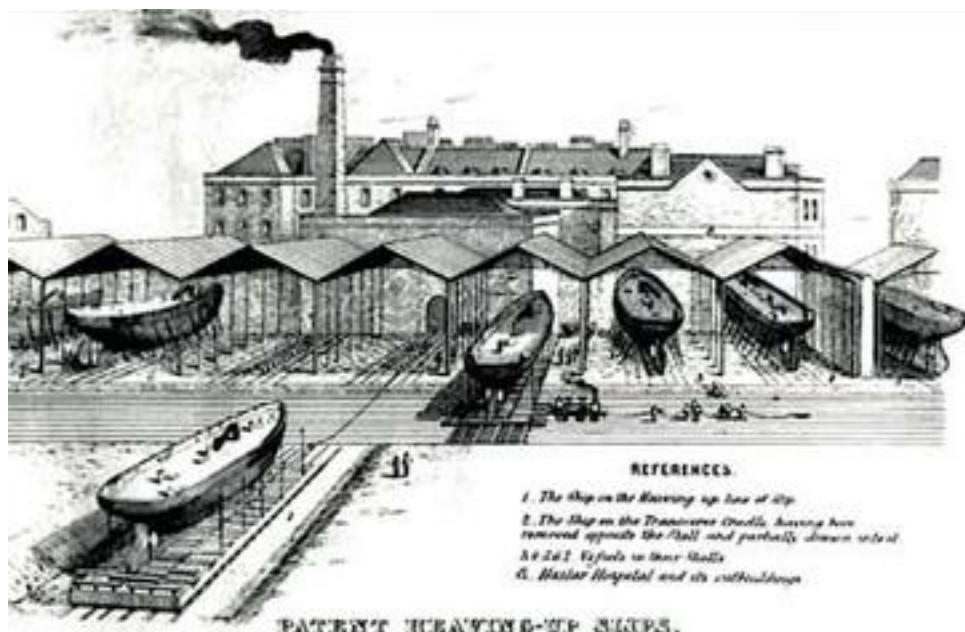
Hovercraft Museum map 2016

 Hovercraft Museum

When the Interservice Hovercraft Trials Unit was formed in 1962 to assess the amphibious hovercraft in military roles and as fast response platforms, the slipway adjacent to the seaplane sheds was brought back into regular use. In 1963 the world’s largest hovercraft, SRN 3 was extensively trialled as a high-speed, amphibious, load-bearing military vehicle and patrol boat with its relative invulnerability to sea mines and its use in clearing them. Finally, on 29 March 1996 HMS *Daedalus* closed after seventy-nine years of continuous operation. Development proposals included housing, a business park, gravel extraction and even a horse racing course. In 1999, anticipating that *Daedalus* would be disposed of, Gosport Borough Council designated it a conservation area to protect the buildings and structures inside it.

On the Lee-on-Solent seafront road is the unique Hovercraft Museum, registered as a charity in 1987. Inside the WWI/II seaplane hangars, one listed Grade I, is the museum’s collection of military and civil hovercraft including the enormous SRN-4 *Princess Anne*, which carried motor vehicles across the English Channel, as well as models, films, photographs and books. In 2023 developer MurrayTwohig acquired the site. Their vision is ‘the restoration of the historic buildings, including the First World War hangars that face the Solent. These are intended to act as a catalyst for economic development, a gateway to the project and an upgraded home for the Hovercraft Museum. The goal is to help it become a world-class visitor attraction – joining the rest of Hampshire’s unrivalled Naval and Maritime attractions.’⁴⁰

advances, such as ship-to-ship communication and communications headquarters in WWII in Eastney Fort East. Two chapters in the book describe their construction and subsequent history in detail. It's surprising that more forts, batteries and lines have not been put to alternative uses as they are fascinating structures, representing considerable embodied energy in their millions of bricks. However in view of their sheer numbers and the complexity of reusing them, perhaps it's to be expected that some in Gosport and Fareham and along Portsdown Hill are decayed or have disappeared. A few are in a state of 'controlled [or uncontrolled] ruination'. Only Fort Monckton is still in active defence use – as No. 1 Military Training Establishment, operated by the army, the only fort around the harbour to be retained by the Ministry of Defence. Others have found new life in a variety of creative ways. No. 2 Battery in Stokes Bay Gosport is an acclaimed Diving Museum. Forts Widley and Purbrook on the brow of Portsdown Hill belong to Portsmouth City Council, leased to the Peter Ashley Activities Centre since the 1970s. Fort Widley contains a preserved Cold War command post and continued use of the historic stables as a riding school. The Peter Ashley Activities Centre's mission is to contribute to the development of young people 'to be the best they can be'. They offer young people climbing walls, horse-riding, archery and camping, while visiting groups stay in Fort Purbrook's extensive barrack rooms. Training volunteers to repoint historic brickwork in the fort – acres of which need doing - was offered by the Sustainable Conservation Trust at Fort Widley, but the trustees decided this should cease. Spitbank Fort and No Man's Land in the sea at Spithead are luxury event venues, while the uncompleted St. Helens Fort off the Isle of Wight is derelict. . . Lumps Fort in Southsea encloses a lovely rose garden and model village.



Patent Heaving-Up Slips' at Haslar Gunboat Yard (*Mechanics' Magazine*, 3 January 1857)

As mentioned earlier, there is uncertainty about the future of Fort Blockhouse, including the former HMS *Dolphin* and the Submarine Escape Training Tower – which with Haslar Hospital’s Water Tower is prominent in the local land- and sea-scape. It’s on the Buildings at Risk register. Across the road the guardhouses of HMS *Hornet* have been restored, but Brunel’s pioneering gunboat sheds are caught in a limbo within QinetiQ’s boundary. In front of the sheds was a steam-powered, railed traverser system using wheeled platforms to carry boat cradles that enabled the vessels to be moved from the creek into the sheds. In Gosport’s Local Plan (2011–2019) there was concern that the reuse of the sheds for housing would break them into separate units and the associated changes that would be needed could harm the historic building. Preferable would be to maintain the building in its current form or as part of a marine employment use (such as boat sheds), or to display gunboats or other similar features.



Fort Gilkicker



Deniz Beck New top storey added

Deniz Beck

Taking just a few of the many forts around the harbour, their experiences are very different. Fort Gilkicker (1871) is a semi-circular casemated design armed with twenty-six rifled muzzle-loading guns at the southernmost point of Gosport. It was used from 1908 to 1911 to accommodate families of the Royal Engineers at Fort Monckton and again from 1939 to 1946. There were proposals to convert it into private apartments by Hampshire County Council in 1986 and by commercial developers, but without success. Permission was granted to remove the earth bund on top of the sea-facing elevation, the habitat of the rare

Gilkicker weevil. In 2023 with the guidance of the Palmerston Forts Society two local builder-brothers removed the concrete infill inside the casemates and the massive iron doors, proposing to add a lightweight modern structure as a second floor. This is similar to Spitbank Fort’s lighthouse extension designed by architect Deniz Beck who specialises in restoring forts and other defensive structures.



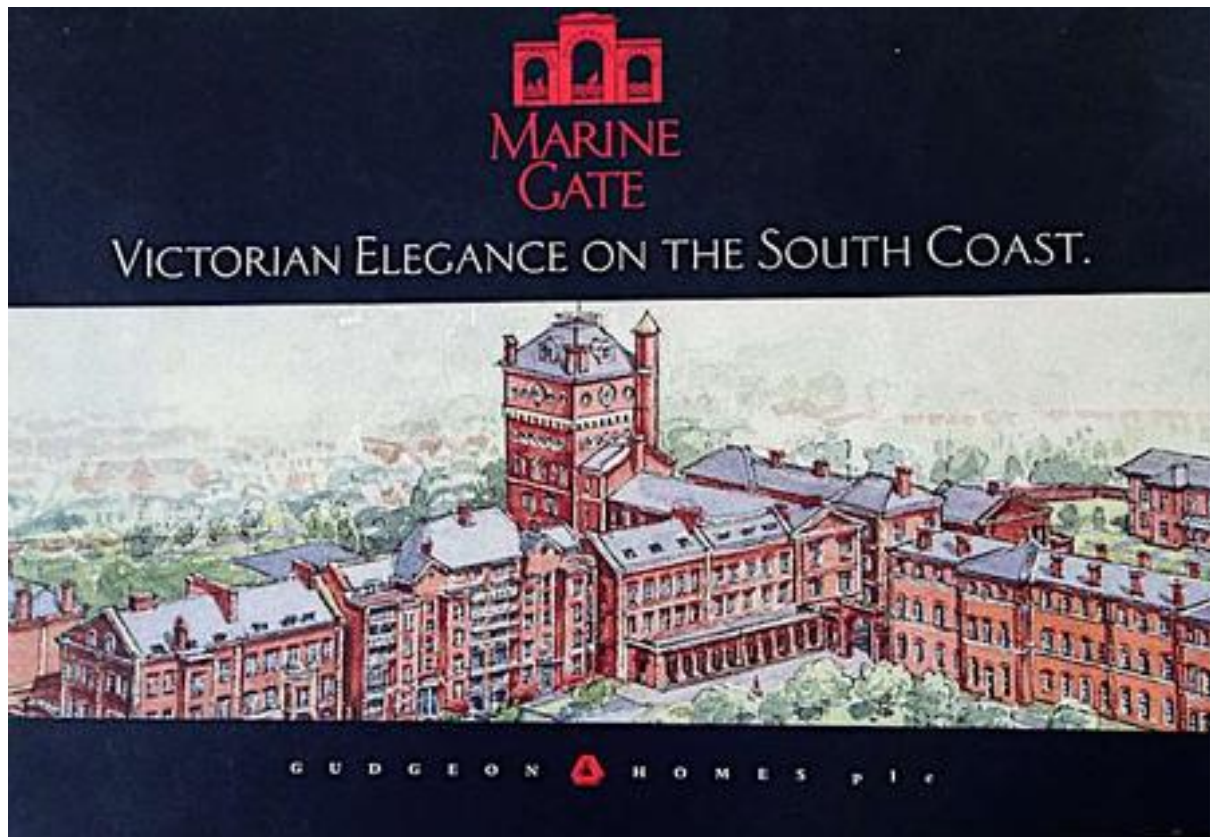
Spitbank Fort Americas Cup 2015

Celia Clark

She converted Spitbank Fort, one of four seaforts constructed from the 1870s in the sea to defend the approach to Portsmouth Harbour from the French. Her conversion into a luxury event venue was not easy – as a building site in the middle of the sea. She won prizes for this and for her restoration of the Hot Walls in Broad Street Old Portsmouth. The casemates there were converted into artists’ studios and the popular Canteen with its daring balcony thrown over water to link to the Round Tower. The more accessible NoMansLand fort in the sea off Ryde Isle of Wight was converted to a four-star hotel with 23 en-suite bedrooms, five bars, a restaurant, spa, hot tubs and sauna. Purchased on a whim by Edward Ford of London, a trader in tech stocks, this fort had been marketed for £4.25m. “The remote location provides either great privacy or exclusivity for potential guests and clients” as the local newspaper reported. In December 2024 a new tenant was sought for £1.25m.⁴² Horse Sands Fort, the largest of the Victorian ‘ring fortress’ sea forts, has changed hands several times without any significant work towards restoring or converting it. St. Helens Fort

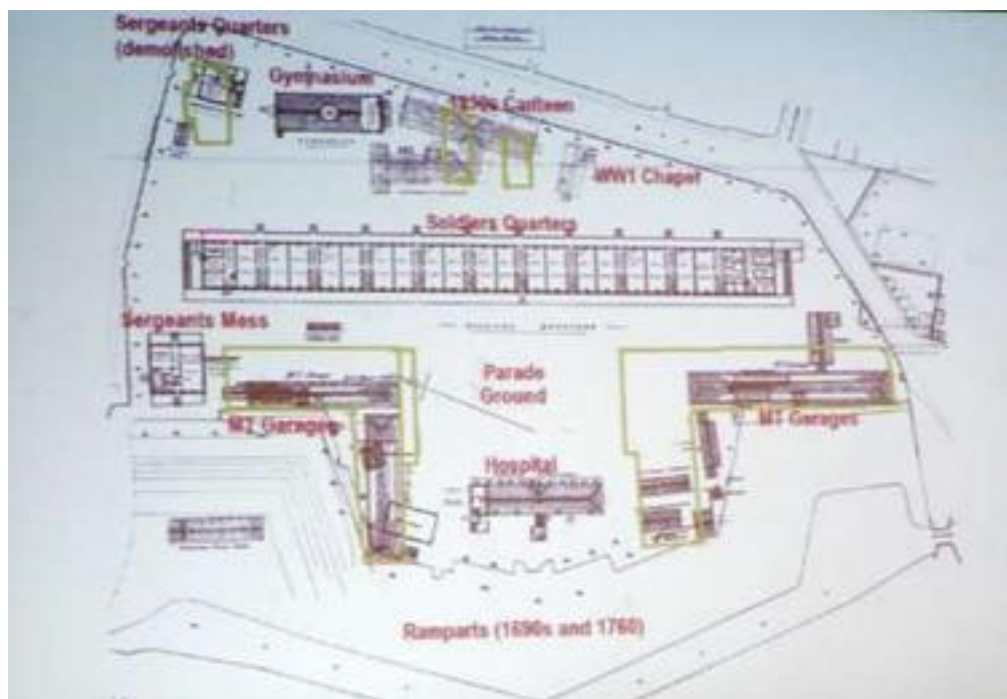
off Bembridge in the Isle of Wight which was never completed is only accessible at particular states of low tide.

Housing



Royal Marines barracks Sales brochure

Redrow





St. George Barracks redeveloped.

Gosport Borough Council

Residential conversion often seems the obvious next use for redundant barracks. Civilians are now living in several barrack complexes on both sides of the harbour. Not all barrack blocks survived: the barracks site in St. George's Road Old Portsmouth was redeveloped with new build flats and houses inside the historic wall. Key factors of the conversions are the degrees of intervention: how much of the original fabric and layout remains, given the need to insert complex new services, internal communications, insulation, lifts, stairs and subdivisions for kitchens and bathrooms.

St. George Barracks East and West in Gosport, the Royal Clarence Victualling Yard, Haslar Hospital and the northern part of Gunwharf have been converted or redeveloped for private flats and houses. Local firm Gudgeons were the first developers to realise Eastney Barracks' potential, and national developer Redrow finished the conversion. Each apartment in Gunners Row was originally a mess for up to twenty soldiers in one big space. They now have just one or two residents. The officers' houses in Teapot Row have been subdivided horizontally into flats. The Royal Marines Museum in the Royal Marines' Officers' Mess at the eastern end of the Eastney Barracks parade ground was closed in 2017. NMRN staff packed up and removed the collection and artefacts and the site was put up for sale in summer 2019. The failure of the Lottery bid

for the conversion of Boathouse 6 for the museum and work on the NMRN's library meant that the Royal Marines archives has not been available for researchers for some years. However, by public demand, the Yomper statue of a marine in the Falklands had to stay where it is in front of the barracks. The new owner of the imposing officers' mess who was born in New Road Portsmouth, planned to convert it into Portsmouth's first five-star hotel, but as yet there is no sign of work starting. The proposed housing development converting Fraser Battery at Eastney, a research station, firing range and training base where radar equipment was tested using large steel-lattice towers, has yet to materialise.

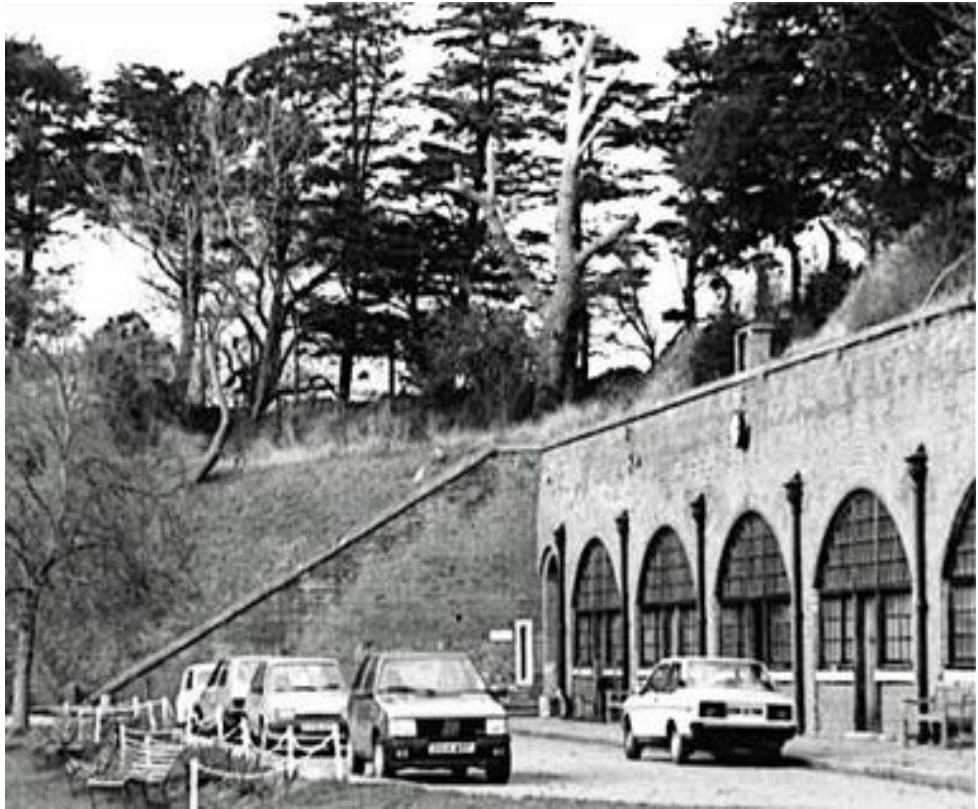
An ongoing challenge is to build the thousands of homes set in the government's housing targets – very difficult to fulfil in an island city. In response, Portsmouth City Council attempted to develop the Ordnance Depot at Tipner. £6m was spent on plans for 'Lennox Point' which involved reclaiming twenty-one hectares of heavily protected tidal mud-flats. As shown in the map at the beginning of this article, the head of Portsmouth harbour has Special Protection status for wildlife including migrating birds feeding. 'Lennox Point' was cancelled because of strong opposition from wildlife interests, but the city council is still planning to reclaim fourteen acres of the harbour to build a thousand new homes, which is likely to run into the same opposition from wildlife interests. Portsmouth City Council is in the process of acquiring the adjoining Pounds scrapyard with its Grade II brick magazines where ships, linkspans, submarines, concrete pontoons were broken up and a floating crane as a centre of maritime industry. The floating crane has now been dismembered and the site cleared.

Open space



Gosport Lines Bastion No.1 before restoration. Gosport Borough Council

If we're aware of their history, enjoying the summer scent of roses inside Lumps Fort on Southsea seafront, or relishing the wide expanses of Southsea Common, the Solent panorama from Portsdown Hill or climbing the steep steps on No. 1 Bastion in Gosport to look across the harbour entrance, there's a strange frisson and sense of privilege that we can now enter once forbidden military territory. Both Gosport and Portsmouth have gradually gained open space from releases of military land, after changes in weaponry and different enemies rendered it obsolete for defence. Much of Portsmouth and Gosport's open space is around their coastlines. We owe to the military: Stokes Bay Lines and Hilsea Lines, Gosport ramparts, Walpole Park, Victoria Park (once the site of the walled town of Portsea's defences), Southsea Rose Garden and Model Village within Lumps Fort, Ravelin Park which contains university buildings, Long Curtain, the Saluting Platform, the Hot Walls and the King's Bastion, and the extensive seafront area of Southsea Common. They are vital to local people's enjoyment and health. Portsmouth has less green space per person than most other cities in the UK.



Portsmouth Grammar School Playing fields Hilsea Lines PGS



Palmerston Forts Society members explore overgrown Hilsea Lines
Celia Clark

Education



St. Vincent Parade Gosport

Martin Marks

Schools, colleges and the university of Portsmouth have moved into other barracks. They now hum with young people learning, where once soldiers and sailors were drilled in military discipline. St. Vincent Comprehensive School in Gosport opened in 1974, but only the frontage buildings were saved.⁴⁵ New teaching blocks were built. It is now a sixth-form college for fourteen- to nineteen-year-olds. Bay House, designed by Decimus Burton in 1838 and later the property of the Admiralty, is now the centre of Gosport's other sixth-form college.

The whole character of Portsmouth changes when the thousands of students return for their term times. 'Universities are at the head of many regional economies across the UK, supporting jobs, high- end investment and research . . . And, setting aside economics aside, universities offer a great many other benefits and opportunities . . .'⁴³ The Polytechnic, now the University, has to a large extent replaced the Ministry of Defence in both geographical and economic terms. One of the city's largest employers, the university has over 2,700 staff, and generated £658m in the Solent region and £505m in Portsmouth, making a significant contribution to the tourism economy via the Portsmouth Heritage hub, a research network with stakeholders in local cultural sites and the Defence Heritage group which was working internationally. The universities of Portsmouth and Cagliari in Sardinia jointly run annual Conservation of Architectural Heritage international conferences.

The University has added many new buildings on the site of the ramparts to Portsmouth and Portsea – as well as repurposing some of the older ones including Milldam Barracks in Portsea. These were built c. 1800–10 for the

Royal Engineers on the northwest edge of Milldam, the tidal pond between the towns of Portsea and Portsmouth. The red-brick barrack block is fifteen bays long and two storeys high with a central pediment over three bays. The southern end was damaged by WWII bombing and replaced in 1983 when the barracks were converted for the Polytechnic. Light metal galleries and a glassed-in staircase were added to LE Block facing the parade ground to provide disabled access after the Disability Discrimination Act of 2005. The taller other ranks' block provides rather small seminar rooms and offices.

The Portsea ramparts were cleared in the late twentieth century for the red-brick buildings of the Polytechnic Buckingham Building designed by the city Department of Architecture and Civic Design in 1973–4, entered under the cantilevered lecture theatre. Forming a courtyard with it is the white Portland Building designed by Sir Colin Stansfield Smith in 1993–6 as an experiment in low energy architecture using the stack effect for ventilation and cooling – though this did not always work well in high summer. Sir Colin's office as professor of architecture was in the south wing; he was also the Hampshire County Architect. The central glazed atrium with its high-level bridges is much enjoyed, for exhibitions as well as parties. The white Dennis Sciama Building of 2008–9 by Van Heyningen & Haward for the Institute of Cosmology was the first in the university to incorporate energy generation on its roof. In 2009 the Portsmouth Society gave it the Best New Building Award. Across a square is the seven-storey brightly panelled Richmond Building and lecture block of 2002 by Hawkins/Brown for Business Studies.

Not all ex-military buildings within the university's estate survive. The site of the Octagon, the YWCA United Services Club, a gift from the South African Mayors' fund in 1941 is marked in the ground adjacent to the new sports complex opened in 2023. The university plans to pull down the former technical college, now the Engineering School: Anglesea Building of 1952 by F. Mellor, the city architect, in Festival of Britain style with idealised sculptures of a bricklayer and an engineer. The Nuffield United Services Officers Club has already gone. It was designed in 1940 by E. Berry Webber, architect of the burnt-out Guildhall. Its impressive design included a main hall and viewing platform over the adjoining cricket ground. Last used for student services and the student medical centre, the Nuffield was destroyed in 2023-4. Of the new buildings, the most impressive is the award-winning University Library which was developed in three phases. The first was the ziggurat, formally known as the Frewen Library, designed by Ahrends, Burton & Koralek in 1975–7. Extended twice, once by ABK, it was completed by an exhilarating saw-toothed south wing by Penoyre and Prasad in 2008, its sloping black brick base echoing the revetments of the old defences. The nearby William Beatty Building dates from 2005: the dental academy with its top floor laboratory where trainee dental

technicians drill the teeth of model heads was designed by Miller Hughes. A new wing linked by a pink glazed first-floor corridor to the rear in 2010 extended it westward, upgraded in 2023. The military Drill Hall in St Paul's Road houses the university chaplaincy and advice centre now that the new Sports Centre in Museum Road is open. The university's masterplan is currently being 'refreshed'.⁴⁴

Schools, too, have reused barrack buildings. Portsmouth Grammar School was the first institution to seize the opportunity offered by empty barrack blocks and land cleared of the town's defences. The main frontage of Cambridge Barracks on Portsmouth High Street (c. 1855–60) was purchased from the War Office in 1926 for £10,000 and converted for the Grammar School's senior school. In 1927 the school moved in. The Mayor, Frank Privett, who was also the contractor and paid for the conversion work, donated the cast-iron gates. The Home Secretary, Sir William Joynson-Hicks ceremonially opened them accompanied by the Mayor. The school memorial library was originally the officers' mess; the staff common room was the barracks library. When Portsmouth's fortifications were demolished in the 1870s the Grammar School built a new building for the Junior School in 1879 across the road over the old foundation. It was designed after a competition by architects Davis & Emmanuel. Barrow Emmanuel was the son of Portsmouth's first Jewish mayor, Emmanuel Emmanuel. On their main site in the High Street, the school purchased the rear block, but it was separated from the front one by a chain-link fence and barbed wire until 2000, when the two halves were reunited. The northern block facing Alexandra (later Museum) Road was also bought and converted into classrooms, and in the same year so was Cambridge House, once occupied by the Naval Surface Weapon Engineering Purchasing Office, which was responsible for ordering and supplying Trident, Seawolf and Seadart missiles.

World Heritage site bid



Proposed boundaries of Portsmouth Harbour World Heritage Site Celia Clark

The harbour's outstanding matrix of research and innovation stimulated by national defence was the basis of the bid in 2016 to inscribe Portsmouth Harbour as the world's first seascape-focused defence heritage onto UNESCO's World Heritage List. Supported by Portsmouth, Gosport, Fareham, the Isle of Wight councils and Hampshire County Council, its boundaries were to be the Queen's Harbour Master's sea area and the land area between the enclosing hills of Portsdown and Ryde. Its management committee chaired by the Naval Base Commander would have had powers to require high standards of new development and building conservation for development of the land around the harbour, as well as providing a forum for the myriad bodies responsible for the water – which currently lack any coordinating body. In 2012 the World Heritage bid was launched by Admiral Band in the auditorium of No. 6 Boathouse. The case for it was based on the many local technological world firsts stimulated by supplying the dockyard, such as the development of the puddling of iron (first pioneered in Jamaica), pumpable caissons to close dry docks, the first steam-powered dredger, the world's first steam-powered factory Block Mills using metal machine tools to produce the thousands of wooden pulley blocks required for the navy's sailing ships – and many of the other developments outlined above. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport's *The Costs and Benefits of World Heritage Status in the UK Case Studies* sets out economic gains from inscription, and a local study in support of the bid was undertaken.⁴⁶ But after six years of work on the proposal, it was cancelled by the key local authority, the leader of Portsmouth City Council - because he believed it would inhibit investment. If you look at Liverpool – the opposite is true. Its World Heritage Status has been taken away because so much has been

built there.



IK Brunel's 1809 bridge in Fort Cumberland. Celia Clark

Reassembly of Isambard Kingdom Brunel's first surviving bridge of 1809 in Portsmouth might have been a spinoff from the bid. Designed to span the Grand Union Canal and railway tracks at Paddington, it is owned by English Heritage and listed Grade II. It was moved twenty years ago in pieces to Fort Cumberland. Its timber and iron structure sit outside exposed to the weather while the bricks are stored inside. There do not appear to be any plans or agreed site for its reassembly or a celebration of the birthplace of Brunel in the city where he was born - when his father Marc Brunel led the brilliant engineers who created Block Mills.

Conclusion

The complex military system dedicated to national defence which dominated Portsmouth Harbour for so many centuries has, from the mid-twentieth century has increasingly been replaced by diverse civilian activity – and this process is ongoing. Gosport Borough Council's conservation officers successfully anticipate defence land releases, research their history and identify significant structures, working with the MOD DIO on agreed conservation management plans before sites are sold, so that defence heritage is identified and conserved in their transition to civilian life. In Portsmouth government-funded sea defences have encased historic coastal heritage at Long Curtain Moat, Southsea Castle and Hilsea Lines to protect them from rising sea levels. Installation of the Royal Marines Museum collections in Boathouse 6 in the naval base's Historic

Quarter is planned. Conversion of its former home in the Royal Marines Officers' Mess into a five-star hotel has planning permission.

The major success in the harbour's regeneration has been the development of defence heritage tourism. Together with the repurposing of historic defence buildings as museums including two national ones: the National Museum of the Royal Navy in the dockyard's Georgian storehouse and the Royal Armouries Museum at Fort Nelson, the dockyard Heritage Area is an international exemplar of both the challenges and the successful reuse of defence heritage. Training in traditional boatbuilding and repair in Boathouse 4 is an appropriate educational initiative, offering continuity with the skills of generations of dockyard workers, and also bringing the tourist experience of a working dockyard alive in a building built for the same purpose in the build-up to WWII. Since its creation – underfunded for the task it was set by the government in 1985 – the Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust's exemplary restoration and repurposing of the historic buildings within the naval base Heritage Area and across the harbour at Priddy's Hard – and its commissioning of impressive new architecture – reflect the expertise of its board and of its chief executives. Current challenges which have to be faced by the trust (renamed the Historic Quarter) as well as by all the different subsequent civilian owners include rising energy costs, rising sea levels, financing repairs and finding new uses for the remaining empty historic buildings. Developers, too have been innovative, recognising the potential of Gunwharf, barrack complexes and Haslar Hospital – even if not all historic buildings on their sites survive redevelopment, and public access is not always guaranteed.

In the active naval base on the other side of the Historic Quarter's security fence, the MOD's welcome change of mind towards investing in its built heritage is a hopeful sign. Given the base's shortage of space, the naval base management has begun to restore and reuse some of its historic buildings. The hope was that basing the two supercarriers in Portsmouth would stimulate inward investment by the commercial firms responsible for their upkeep and repair by taking on empty buildings. BAE restored and converted the Foundry. But the increased security threat to the supercarriers represent and the fact that the Second Sea Lord occupies the Commissioner's House adjacent to the Academy has so far precluded the extension of the heritage area leased to the property trust – which might have restored the Old Naval Academy into a civilian hotel. If a high enough price is raised from the sale of the wardroom in Queen Street is achieved, the Academy might yet again house naval officers, as it did until 2006.

In the context of the changing roles of former defence sites around the harbour its communities continue to innovate. There are so many stakeholders involved in shaping the harbour's future, whether they are Historic England, Natural

England, the Environment Agency, the Crown Estate, the two harbour masters: naval and civilian, commercial firms such as BAE, the MOD and the civilian management inside the dockyard, local governments, the ferry port, shipping lines, ship repair firms, yacht marinas, developers, estate agents, planners, architects, surveyors, coastal engineers, special interest groups such as the Hampshire and IOW Wildlife Trust, Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust, Palmerston Forts Society, the two civic societies and other local residents' and community groups . . . Yet there is no forum for them all to talk. The World Heritage Site Management Committee chaired by the Naval Base Commander might have provided a meeting place for at least some with joint responsibilities, for discussion of concerns and development of agreed policies – although how responsive such a body would be to community interests would depend on whether they were represented and what weight was given to their views. In my paper for the session 'Breaking down the barriers of former military sites in Europe: Perspectives for urban regeneration' as part of the October 2023 EU Cities and Regions Week I examined some of the methods used to engage and empower local people in working out futures for historic defence sites.³⁸ In my long-term research since the 1990s I've concluded that a high degree of genuine and purposeful community involvement early on in the disposal and regeneration process leads to less conflict, shorter regeneration timescales and more historic structures being beneficially reused.

There is a local democratic deficit which does not sufficiently take into account bottom-up resources and responses or draw on local expertise and innovative ideas. The mass protest to save Haslar as a naval hospital, the Enquiry by Design masterplan for its future, and the Veterans' Village to make it the equivalent of Chelsea Hospital for naval veterans were all ignored when the MOD sold it to developers without pre-conditions. Berkeleys and Portsmouth City Council did not respond to conservationists' objections to the loss of most of HMS *Vernon's* physical history, though Berkeleys subsequently learned to arrange better public consultation and to reuse the buildings on Royal Clarence Yard. Portsmouth city council has yet to respond fully to conservationists' concern about the historic structures in Pounds Yard, to the concerns of the Environment Agency or to the large petition by the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust against reclamation of the heavily protected tidal mudflats in the harbour at Tipner West where they plan to build thousands of homes.

In the face of increasing evidence of sea level rise, the local authorities around the harbour funded by central government are investing millions into concrete and rock coastal defences – while ignoring other countries' softer engineering solutions and requests for alternative designs. Until recently the MOD refused to acknowledge the major threat to the future of the harbour if the weakness in Haslar's sea wall was not repaired – until this affected their intention of selling

Fort Blockhouse. We await information on the Naval Base Commander's plans to protect the dockyard from rising sea levels and storm surges, for which government funding is available.

The Ministry of Defence's property agency, the Defence Infrastructure Organisation, remains mostly impenetrable and unresponsive, and despite the criticism of the Public Accounts Committee, apparently not able to learn how to do better, even how to get a better financial return from all the accumulated experience from around the country and abroad. Expectations of local benefit when government owned land is disposed of – new enterprises, jobs, reusable buildings, new amenities, open space – are unlikely to be fully met while the UK's Treasury-dominated top-down system of surplus government land disposal requiring maximum financial return remains in place. In my other paper in this volume of *Transactions*, I explore how other countries do things better.

The justification for this local case study is that most of the challenges and the major achievements that arise in the process of reuse, adaptation of our rich historic defence legacy are demonstrated within this one small area. Together they offer in microcosm a complex case study of how similar sites around the world can successfully be brought to sustainable new uses – to local benefit.

Biography

'What does one do with a historic dockyard?' Sir Neil Cossons, chair of the Heritage Education Group in 1990 asked Celia Clark this question when she was the Civic Trust's Education Officer. As a writer, academic and campaigner much of her career since has been directed towards answering it. *Sustainable Regeneration of Former Military Sites*, which she edited with Samer Bageen (Routledge, 2016) with case studies from many countries was the first exploration of the complexity of the transition of historic defence sites to sustainable regeneration for these very special places. Her 2020 book with Martin Marks, *Barracks, Forts and Ramparts: Regeneration Challenges for Portsmouth Harbour's Defence Heritage* (Tricorn Books, 2020; copies available from celiadeane.clark@btopenworld.com), explores local experience of this process. Her current research is examining how different countries dispose of their surplus defence sites, including historic ones, and who benefits or loses in their transformation to civilian use. The UK's Treasury and Ministry of Defence dominated system of sale to the highest bidder contrasts with other countries' more locally beneficial systems.

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