

The Naval Dockyards Society: the first fifteen years

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Abstract

The Naval Dockyards Society was formed in 1997. As well as placing a strong emphasis on research into the history of dockyards and the civil side of naval history worldwide, it has become involved in a number of important development issues, particularly in the UK. This paper traces the society's involvement through a number of case studies (Gibraltar, Sheerness, Chatham, Deptford and Plymouth), assesses its successes and failures, and draws conclusions about the problems and opportunities presented by dockyard heritage.

Keywords: Chatham, Deptford, Devonport, dockyards, Gibraltar, heritage, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Royal Navy, Sheerness.

1 Introduction

The Naval Dockyards Society (www.navaldockyards.org) was formed in 1997 as a result of an idea developed by Dr Ann Coats, the first secretary, and Dr Philip MacDougall, the first newsletter editor, both of whom had specialised in dockyard history for many years: 'its aims were literally drafted on the back of an envelope on the kitchen table' [1]. The inaugural meeting took place at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, on 14 September 1996 followed by a meeting to adopt the constitution on 1 March 1997. The society's creation was greatly assisted by Dr Roger Knight, Assistant Director of the National Maritime Museum, and Peter Dawson of Chatham Dockyard Historical Society, who became the first Chairman following the unfortunate death of the Chairman-designate, Keith Slade, shortly before the first meeting. By the end of 1997 there were 89 members, a figure which has increased to the current total of nearly 200.



Although most of the members are UK-based, the society is also represented in several European countries, the USA, Canada and Australia, and the membership includes many eminent naval historians as well as 'enthusiastic amateurs' and former dockyard workers. Dr Roger Morriss succeeded Peter Dawson as Chairman in 2001, serving until 2005 when he was succeeded by the present incumbent. Ann Coats has served as Secretary throughout and has been particularly influential in developing the society's role in heritage campaigning.

The society organises tours, both to UK locations (most recently the north-east of England; previous visits have included Harwich, Pembroke Dock and Bursledon) and to sites overseas, particularly in France where the likes of Brest, Rochefort and La Rochelle have been visited. An annual conference attracts speakers of international calibre, and these are sometimes held abroad in conjunction with other organisations (in Malta in 2007 in conjunction with the International Congress of Maritime Museums and in Bermuda in 2012 in conjunction with the National Museum of Bermuda). The papers given at these conferences have been published in the society's *Transactions*, which have been very positively reviewed. Seven volumes have been published to date with an eighth due for publication in 2012; this will be the last to be edited by Professor Ray Riley, formerly of the University of Portsmouth, who has done much to establish the publication as an internationally respected journal of record [2]. The society also produces a newsletter-cum-journal, *Dockyards*, twice a year: this contains reports on the society's activities, articles on dockyard and naval history, book reviews, etc.

2 The UK National context and the society's role in heritage preservation

Although the naval estate had contracted slowly from 1945 onwards (for example, Sheerness dockyard closed in 1960), the last years of the Cold War and its aftermath witnessed a dramatic reduction in the Royal Navy's 'footprint'. Chatham and Gibraltar dockyards closed in 1984 followed by Rosyth and Portland naval bases ten years later, while there was also a steady contraction at both Devonport and Portsmouth. Parts of the most historic areas at Chatham and Portsmouth were developed as heritage attractions from the 1980s onwards, but elsewhere, the naval estate's waterfront locations and/or impressive buildings proved attractive to commercial developers. Some of the resulting development proved to be appropriate and of high quality (notably the Royal William victualling yard at Plymouth and parts of Pembroke Dock) but on other sites, notably the Gunwharf at Portsmouth, overblown and unattractive development which paid little or no regard to the site's history was somehow approved by the planning processes.

At first the society did not explicitly envisage a role for itself in heritage campaigning. The aims as set out in the constitution adopted in 1997 were primarily research orientated; the first meeting culminated in an expression of a unanimous desire 'to build up a kindred spirit' [3]. Much of the society's work in its first fifteen years has been in fulfilment of these original aims. In particular it

has continued to have a strong research element, notably its sponsorship of the 'Navy Board Project' which has involved teams of volunteers calendaring and placing online the Navy Board papers at both the National Archives, Kew, and the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

However, the original constitution also included the following aims:

- Increase public awareness of historic dockyards and related sites.
- Increase access to historic dockyards and related sites.

A mission statement was adopted on 18 April 1998:

The Naval Dockyards Society...is concerned with, and publishes material on: naval dockyards and associated activities, including victualling, medicine, ordnance, shipbuilding, shipbreaking, provisions and supplies; all aspects of their construction, history, archaeology, conservation, workforce, surrounding communities and family history; all aspects of their buildings, structures and monuments relating to naval history. The Society is therefore involved closely in the terrestrial and underwater heritage of all these sites.

These stated objectives of the society gradually came to be interpreted as permitting – indeed, impelling – it to intervene in important development issues on dockyard and other naval-related sites, a number of which arose during the 2000s.

3 Case study 1: Gibraltar

On 11 December 2005 the Society was contacted by Gibraltar residents to assist in opposing the Gibraltar government plan to demolish the Rosia Bay Water Tanks and build a block of flats in their place. The Rosia Tanks were built between 1799 and 1804 because Admiral Lord St Vincent was staying in Gibraltar in 1799 and realised that a reliable water supply and victualling store was necessary because Britain had no allies within the Mediterranean, and Tetuan and Ceuta could not consistently supply the navy. The house where he stayed still exists (supposedly Nelson's body was brought there before taken home after Battle of Trafalgar). It was later occupied by Victualling Yard officers. Rainwater was collected from the Victualling Yard roof and stored in six underground tanks, cut into the cliffs next to the yard to avoid having to build retaining walls. One million bricks were transported from Spain, North Africa and Britain and sealed with hydraulic cement. There was a pump house on the site. The six tanks, holding 5,000 tons of water, were 55-60 metres long, 4.5-7.2 metres wide and 6.5 metres high, with the water reaching the waterside through a culvert. The tanks were part of the whole Victualling Yard complex and built together so that both water and victuals could be supplied from one site. It came into operation eighteen months before the Battle of Trafalgar. Some of the surviving British ships and captured prizes took on stores from Rosia Bay after the battle before returning home.

The Tanks remained in use by the navy until 2004 and were in good condition in January 2006. In October 2005, the same month that Gibraltar was hosting international celebrations for Trafalgar 200, Chief Minister Peter Caruana announced that the water tanks would be demolished to build an eight storey



block of 200 'affordable' flats. The Chief Minister maintained that Rosia Bay was the only place available for affordable homes. There were in fact many other empty sites at Cumberland, North Front Aerial Farm/Eastern Beach, Europa Point, while Eastern Beach site was being created by landfill. There had also been many luxury developments (then costing £300,000-£1m) around the harbour at the Coaling Yard, Queensway, and two rowing clubs were being moved for luxury developments. In 2004-7 the UK disposed of a large number of MOD sites to the Gibraltar Government in non-monetary transfers [4]. Within 21 days of the announcement 3,000 signatures, 10% of the Gibraltarian population of 30,000 were collected to object to the proposed development.

The Chief Minister proceeded with the demolition plan regardless, with no Environmental Impact Assessment or archaeological/architectural survey. Indeed, the Gibraltar government seemed determined to press ahead with the dubious development even at the expense of its proposed bid for UNESCO World Heritage status [5]. Gibraltar Heritage Trust took the case to Judicial Review in January 2006 but had to withdraw because it did not have the funds to pay legal damages. The South District Association carried on the campaign, holding public meetings, vigils and press conferences [6]. They invited NDS Secretary Ann Coats to visit between 6 and 11 February 2006. She was taken all round the peninsula by Gibraltar Heritage Trust and SDA to see many ex-MOD historic sites where luxury housing estates had been built during the preceding years, and many sites where affordable housing could be built. She also visited Gibraltar Dockyard, now Cammell Laird Super Yacht Facility, which was well maintained. She spoke on local radio and TV and at the public meeting on 7 February, urging the listing and preservation of the Tanks, Victualling Storehouse and Rosia Bay complex, which includes Parson's Battery, the Grand Arsenal, a rail tunnel linking the base to the Dockyard, a hoist to raise injured seamen to the Royal Naval Hospital and a cold meat store cut into the cliffs. Five generations of one family attending the meeting had supplied the Victualling Yard.

Ann Coats argued that the site would be valuable to the Gibraltarian economy as a maritime heritage site, improving Gibraltar's case for World Heritage status, provoking the Chief Minister to criticise her for coming to Gibraltar to tell them to protect their victualling heritage when Great Britain's own victualling sites had been destroyed. He had to be corrected: Royal William and Royal Clarence Victualling Yards still exist and have been developed for residential and commercial use. The local press covered the case exhaustively. On 7 February Ann accompanied representatives of the South District Association who handed in evidence (that they could not submit to the courts) to Chief Minister Peter Caruana OBE and HE Governor Francis Richards OBE. The Governor repeated that this was a defined domestic issue and he could not become involved unless the Chief Minister had not carried out a procedure correctly. Ann was unable to visit the Tanks site itself, although the roof could be seen from various points around Rosia Bay.

After Ann's return to the UK the Naval Dockyards Society worked with the Society for Nautical Research, SAVE Britain's Heritage, ICOMOS-UK, Europa

Nostra, MEPs and the South District Association to save the Rosia Tanks [7]. However, the British Government maintained that this was a 'defined domestic issue' and would not intervene. The Gibraltar Government remained intransigent: in a letter to the NDS, one of its functionaries sarcastically demanded to know how many water tanks had been preserved in the UK, thus revealing either startling ignorance about the uniqueness of the Rosia site or a cynical willingness to obfuscate in order to conceal his government's distinctly questionable agenda. Sadly, the Rosia Tanks were demolished in August 2006 [8].

Following this high-profile intervention, the Society has taken an active role in defending dockyard heritage around the world from planning applications which threaten the remaining tangible heritage.

4 Case study 2: Sheerness

On 17 June 2000 NDS visited Sheerness Dockyard; the nearby dockyard church stood empty, prior to being gutted by fire in 2001. In 9 July 2005, following a request by Sheppey NDS member David Hughes, the Society sent its first letter to Swale Borough Council opposing the first planning application by George Demetriou which proposed five new blocks of flats (together with underground car parking) among the residential gardens of the Georgian buildings at Sheerness Dockyard, which he had bought for £350,000 in 2003. On 25 June 2007 we wrote to the council:

Reasons why no new building should be permitted in the Georgian grounds include the serious detrimental effect any such building would have on the context or setting of the historic building assemblage; causing of irrevocable damage to important archaeology (the foundations of the George Ledwell Taylor Stable Block, the Stable Mews and garden walls of Dockyard Terrace/Regency Close, the garden of the Commissioner's Residence/Dockyard House, the Commissioner's Stable Block, and the garden of Boatswain's House/Dockyard Cottage, etc); the destruction of a section of the grade II listed Dockyard Wall and serious threats to the flora and fauna of the site (including a colony of scorpions).

Despite the loss of a number of significant buildings and engineering works in the half century since the Royal Navy closed the dockyard, Sheerness remains a remarkably intact and rare example of a minor but important dockyard redeveloped and modernised in the immediate aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars when expenditure on such works was severely curtailed. Its only parallel in this respect is the naval dockyard at Bermuda, but the latter lacks the formal planning, while Sheerness benefited from the input of the great civil-engineer/architects, John Rennie and his son. Their work makes Sheerness Dockyard one of the most important groups of historic buildings, not just on the Isle of Sheppey, but also in Kent and internationally.

We, in conjunction with many other heritage conservation groups, continued successfully to oppose Demetriou's successive applications until 2011, when Spitalfields Historic Buildings Trust purchased the entire 1820s Rennie site,



containing six Grade II* and four Grade II buildings on four acres of land for £1.85m [9]. The houses are now being restored appropriately by the Trust.

However, a campaign to oppose a development of 22 flats with an enabling development of five terraced houses in St Paul's Dockyard Church Sheerness (on the EH At Risk Register) is ongoing, and a new proposed development for wind turbine manufacturing (WTM), which will destroy the Mast and Boat House, will proceed during 2012. On 10 January 2011 NDS had urged the inclusion of the whole of Sheerness Dockyard within Sheerness Royal Dockyard and Bluetown Conservation Area Boundary Review:

The Naval Dockyards Society therefore proposes that the *whole dockyard* be included within the Extended Conservation Boundaries, in order to protect vital archaeology which has not been addressed specifically in this document but represents a useful future resource. Additionally, the Mast and Boat House (Building No. 26) and the 1820s Pumping Engine House (known as Jamaica House) should also be included in this extended protection. It should also include the extant Georgian granite walls of the now filled in Camber and Small Basin. This would give greater protection to the listed buildings, basins and docks, and enhance interpretation of the civil engineering and working history of the yard. The NDS strongly supports SBC's recommendations to English Heritage that the noted aboveground and underground features be scheduled.

Needless to say, Swale Borough Council did not include the area which is now identified as indispensable for Vesta's WTM: 'unfortunately without the removal of the Mast House their proposed facility is not viable' [10].

As Ann Coats says, it is a never-ending contest, as the MOD, Audit Office and local authorities pursue their agendas to dispose of 'brownfield' dockyard sites to property developers. NDS will pursue the issues of Deptford Dockyard, Sheerness Chapel and Vesta's WTM during 2012, aided by the commitment of its historians, civil engineers and local campaigners.

5 Case study 3: Chatham

In 2010 NDS was invited by English Heritage to be a consultee to Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust's application to grant a late nineteenth century slipway at Chatham Dockyard immunity from listing. Malcolm Tucker, MA, CEng, MICE, and NDS member, prepared the NDS response in September 2010:

To sum up, the Chatham slipway represents a significant feature of a dockyard, namely a slipway purpose-built for both boats and masts, that has not received adequate typological attention in the past and is now very poorly represented elsewhere. It retains its original fabric of stone paving, brick walls and granite copings, with stone access steps, and is very substantially and handsomely constructed in traditional style. We consider that it scores highly under Rarity and Aesthetic Merit.

By virtue of its use it has Group Value with the Mast House (Grade I), the North Mast Pond and the Lower Boat Store (Grade II*). The unlisted river wall and entrance to the former South Mast Pond have associated interest with the slipway, while the slipway together with the latter features have visual Group

Value with the Nos. 3 to 7 Covered Slips and the Dry Dock entrances to their south.

We consider therefore that the Mast and Boat Slip is worthy of addition to the Statutory List and it should not be granted a certificate of immunity.

In May 2011 NDS was informed by EH that the Minister for Tourism and Heritage had decided not to add the boat slipway, north of covered slip 7 to the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. However, the report did incorporate several architectural and material details made by NDS that will now form part of the historical record.

6 Case study 4: Deptford

Deptford Royal Dockyard was established before 1513 and closed in 1869. After reuse as a foreign cattle market until 1913, the site was mostly levelled during the twentieth century and a succession of large warehouses built across it, latterly handling newsprint for News International and known as Convoy's Wharf. The foundations of the Tudor and early-Georgian storehouse under part of the site are a scheduled ancient monument, the surviving 1846 Olympia shipbuilding shed is listed Grade 2, and extensive remains of docks and slipways exist beneath the ground.

A massive redevelopment proposal centred upon a Richard Rogers design was submitted to Lewisham Council by News International in 2002. On 18 September 2004 NDS wrote to London Borough of Lewisham regarding its concerns with the Richard Rogers Partnership's proposal for this site, principally 'that *the main features lie beneath ground level*'. Thus the developers miss the point when they say "there are few visible reminders of the long and varied history of Convoys Wharf" and base their ideas largely on this premise.' It regarded the proposal to use the old Mast Ponds and Basin as 'shallow ornamental water features' as 'trivialisation of the potential of the site' and objected to the Great Dock being overshadowed by a huge rubbish re-cycling plant. It urged that the 'Great Dock must be exposed and used (as in many other similar locations) for the accommodation of historic ships. To do otherwise is to miss an unrivalled opportunity of making Deptford's maritime history a visible reality.' The proposal was referred back to the Lord Mayor of London and was not revived in its original form.

In 2011 Hutchison Whampoa, the new owners of the site, submitted a new proposal. On 14 October 2011 NDS contended that 'This Application shows insufficient regard in places for the documentation and archaeology of Deptford Dockyard which confirm its unique intangible heritage, in particular for the setting of Olympia Slip Shed and the above ground interpretation of the Royal Dockyard Basin and its river connection.' It recommended that the design brief should incorporate far more design and links to historic sites outside and along the Thames Path (Greenwich Royal Hospital, the Observatory, the National Maritime Museum, Woolwich Dockyard, Trinity House, the East India Company, John Penn's Boiler Factory at Payne's Wharf, the Victualling Yard,

Rum Store and Offices and Victoria Dock and other commercial docks to the west). Specific points were that:

- Olympia Slip Shed (1846) be restored for both permanent and temporary exhibitions of artefacts with interactive displays showing key events and Dockyard changes; and an interpretation centre built within to resource ongoing research and interpretation.
- Basin/Wet Dock (1517) be presented as a piazza, and have its outline, gates etc. marked by stone paving.
- Tudor/Georgian Storehouse (1513) to have a significant part of its foundation walls exposed, protected environmentally and interpreted and displayed with appropriate artefacts, beneath the new buildings but visible to the public.
- Great/Dry Dock (c. 1517) be restored for public display. The option should be available to display a reconstructed ship from Deptford's rich shipbuilding past to visibly interpret shipbuilding and engineering practices and make clear links with the nearby Master Shipwright's House and the office of Surveyor of the Navy Samuel Bentham [11].

Very many local heritage groups and NDS members Chris Mazeika and Will Richards, owners of the immediately adjacent Master Shipwright's House (1703) also criticised the proposals [12]. On 9 November 2011 the Borough of Lewisham stated that it was 'unable to support the application.' Lewisham Mayor Sir Steve Bullock announced that he 'will hold a public event to allow interested parties to present information on the history of the site and share their views on how this could inform and be reflected in proposals.' NDS will take part.

7 Case study 5: Devonport South Yard

In May 2008 NDS was alerted to the future closure of Plymouth Naval Base Museum (occupying the Pay Office) by Mary Wills, secretary of the Friends of PNB, which organised visits and Heritage Open Days; the society had toured Plymouth Naval Base in May 2002. The museum, including items collected by Stanley Greenwood (Mary's father) of the Naval Stores Department at Devonport since 1941, was opened by Dr. Basil Greenhill, Director of the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich on 28 April 1969. On 21 March 2009 NDS proposed to stakeholders that the museum should move into the West Ropery, which would have convenient access via Mutton Cove Gate. This proposal was not taken up. In September 2009 an archivist, working under the guidance of the National Museum of the Royal Navy, was employed by Babcock Marine to evaluate the museum collection.

On 15 June 2009 it was announced on the *This is Plymouth* website that under the Navy's Programme Roundel the MOD would dispose of 'more than half, 87 acres, of the South Yard, the first 15 of which have just been handed over to

Princess Yachts, on a 125-year lease, to build 105-foot and larger super vessels.' South Yard is the most historic part of Devonport Yard, whose core was a revolutionary design by Edmund Dummer in the 1690s: a stepped stone dry dock opening onto a wet dock, with storehouses around it, to minimise time taken in getting men and supplies to ships needing repair.

In 2010 Princess Yachts' application for three large ship halls was submitted to Plymouth City Council. On 28 June 2010 NDS wrote to the council in response: 'A proposed development on this scale will inevitably damage the setting of historic buildings in South Yard, have a serious impact on the historic plan of the dockyard and curtail long-established vistas at the heart of the yard.' It concluded: 'the historic buildings of South Yard will be threatened irrevocably by additional activities which are not clarified within the Planning Application documents, in particular:

- threats of physical damage to the historic buildings
- unclarified loss of the West Ropery
- destruction of historic vistas
- destruction of assemblage and sense of place
- permanent loss to the public of the Ropery Complex and Gazebo
- loss of integrated historic group value by isolating buildings and threatening future physical damage to the historic built environment.

On 29 July 2010 the Planning Committee recommended acceptance of the application, despite at least two of the committee voicing their concerns. A spokesman for English Heritage said that the organisation was 'disappointed' at the decision, which would have 'an irreversible impact on the rest of the historic South Yard' [13]. The future of the naval base museum remains unclear.

8 Successes and failures: a summary

The NDS's greatest failures have been the Gibraltar Water Tanks and Plymouth South Yard. Despite the strong support of the Rosia Bay community, writing to as many stakeholders as possible and receiving much sympathetic support, the peculiar – some might say Ruritanian – constitutional situation in Gibraltar was not amenable to public pressure for heritage interventions. There were too many international political agendas concerning British-Spanish relations, opening up Gibraltar airport to cross-Spain flights, lucrative Gibraltar property developments, the political structure within Gibraltar and the low priority of heritage within its economic agenda, which prioritised international gambling over heritage as a revenue source. Conversely the Plymouth South Yard campaign, despite sound grassroots opposition to the application, was unsuccessful because the main stakeholders, the MOD and Plymouth City Council, had agendas which did not prioritise dockyard and naval history. In particular, the dire employment situation in Plymouth made Princess Yachts' proposal to create over a thousand jobs virtually irresistible [14].

The society's greatest success to date has without a doubt been the residential quarter of Sheerness Dockyard, due to the unstinting campaign directed by national organisations such as NDS itself, SAVE Britain's Heritage, led by Will



Palin, and local champions David Hughes and Debbie Cresswell; and to local councillors' consistent opposition to damaging planning applications. It must be said that English Heritage and some of the officers of Swale Borough Council were not always supportive, as the estate should have been better protected by local authority use of its statutory powers; and their support for the final application was at odds with the rest of the heritage community. It is also a significant factor that the Sheerness residential quarter is an aesthetically pleasing estate, set in potentially beautiful grounds, whereas Plymouth South Yard is a less attractive operational industrial area with many derelict areas.

Plymouth South Yard is also a much larger estate, with more complex planning and remediation issues. Both are out of sight of their neighbouring dockyard communities, which is a factor relevant to all dockyard sites; being concealed in this way reduces their significance to the current communities. Moreover, the huge decline in the numbers employed at dockyards and naval bases has greatly reduced awareness of their role and historical significance in the communities that surround them, as well as having a detrimental effect on the wider economy of the areas in question. A particularly telling and poignant example can be found at Plymouth, where the trade of the shop selling pasties to dockyard workers is now a third of what it was only some twenty years ago [15].

All in all, our experience suggests that there are clearly very different issues at play in yards where much of the estate is still used by the navy (e.g. Portsmouth, Devonport North Yard), by other heavy industrial activities (e.g. Sheerness and Devonport South Yard) or are essentially derelict and available 'brown field' sites (e.g. Deptford), and the society has had to learn how to respond appropriately to these very different contexts. To lump dockyards together as one category of 'defence heritage' ignores the wide variety of local contexts that can exist, as well as the substantial variations in the nature and importance of the surviving built heritage. Moreover, the national and international organisations with oversight roles, notably English Heritage, have sometimes demonstrated only a hazy or incomplete awareness of the nature and significance of dockyard heritage, although this situation has begun to improve in very recent years – partly as a result of the existence of, and interventions by, the NDS.

9 Conclusion

The National Audit Office 2010 report, *A Defence Estate of the Right Size to Meet Operational Needs*, [16] stated that the MOD 'has identified 12 per cent of its sites [their total amounting to 240,000 hectares in the UK] (2 per cent of land) as having no current operational need and being available for disposal' [16, p.5]. It suggested that: 'Sites that are in poor condition or need considerable investment to make them fit for purpose could be candidates for disposal' [16, p.7]. It recommended: 'To put the [MOD] in a good position to both align the estate with operational requirements and drive value for money, 'it should 'immediately broadly categorise estate sites by operational importance, utilisation, cost to maintain, condition, and potential value, in order to align

better the estate with operational needs, and to identify sites and parcels of the land with potential for disposal or re-use across the public sector' [16, p.8]. It is too early to identify specific consequences of this policy, but it has been clear for some time that some of the more southerly areas of HM Naval Base Portsmouth, including the historic Block Mills, are likely to be transferred into the heritage area [17].

Thus the prospects for the historic dockyard sites in the United Kingdom are particularly volatile at the present time, and are likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. The consequences of the 2010 SDSR have not been fully worked through, but might lead to further contractions of the estate (that is, additional to those suggested by the National Audit Office); less easily predictable is the 2014 referendum on Scottish independence, where a 'yes' vote would inevitably see the abandonment of Rosyth and a downgrading of Faslane (although neither has significant built heritage) together with a concomitant renaissance of the naval presence at Devonport in particular. The NDS will continue to monitor all such developments, intervening when it feels it appropriate to do so and, indeed, not always in a critical way: many derelict or redundant dockyard sites, such as Convoys' Wharf at Deptford, are crying out for sympathetic development, many such sites have outstanding heritage potential, and we are fully prepared enthusiastically to support sensitive proposals. Importantly, our interventions in development issues which have a high profile in their local areas mean that we are now regarded as an expert body whose opinion is to be sought out, as the Chatham slipway case demonstrates; in other words, the society seems to be making the transition from being an 'outsider' pressure group to 'insider' status, a change that will bring new challenges and responsibilities. Overall, though, the NDS looks forward to continuing to exercise all aspects of its remit as the principal international body concerned specifically with the history of dockyards and the civil aspects of naval history.

Acknowledgement

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References

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