



Media release

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Ropery wheels back in motion at The Historic Dockyard Chatham

Due to UK Government Covid-19 restrictions Master Ropemakers Ltd, the traditional manufacturing company based at The Historic Dockyard Chatham, was forced to close in March 2020 - a closure that has not occurred in the 400-year history of rope making at Chatham.

The recent loosening of lockdown restrictions for the manufacturing industry has enabled the rope makers to return to work and rope making has recommenced on the historic ropewalk this week.

Rope was first made at Chatham in the 18th Century and it is the only one of the original four Royal Navy Roperyards to remain in operation. Master Ropemakers, a wholly owned subsidiary of Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust, continues to use the skills and traditions of 400 years of rope making to supply businesses and leisure markets across the world.

Today Master Ropemakers make rope on a commercial scale for clients ranging from schools, churches and sports clubs to theatres, film production companies and garden designers as well as continuing to supply historic sailing ships, such as *HMS Victory*, *HMS Gannet*, *Cutty Sark* and *Endeavour*.

Using natural and synthetic fibres in manufacture Master Ropemakers offers bespoke design and manufacture for projects of all shapes and sizes. The team of artisan craftsmen and women not only make rope and hand-made traditional rope products but also work with it: splicing knotting, net making, mooring ropes and creating products to customer requirements.

Alex Rowling, Manager, Master Ropemakers, said: "*We are living in unprecedented times, closing the ropewalk and stopping the manufacture of rope has never happened in*

Chatham's long history. Whilst the safety of our team is a priority, we're incredibly pleased Government restrictions have started to ease and we're able to start making rope once again."

"We would like to thank everyone for their patience during our closure and we look forward to re-connecting with existing clients and reaching out to new ones. Commercial orders help to keep the Ropery alive and we urge everyone to support local businesses, like ours, during these challenging times."

Find out more about Master Ropemakers: <https://www.master-ropemakers.co.uk/>

The wider Historic Dockyard Chatham site remains closed to the visitors and public tours of the Victorian Ropery are currently not available.

MORE PRESS INFORMATION

Please contact Lynnette Crisp on 01634 823800 or email lcrisp@chdt.org.uk for further information.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

COVID-19

As with the rest of the world, Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust is closely monitoring the evolving situation around the global pandemic of COVID-19. Following UK Government guidelines the Historic Dockyard has been closed to the public from Wednesday 18th March 2020 until further notice. The Trust will continue to review the situation in line with Government guidelines and reopen as soon as it is safe to do so.

The Historic Dockyard Chatham

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).