

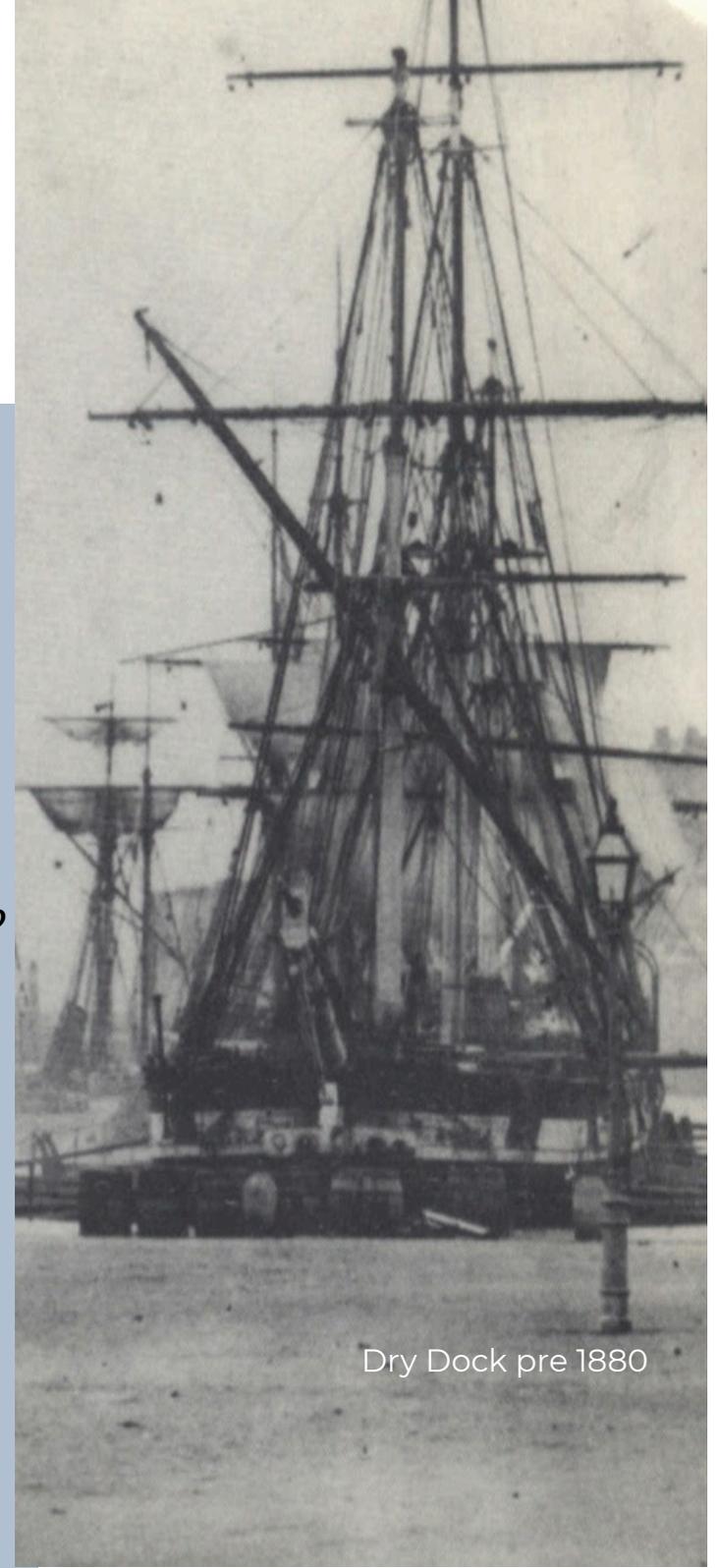
THE DRY DOCK FEASIBILITY STUDY

RAMSGATE ROYAL HARBOUR

In 2024 when Ramsgate Royal Harbour became a member of the Heritage Harbours group, it was identified that several assets of the harbour needed to be redeveloped if the harbour was to provide the facilities required for repair and construction of heritage ships.

The Dry Dock, originally constructed under the instructions of John Smeaton between 1787 and 1791, is central to the requirements of heritage vessels because it was created for exactly the type of sailing ship the Maritime Heritage Trust and National Historic Ships groups are trying to conserve. At the time the Dry Dock was built it was the only commercial dock between Gravesend and Portsmouth. It still is today.

In conserving the Dry Dock a harbour industry will be brought back to life and with it many ancillary industries. To repair a heritage timber sailing ship requires a team of skilled trades.

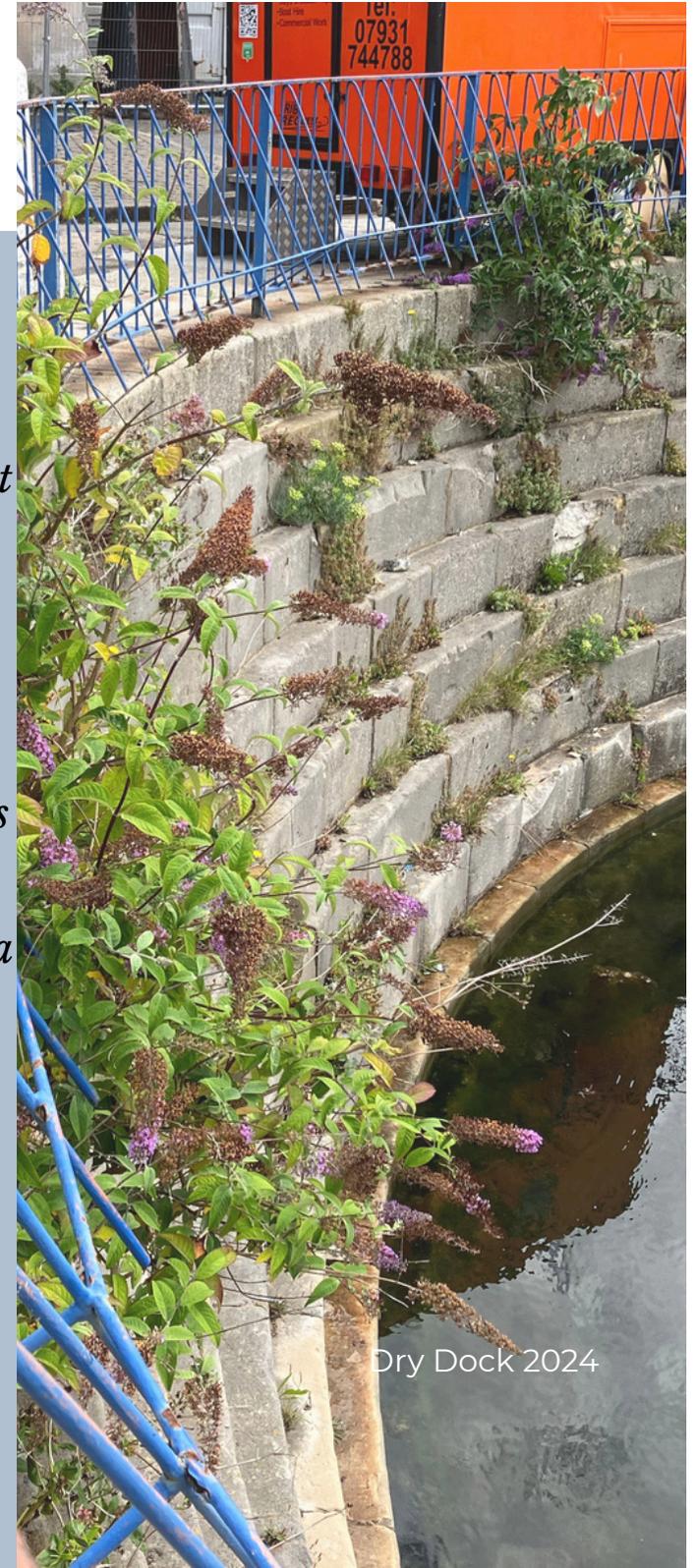


Dry Dock pre 1880

THE 2016 ARUP SURVEY

DRY DOCK FEASIBILITY

In 2016 the Ramsgate Society commissioned a survey of the Dry Dock by Arup whose findings were based on a visual survey from above the water line. This sets out the potential for three versions of conservation for the Dry Dock. Then, it was about conserving the structure to prevent further deterioration, now, this is now somewhat outdated since the Heritage Harbours membership provides deeper understanding of the pivotal role the Dry Dock would play in providing for the usefulness of the harbour to heritage vessels. Conservation therefore needs to allow for the full use of the Dry Dock - however modern technology also aligns with past harbour practice, since an early diving bell was used in the construction of the Advanced Pier and underwater drones could fulfill a similar role - though each ship at some point in the repair programme would require dry access. In the ninety years that the Dry Dock was in use, it averaged a ship repair per month and on occasion took vessels of extreme size, upward of 700 tons. This would certainly stretch the current arrangements, but a contingency option for oversized vessels is a system of coffer dams; the means through which harbour repairs were undertaken throughout its history.



Dry Dock 2024

THE ONLY COMMERCIAL DRY DOCK IN THE SOUTH EAST

INDUSTRY PARTICIPATION

shipwrights

ropemakers

mastmakers

riggingmakers

carpenters

diving team/drone operator

sailmakers

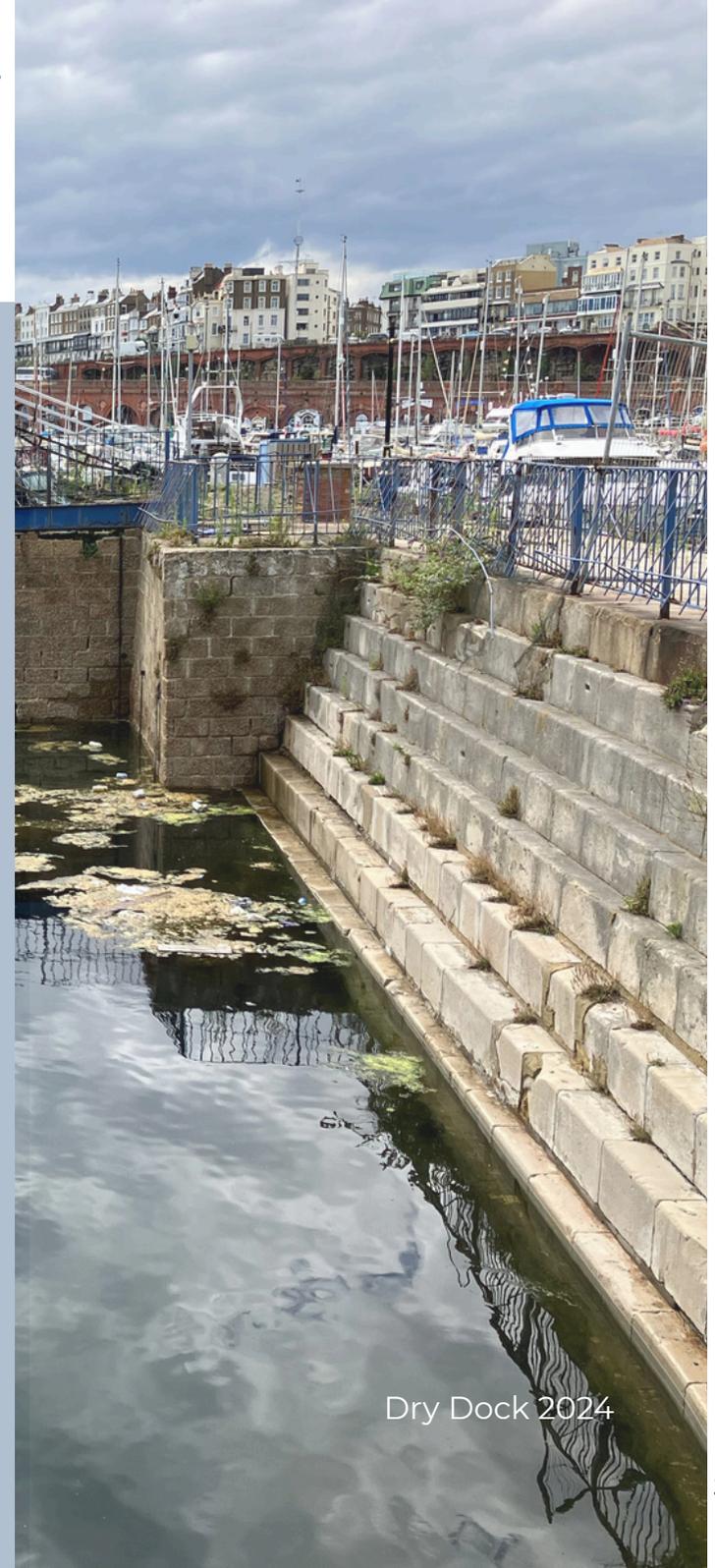
blacksmiths

engine fitters

metal hull fitters

joiners

crane operators



Dry Dock 2024

THE CURRENT CONDITION DRY DOCK FEASIBILITY

Repairing timber sailing vessels is a labour intensive occupation and each of these skilled professionals will require assistants as well as apprentices, suggesting that upward of 40 positions could be created within an already existing asset. There is already an infrastructure within the harbour; office space, workshop space, warehousing and access to refreshments and transport links.

As soon as the Dry Dock opens to heritage vessels requiring repair, the site becomes a teaching facility. It provides the opportunity for lectures and presentations on maritime industry, and the potential for courses in any of these crafts, appealing to many enthusiasts and specialists. This is an additional employment strand which provides opportunities to share the results of coursework to a wider platform, creating a study hub with the potential to be a centre of excellence. If operated as part of the Green Campus this could provide an accreditation for attendees.

Appropriate repair is essential to the restoration of historic ships and without the correct facilities this process is prolonged, requiring ongoing invasive works. Today this process would be slower to allow for the skills deficit to be overcome and to provide for training and education formats. Reopening a facility for the repair of heritage sailing ships shines a spotlight on the heritage of the harbour and this provides the potential for tours of the vessels while under repair, inviting engagement between the public, historians and the owners of the vessels. This inspires links between Ramsgate and the home harbours of the ships under repair, inviting yet another employment strand and potential for study based on maritime history. Indeed, it creates potential for film and television locations.

THE CURRENT CONDITION DRY DOCK FEASIBILITY

A major part of the harbour heritage is that it has always been a working harbour: it has never been closed in its 285 years of operation. Many of the vessels using the harbour in the past hailed from foreign ports. As it is anticipated that vessels requiring repair could be from foreign countries, Ramsgate is once again a harbour for those in need, demonstrating that the longevity of the harbour continues to have a relevance in the Twenty-first century.

The Dry Dock provides links to the past by offering the facilities that heritage sailing ships need for repair and in the process it reestablishes employment within the harbour for maritime industries, history and education. Vessels under repair will have specific requirements for lost equipment. This creates an additional layer to the working harbour, by providing for opportunities to identify lost maritime industries and reinvigorate them in an appropriate setting. In other words, once the Dry Dock is operating, it will attract additional skills to those already offered in response to the needs of the vessels using the harbour, because it is the only commercial Dry Dock between Gravesend and Portsmouth.

A conservation programme would bring the Dry Dock in line with the work being done to return the Clockhouse to meaningful use and complete the public realm enhancement that the Pier Yard will undergo after the Clockhouse conservation ends. As this area was always the heart of harbour business, it will return to this when the Dry Dock is in use, linking the sites according to the heritage of the harbour, but creating new purposes in the twenty-first century, supporting new enterprise and providing a focus for the community that speaks of fortitude and resilience.

THE CURRENT CONDITION

DRY DOCK FEASIBILITY

Importantly it continues to use the Grade II harbour for the purpose it was built for - to be useful to commercial sailing ships - the same vessels that are now historic ships.*



Harbour model circa 1975