

*Support for the Fleet. Architecture and Engineering of the Royal Navy's Bases 1700-1914*, by Jonathan Coad; ISBN 9781848020559; English Heritage 2013, 464 pp, 482 illns, hardback.

From early in the 16th century the royal dockyards were the essential support for the new permanent Royal Navy. An expanding fleet in the 18th century saw the growth of naval bases at home and increasingly overseas. At their heart lay the dockyards with their associated victualling and ordnance yards. They developed as significant industrial centres, and their focus on constructing, fitting out and maintaining warships led to the evolution of a variety of specialised and distinctive buildings. Associated with the key yards were naval hospitals, barracks and specialist training establishments, while huge engineering workshops and coaling stations became increasingly important as the fleet changed from sail to steam and from wood to iron and then steel. The steam engine was at work in the royal dockyards years before it went to sea in a warship, and at Portsmouth the world's first factory using steam-driven machine tools for mass-production was inspected by Nelson just before he sailed for Trafalgar.

This superbly illustrated book is the work of Jonathan Coad, the foremost architectural historian of the royal dockyards. It is the culmination of years of painstaking research in often neglected and unpublished archives worldwide. The aim of *Support the Fleet* is to chart the history of the construction, establishment and evolution of these naval bases at home and overseas between 1700 and 1914. This is a period covering the Royal Navy's remarkable expansion and global dominance after the Napoleonic Wars and when, for most of the 19th century, it had no serious rivals and exercised a world-wide influence.