



Maritime England

Royal Navy and Merchant Navy in the history of the nation

27 August–2 Sept. 2024 (MK 390)

7 days • £2,820

Lecturer: Dr James Davey

Surveys the maritime history of what was once the world's greatest trading nation.

Visits the finest historic dockyards surviving anywhere, and famous historic ships, including Henry VIII's *Mary Rose* and HMS *Victory*.

Concentrates on the Royal Navy in the ages of sail and steam, but also with due focus on the merchant marine.

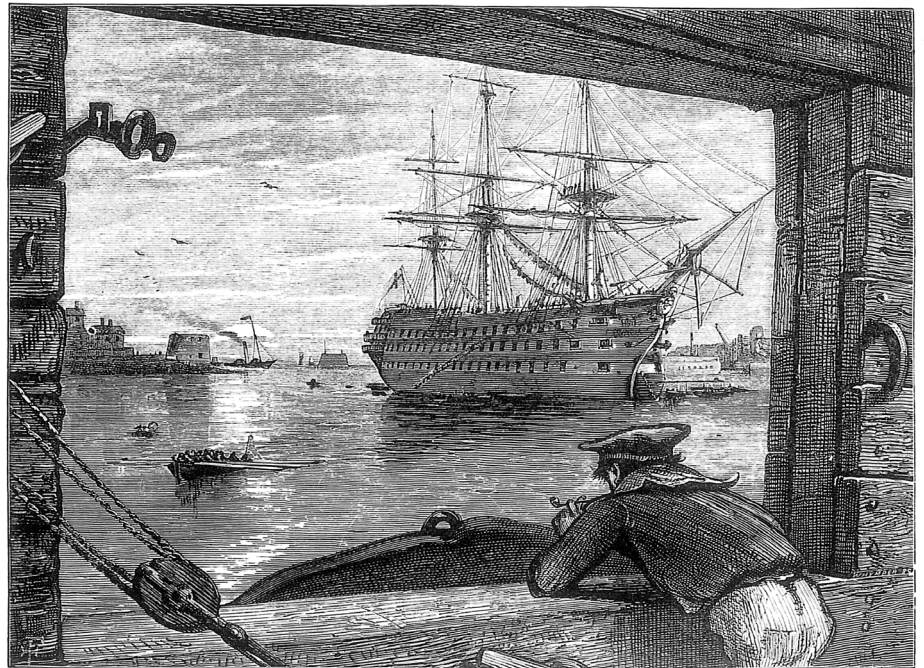
Just two hotels, modern and comfortable.

With over 70 ships, the Royal Navy remains among the most powerful seaborne armed forces in the world today, though it trails far behind the leader: the United States has 430. The statistics were very different at the end of the Napoleonic Wars: with 713 ships, the Royal Navy was larger than the next six navies put together. Even a hundred years later, despite the absence of major wars and a shrinking share of the world's economy, government policy maintained the Royal Navy at more than twice the size of the next two navies combined.

Before the 18th century, success at sea was intermittent and rarely sustained, the French, Spanish or Dutch generally possessing more powerful forces. Under the last Stuarts and the Hanoverians there was steady investment in the Navy – up to half the total of government wartime expenditure – and Britain began to gain global supremacy through improvements in skills, technology and tactics, as well as sheer number of ships. The Royal Navy became a centre of industrial enterprise and innovation.

Success at sea transformed Britain into the world's maritime superpower in the 19th century. It enabled international trade by all nations to flourish, with a virtuous circle of more customs revenue leading to a larger navy and therefore more merchant shipping. The power of the Royal Navy as a deterrent and an enforcer of free trade cannot be overestimated.

The merchant marine enjoyed a dominance similar to that of its military counterpart (honoured with the title of Merchant Navy by George V after the sacrifices of the First World War). So much has changed in recent decades that it is difficult to hoist in the metrics: 40% of the world's trade around 1840 was British; around 1900 some 80% of the world's shipping was registered in England. Dominance of



HMS Victory, wood engraving c. 1880.

the sea lanes was bound up with the history of an empire of unprecedented global reach. The history of maritime England is therefore a large chunk of the story of the nation, its tribulations and triumphs, its evolving society and economy, its ethics and culture.

The tour begins in London, the world's largest port for nearly 300 years. Along the way you see some of the most remarkable historic ships in existence, the world's longest serving industrial complex, a wonderfully preserved Georgian shipbuilding village, Britain's finest group of Baroque buildings, powerful forts, a moving Titanic museum, and much else – all with the commentary of an outstanding naval historian.

Itinerary

Day 1: Pool of London, Docklands. Start at 11.00am at the site of the quays between London Bridge and Tower Bridge, the Pool of London. By Jubilee Line to the West India Dock, pioneer of the massive expansion of the port downstream; the Docklands Museum is in an 1802 warehouse. Decline and closure of the docks was followed by astonishing rebirth in the 1990s as a high-tech business hub. Return to Tower Hill and visit St Katherine's Dock (1825). First of three nights in London.

Day 2: Greenwich. Founded by Mary II in 1692, the Royal Naval Hospital for retired sailors incorporates parts of a palace, and with such architects as Jones, Wren and Vanbrugh became the greatest group of Renaissance and Baroque buildings in Britain. The National Maritime Museum is the finest of its kind, the Royal Observatory has a premier place in the history of astronomy and navigation, the *Cutty Sark* (1869) was one of the last and fastest sailing cargo vessels. Return by boat along the Thames.

Day 3: Chatham. The Royal Navy's most important base in the 18th century, Chatham Dockyard narrowly escaped demolition after closure in 1984. An incomparable site for both architectural and maritime history, here survives the largest collection of Georgian industrial architecture in Britain – sheds, dry docks, warehousing and buildings for the many trades involved in shipbuilding. The ropery was the world's longest room when built (1790). There are museums of maritime treasures, explanatory displays and several historic ships.

Day 4: Bosham, Portsdown forts. The delightful little harbour town of Bosham in Sussex presents a very different aspect of England's maritime heritage. Then another contrast: a resurgent France under Emperor

Maritime England
continued

Napoleon III led to fears of invasion and the construction in the 1860s of massive defences around naval bases. Fort Purbrook (by special arrangement) and Fort Nelson, outpost of the Royal Armouries, occupy the heights above Portsmouth and are among the most impregnable and impressive fortifications in England. First of three nights in Southampton.

Day 5: Portsmouth. First visit. The Royal Navy HQ since Henry VIII; remarkably, the Historic Dockyards are cheek by jowl with the current naval base (modern warships can be seen on a harbour cruise). In aggregate the world's premier maritime history site, there are museums, audio-visual presentations, historic infrastructure and – the highlights – preserved ships, HMS *Victory*, Nelson's flagship at Trafalgar, and HMS *Warrior* (1860), the RN's first ironclad and, upon launch, the largest warship ever built.

Day 6: Southampton, Buckler's Hard. A significant harbour since the Middle Ages – Henry V's army sailed from here in 1415, the *Mayflower* in 1620 – Southampton remains one of Europe's largest ports. Home for most of the crew of the *Titanic*, the tragedy is movingly documented in the SeaCity Museum. Drive to Buckler's Hard, a charming 18th-century shipbuilding village in the New Forest; maritime museum, reconstructed workshops and cottage interiors. Some free time in Southampton; medieval city walls, quays and Tudor buildings survive.

Day 7: Portsmouth. The stunning Mary Rose Museum houses the remains of Henry VIII's flagship which capsized in 1545 and was raised from the seabed in 1982. After 30 years of conservation work, the surviving half of the hull and thousands of artefacts provide unparalleled insight into not just Tudor seafaring but also life in the 16th century. Drive to Richmond Station where the tour ends by 5.00pm; mainline and underground trains reach central London in half an hour.

Lecturer

Dr James Davey. Holding degrees from King's College London and the University of Oxford, he completed his PhD at the University of Greenwich in 2010. From 2011 to 2017 he was a curator at the National Maritime Museum, employed across a range of projects. During this time he was a Visiting Lecturer at the University of Greenwich and held honorary fellowships at University College London and the University of Leicester. He currently lectures in Naval and Maritime History at the University of Exeter.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £2,820.
Single occupancy: £3,470.

Included: hotel accommodation; breakfasts and 4 dinners with wine, water, coffee; transport by private coach, tube and boat; all admissions; all tips; the services of the lecturer and the tour manager.

Accommodation. The Apex City of London Hotel, London (apexhotels.co.uk): a 4-star hotel in a modern building next to the graveyard where Pepys is buried. Rooms are comfortable with all mod cons. **The Harbour Hotel, Southampton** (harbourhotels.co.uk): a comfortable 5-star hotel, well-positioned in Southampton harbour. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use throughout.*

How strenuous? A good level of fitness is essential. Unless you enjoy entirely unimpaired mobility, cope with everyday walking and stair-climbing without difficulty and are reliably sure-footed, this tour is not for you. Average distance by coach per day: there are two days without any coach travel, but there is an average on the remaining six days of 59 miles.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.

Combine this tour with: *Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania*, 11–24 August 2024; *Cave Art in Spain*, 3–9 September 2024; *Samarkand & Silk Road Cities*, 5–17 September 2024.