

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**24 March 2020**

**The Historic Dockyard Chatham celebrates 50 years of public tours**

April 2020 marks fifty years since the first public guided tour of the Royal Navy Dockyard at Chatham. The Historic Dockyard Chatham is seeking participants of the 1970's tours to get in touch with stories of tours they took. The Dockyard will share these stories on its website and social media to celebrate the anniversary on Friday, April 3.

The Dockyard's original monthly newspaper, Periscope, states the tours began at Pembroke Gate (now the site of the University of Kent). There were three tours of 'the Yard' each day, lasting 55 minutes in length and timed to meet public alighting off buses. Despite a slow start, with only one visitor on the first tour, 100 or more visitors were accompanied around 'the Yard' each day. By August 1970, the 1000<sup>th</sup> visitor was welcomed and presented with a framed certificate.

When the tours began in 1970, the original Dockyard site was over 300 acres. It covered not only the current site of The Historic Dockyard but also what is now known as Dockside Outlet Centre and St Mary's Island.

Since the closure of the Dockyard in 1984, The Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust has been responsible for the preservation of 80 acres of the original site and over 180,000 members of the public enjoy access to the site and its collections annually.

To celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first public tours, the Trust is seeking participants of the original 1970's tour. Any members of the public who took a tour between 1970 – 1984 are urged to contact the Trust to share their experience.

Richard Holdsworth, Director of Heritage, Public Engagement and Learning, Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust, said: *"It is extremely important to capture oral history from first-hand experiences so we can preserve this history for future generations. This is a great opportunity for us to speak to and collate history from people who partook in an original tour."*

If you took a Dockyard tour between 1970-1984 please get in touch with the Historic Dockyard's collection team with a paragraph about your memories of the tour.

Get in touch by emailing [info@chdt.org.uk](mailto:info@chdt.org.uk)

**ENDS**

**MORE PRESS INFORMATION**

Please contact Susanna Hodder if you are interested in attending these events for press purposes on 01634 823800 or email [shodder@chdt.org.uk](mailto:shodder@chdt.org.uk)

## NOTES FOR EDITORS

### The Historic Dockyard Chatham

[www.thedockyard.co.uk](http://www.thedockyard.co.uk)

The Historic Dockyard Chatham is the only place in the world that lets you explore a complete dockyard from the age of sail and beyond. It's a unique destination that celebrates Great Britain's magnificent maritime past and unmatched contribution to the Royal Navy's shipbuilding excellence that led to worldwide command of the oceans.

Chatham offers unrivalled access to the ships that shaped the world, from a Victorian anti-slavery sailing ship, to a Second World War Destroyer or a Cold War submarine and the stories of the people who made them. From Chatham's historic buildings, from the Commissioner's House and officers' quarters to the remarkable Victorian ropery, where the rigging for HMS Victory was made, to its collection of maritime archaeology, the Dockyard forms an indispensable part of Britain's naval history and its national heritage.

As a fully accredited museum, Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust collects, preserves, researches and exhibits objects and materials connected with the history of the dockyard and its people. It studies the development of Royal Navy warship design, construction and the use of the River Medway by the Royal Navy.

Visitors to and users of The Historic Dockyard Chatham are fundamental to its purpose and the economic reuse of the site and its buildings. Its staff and volunteers play a vital role in providing a high level of service and customer care. The Trust is also involved in the on-going regeneration of Medway and The Thames Gateway, with Culture and Heritage at its heart.

As part of the Trust's strategy of "Preservation through re-use" recent projects have secured the long-term financial sustainability (on a revenue basis) of the wider Historic Dockyard site. The economic outputs from the new uses of the recently opened Fitted Rigging House as well as other activities across the site will bring the total annual contribution made to Medway's economy to £26.3m in 2019, building on the 2012 estimate of £16m (64% growth).