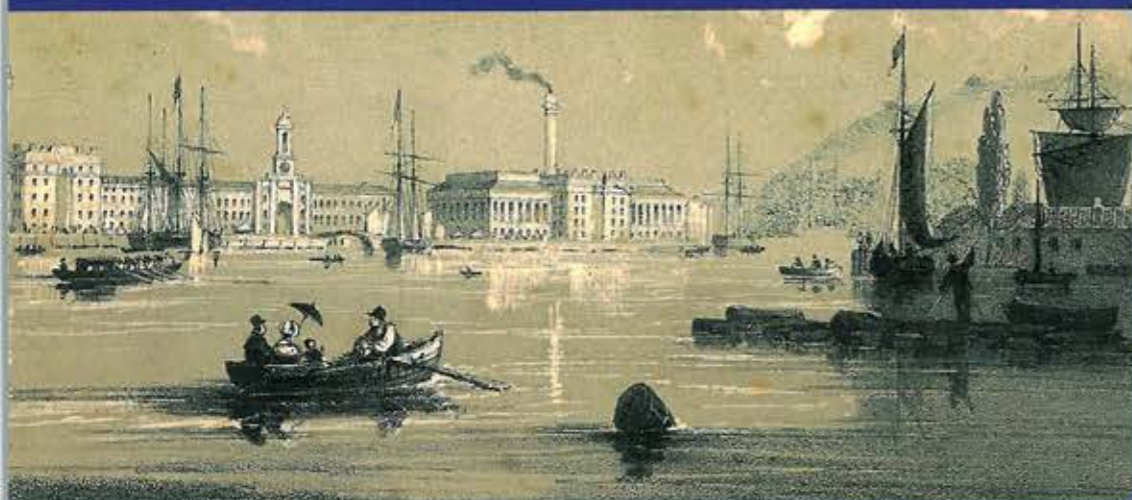


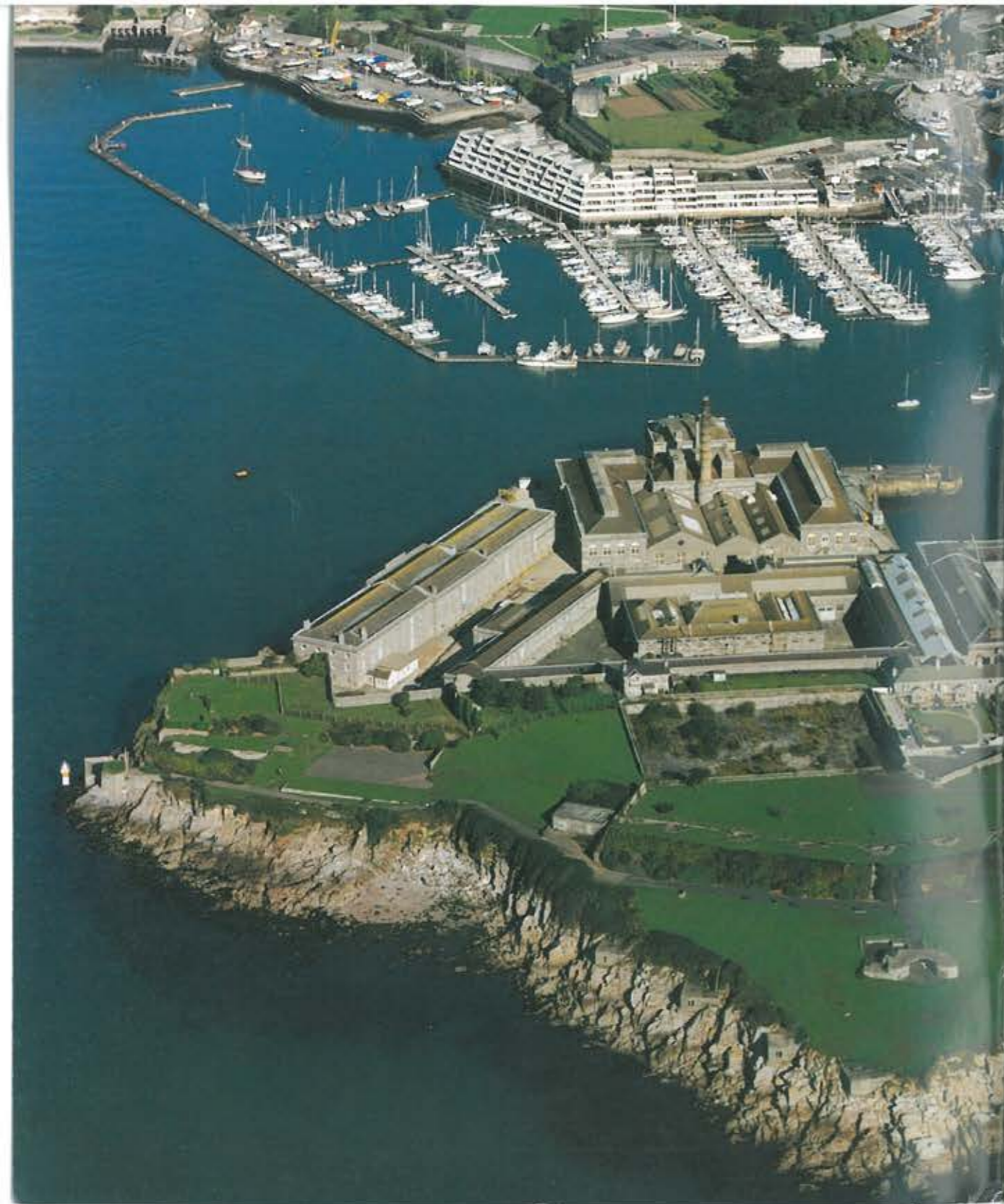


THE ROYAL WILLIAM VICTUALLING YARD



ROYAL
WILLIAM
YARD





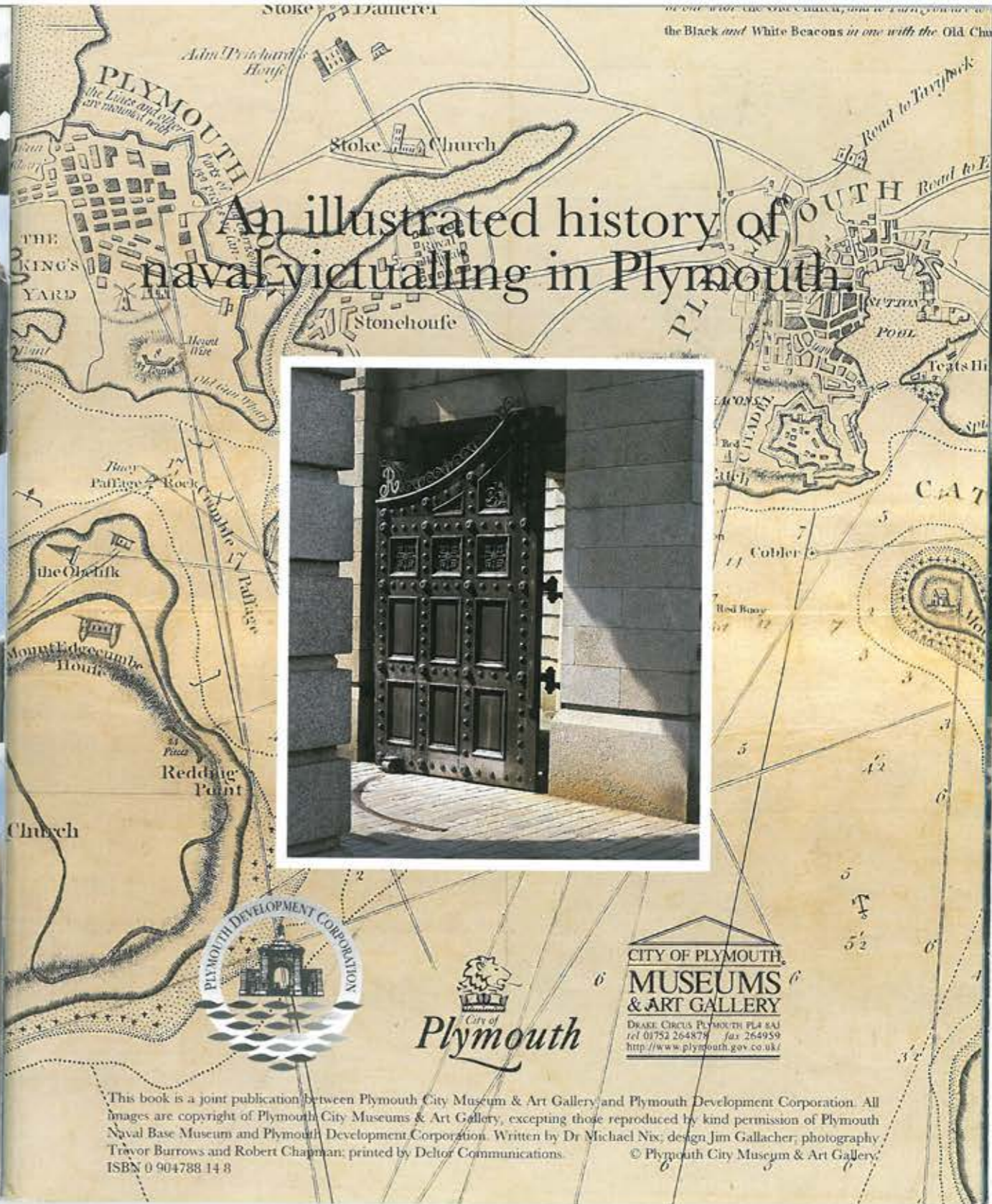
THE ROYAL WILLIAM VICTUALLING YARD



[**victualling** (*vit' ling*) supplying with provisions; —taking in provisions; —obtaining food for ships. —**victualler** (*vit' ler*) one who supplies provisions; —ship for carrying provisions to other ships.]



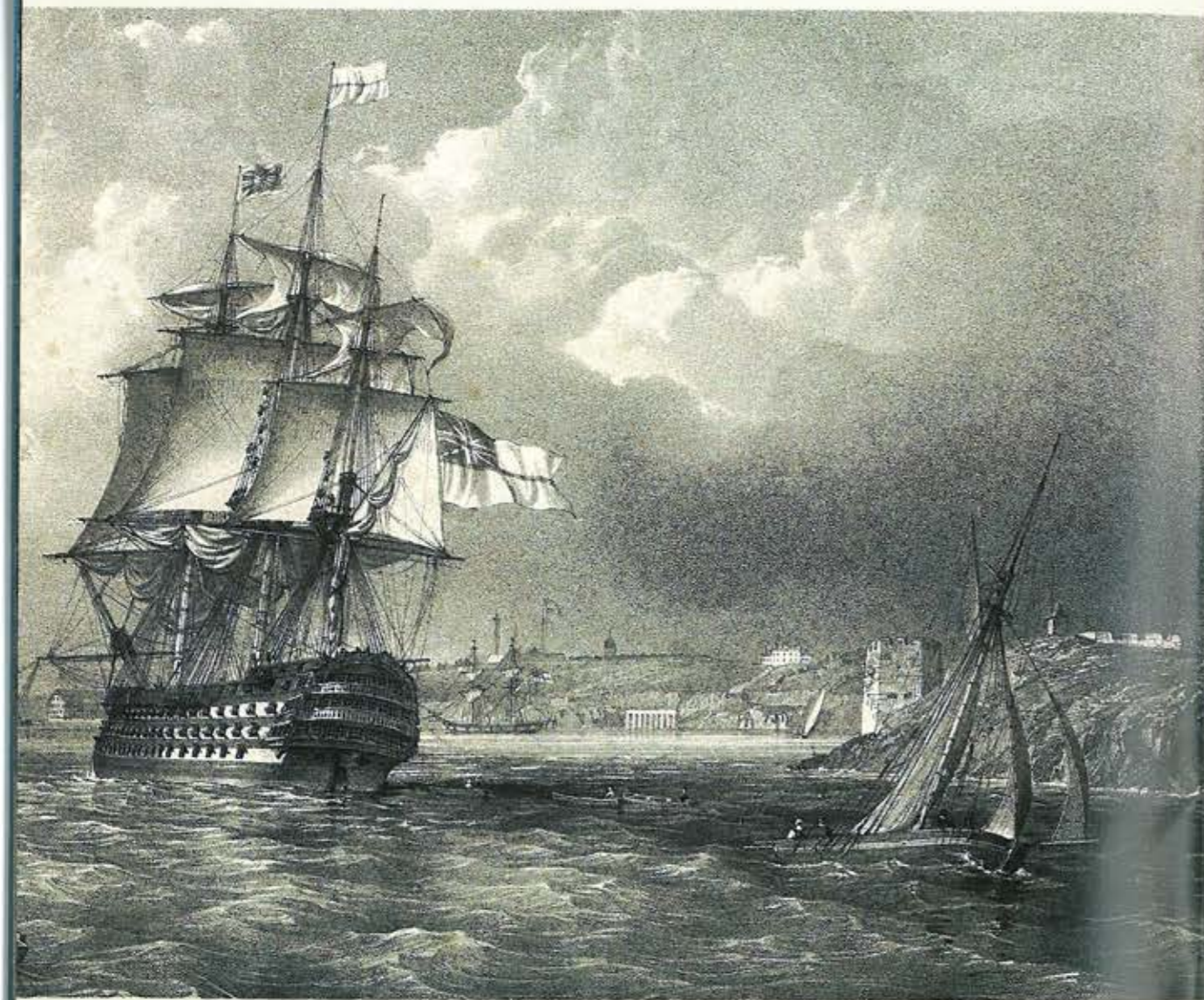
An illustrated history of
naval victualling in Plymouth



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HMS *Britannia*, entering Devonport Harbour, by L. Haghe, c1828.

Victualling in Plymouth

In the seventeenth century, the first Secretary to the Admiralty, Samuel Pepys, remarked that the English sailor loves his "*bellie above everything else*". For the navy, success in war and peace depended to a high degree on the adequate supply of food and drink.

Since at least the thirteenth century, Plymouth has been involved in victualling and supplying fleets and troops. For hundreds of years campaigning armies, victorious in battles such as Poitiers in 1356, and disastrously defeated in fighting on the Isle of Rhe in the 1620s, were supplied from Sutton Harbour. Plymouth similarly victualled the fleet of sixty fighting ships sent to oppose the Spanish Armada in 1588.

The port's role as a naval victualling station grew substantially from the middle of the seventeenth century. In the 1650s, during the Commonwealth period which followed the Civil War, new victualling storehouses were erected at Lambhay in Sutton Harbour. These buildings supplemented those already existing at Cosside.

Towards the end of the century British naval operations increasingly focused on the western approaches and the threat posed to international trade by the French Atlantic bases. A major new dockyard at Plymouth was constructed in the 1690s as a counter to this challenge.

With the concentration of Britain's main battlefleet in the western approaches, the Royal Plymouth Victualling Yard and Office in Sutton Harbour expanded considerably. The method of blockading the French first-class naval bases at Brest and Rochefort adopted in the eighteenth century required that ships remained at sea for months at a time. The task of supplying 20,000 men or more with meat, bread, beer, vegetables and biscuit, for such long periods was immense.



Medieval ship from the seal of the town of Sutton.

The Spanish Armada off Plymouth with the English fleet having manoeuvred behind them. One of a series of charts by Robert Adams showing the progress of the fleets up the Channel, 1590.





Crediton, Devonshire, by F R Lee, 1843. A typical landscape of the region from which food was supplied to the navy.

Carved wooden lintel from the entranceway to the Victualling Office, Lambhay.

Drawing of the old Victualling Yard, Lambhay, by Sibyl Jerram, 1913.

Early Autumn, South Devon, by W Eggington, 1843.



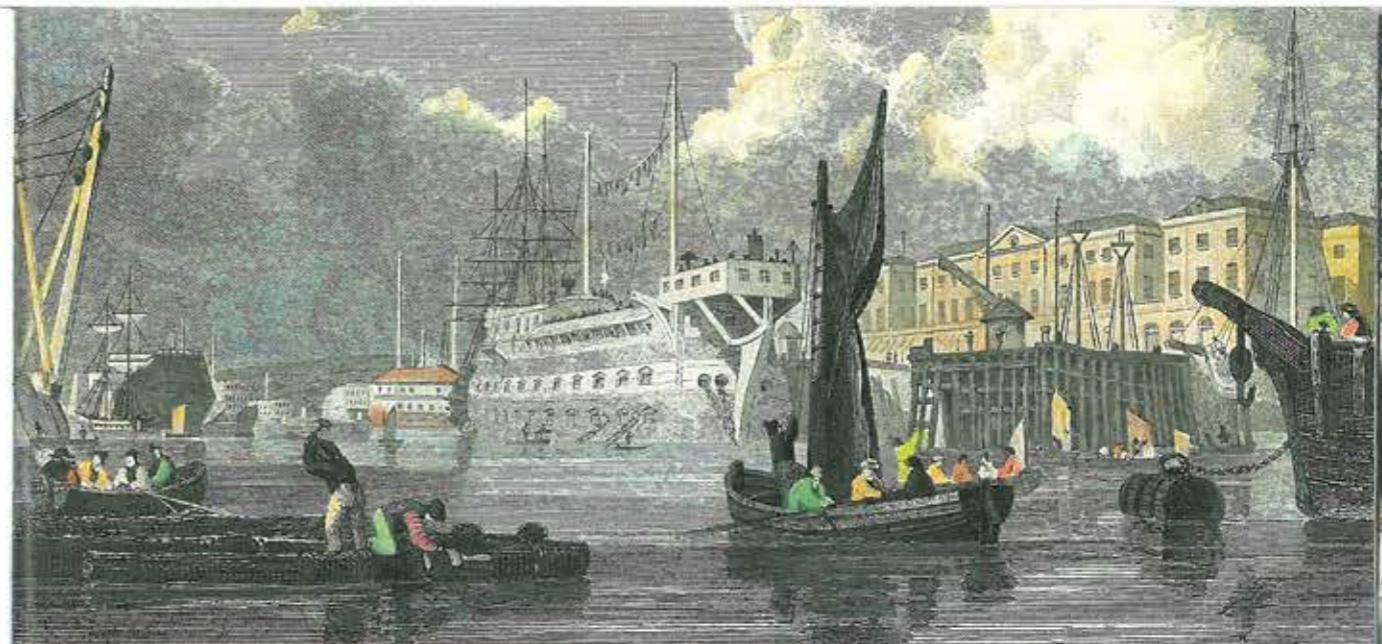
The system of provisioning warships at sea from Plymouth proved, at times, remarkably effective. This is evidenced from various admirals who recorded low sickness rates among their men. Just before the battle of Quiberon Bay in November 1759, for example, Admiral Hawke, after six months of almost continuous sea service, could report 20 sick out of 14,000 men.

The navy's policy of supplementing dry-stores with fresh provisions meant that the contribution of Devon's agriculture became increasingly important. However, the burden of supply sometimes fell heavily on the region's population. In 1795, following a bad harvest, the provisioning of a fleet which remained off the coast for two months, placed enormous demands on a very limited food surplus. High prices in local markets led to serious rioting.

The victualling yard and office at Lambhay also played a significant role in naval expeditions whose primary purpose was exploration and discovery. In 1768, before his first great voyage to the Pacific, Captain James Cook stowed on board HMS *Endeavour* provisions calculated to last eighteen months. These included four tons of beer, 185 pounds of great Devonshire cheeses, salt beef by the ton and 604 gallons of rum. However, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the numerous storehouses, lofts, cellars, bakery and granary at Lambhay were proving to be insufficient and inefficient.



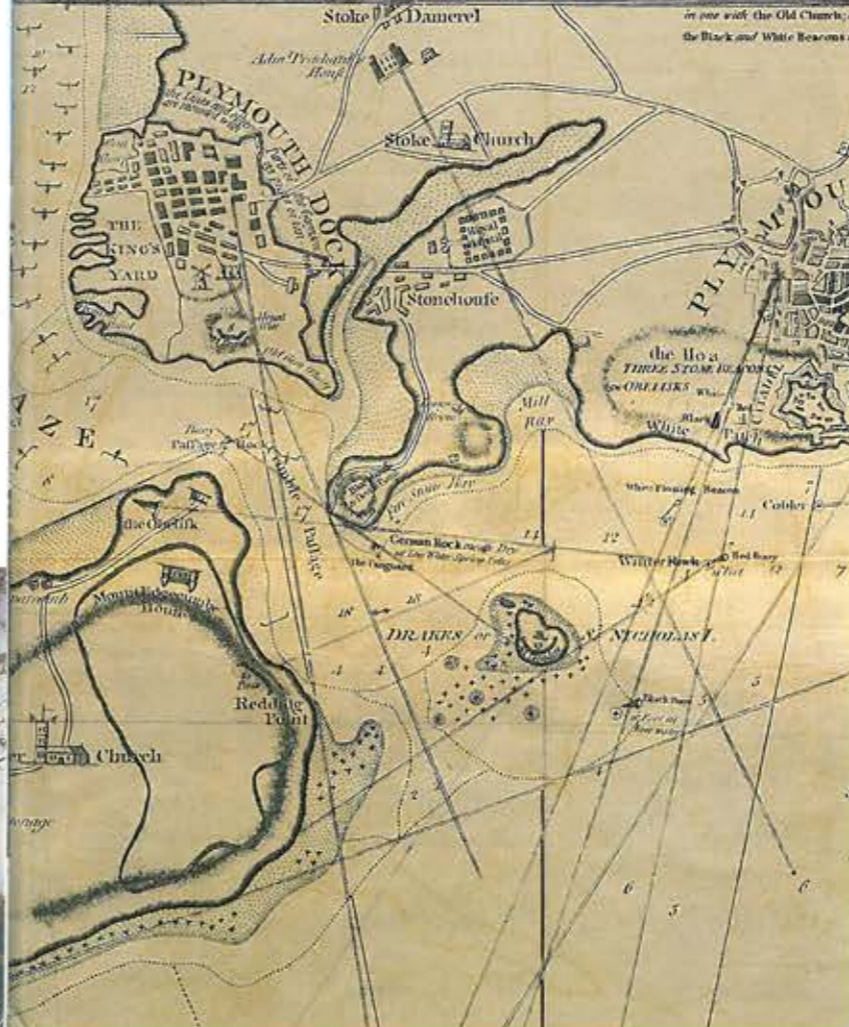
The old Victualling Yard, with part of the carting over the door. 22.11.13 5.3.



Dockyard and Harbour, Devonport, by T Allom, 1829-32.

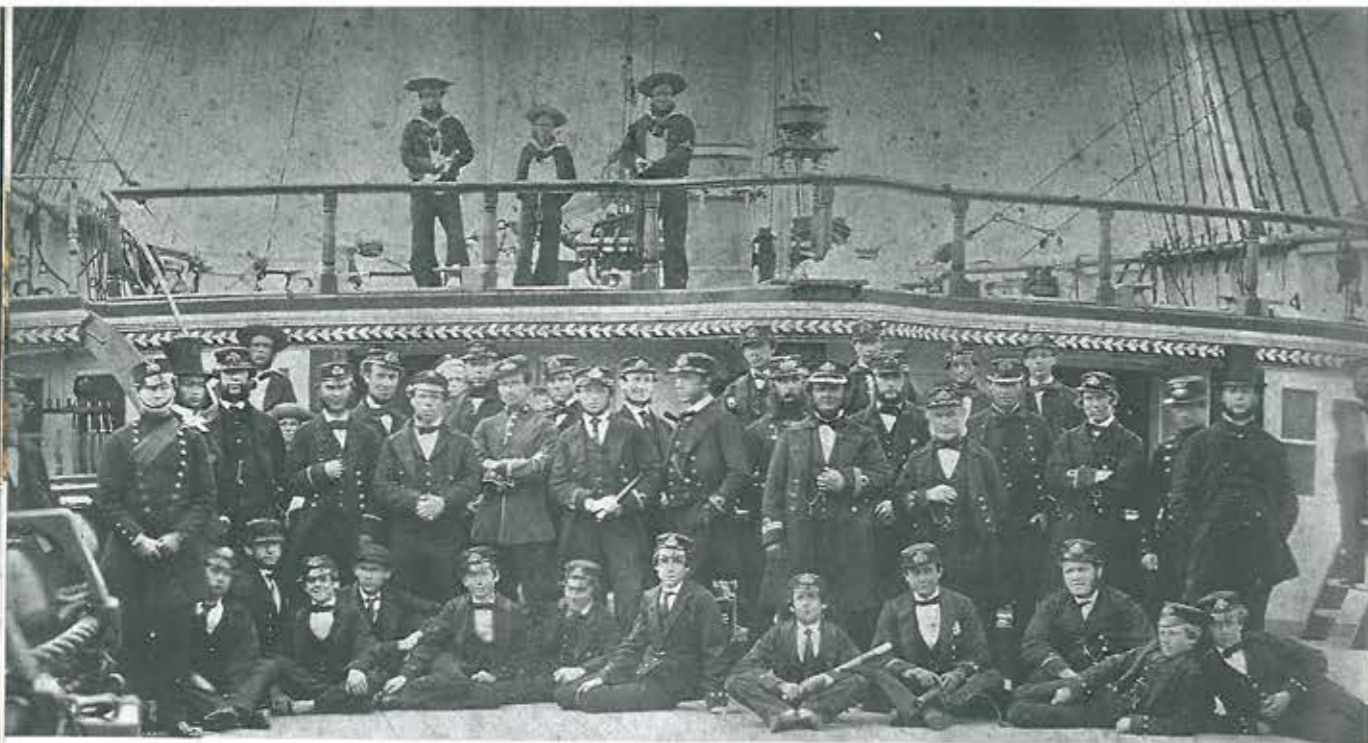
Chart of Plymouth Sound, Hamoaze and Cattewater, surveyed in 1797.

'Nautical Intelligence' from "The Star", September 1803.



PLYMOUTH, AUG. 30.—Sailed, with live cattle and fresh vegetables for the Squadron off Brest and off the Black Rocks, the *ARDENT*, of 64 guns, Capt. WINTHROP. By the latest accounts by letters from off Brest, it appears that the French Squadron in the outer Road still continue there, and in sight of the British in those Squadron manœuvre their ships daily in furling, unfurling, and hauling sails, exercising great guns and small arms, and manœuvring occasionally with their bombards, or large gun-vessels.—Went down the harbour, being completely fitted for sea, the *TRAVELLER*, of 16 guns, Capt. GOONWIN: she came to in the Sound to wait for orders. All the small vessels, particularly the gun-brigs and those with sliding keels, are ordered to be got ready as fast as possible, as they are from their easy draught of water fit for the defence of a line of coast, the entrance of rivers, &c. &c.

Came in the *Arden*, a transport, with seamen and landmen for the fleet, from the Irish Channel. Vice Admiral Sir CHARLES POLS, Bart. President of the Board of Naval Commissioners instituted by A&S of Parliament, to inquire into all the naval abuses whatsoever, and the rest of the Board, are arrived at Dock; they proceed directly to examine the Dock Yard, Victualling Office, South Down Brewery, and the Royal Naval Hospital, to make such necessary inquiries, and reform such abuses as may appear to them fit and necessary, and for the good of his Majesty's service.



Officers on board HMS *Hero*, 1860. The ship was victualled at the Royal William Yard prior to her departure to Canada, with the Prince of Wales on board.

The New Victualling Office Works from offshore, by Henry B Carter, 1828.

In 1824, the Commissioners of Victualling appointed the architect and engineer, Sir John Rennie, to design and build a new victualling yard at Cremyll Point, East Stonehouse.

With some justifiable pride, Rennie later wrote:

At Cremyll Point a fine establishment was formed in 1834 for victualling the Navy and for this purpose no place could have been better selected. Its proximity to the Dockyard, the Hamoaze and the Sound, and the great depth of water rendering it accessible at all times of the tide, enabled it to supply provisions to the different vessels of war with the greatest despatch, facility and economy, whilst its excellent internal arrangements are so designed that every article of provisions can be manufactured and supplied with equal readiness and cheapness.

Work on the new yard commenced in 1825 and the arduous task of levelling the site was undertaken by convicts. The first building Rennie constructed was the Clarence Block which was designed as a general store. This was followed in 1827 by the Melville Block, which functioned as a store and administrative centre. Other buildings included in the overall 16-acre layout



Mount Edgcumbe from Devil's Point, by an unknown artist, early 19th century.





The Royal William Victualling Yard, Stonehouse, by Nicholas Condry, 1840.

incorporated a mill, bakery, brewery, slaughterhouse, cooperage and officers' residences. The large basin could accommodate up to six transports or merchant vessels.

Although the transfer of offices and stores from Lambhay to the Royal William Victualling Yard occurred in July 1831, building work was not completed until the mid-1830s. The Yard proved its use throughout the nineteenth century, particularly in periods of crisis such as the Crimean War and the later military expedition to the Sudan.

The function of the Yard at Plymouth changed as the century progressed. The introduction of canned food and the distribution of naval uniforms and mess utensils helped undermine the Yard's original manufacturing base. The buildings were increasingly used as storehouses. This was followed by the Naval Ordnance Department taking control of the Brewhouse and Clarence Blocks in 1891.

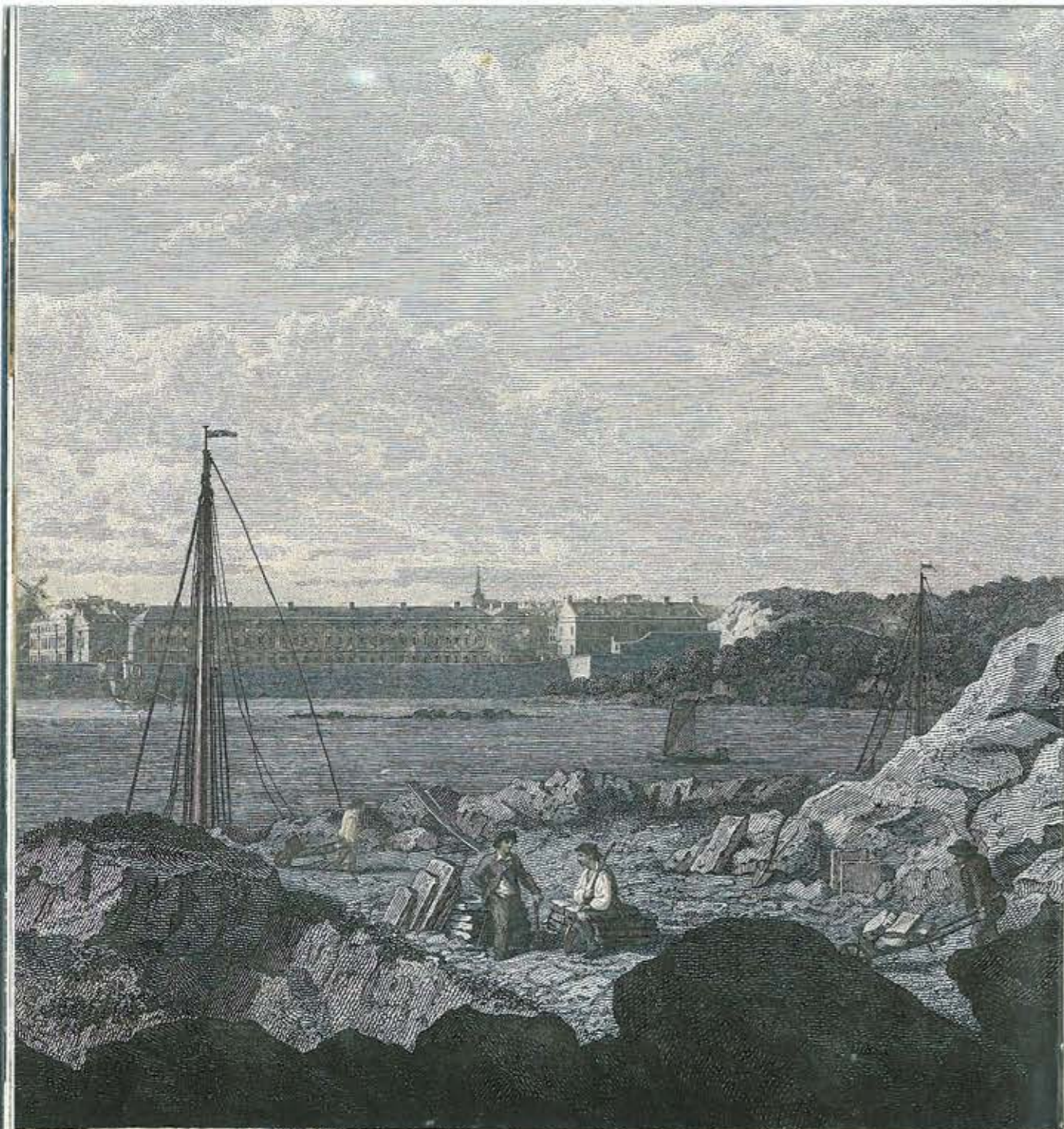


Transport, munitions and stores at the Yard, c.1950, reproduced courtesy of Plymouth Naval Base Museum.

The Yard actively continued its work throughout the First and Second World Wars, increasing its staff to assist with the extra workloads. It survived the blitz in 1941 unscathed, even though Plymouth endured the heaviest air attacks on Britain during the war. In 1972 the Royal Marines' Number Two Raiding Squadron occupied the Brewhouse. Later, in the early 1980s, while millions of pounds worth of clothing was stored at one end of the yard, torpedoes were being maintained and repaired at the other.

The Royal Navy finally withdrew from the Royal William Victualling Yard in 1992. In the following year, the government set up the Plymouth Development Corporation, one of twelve Urban Development Corporations across the country. It was charged with responsibility for promoting the regeneration of three waterfront sites including the Royal William Victualling Yard. The work which the PDC has begun will open up the Yard for a mixture of uses including leisure and tourism, shopping and residential accommodation.





for executing
Barracks
their LORDSHIPS,
as the Act directs, March 10.

the Office of Lord High Admiral of Great B.
at Stonehouse, near PLYMOUTH DOCK.
most obedient Servant. *W^m Hay*
1786, by William Hay, Plymouth.



Designed by P. Jones
A WEST SOUTH WEST VIEW of the ROYAL HOSPITAL, PLYMOUTH.
Engraved by W. B. Blackmore

The Stonehouse Peninsula

Stonehouse developed considerably as a town and military centre in the latter half of the eighteenth century. A fashionable assembly room with baths, known as the Long Room, was commenced in 1756 and later incorporated into the Royal Marine Barracks, built in 1779.

The Barracks were later integrated into the layout of Durnford Street, its three-storeyed terraced houses proving popular with naval officers. Other major developments, both on Stonehouse Creek, encompassed the Royal Naval Hospital, the most advanced in Europe, and the Military Hospital.

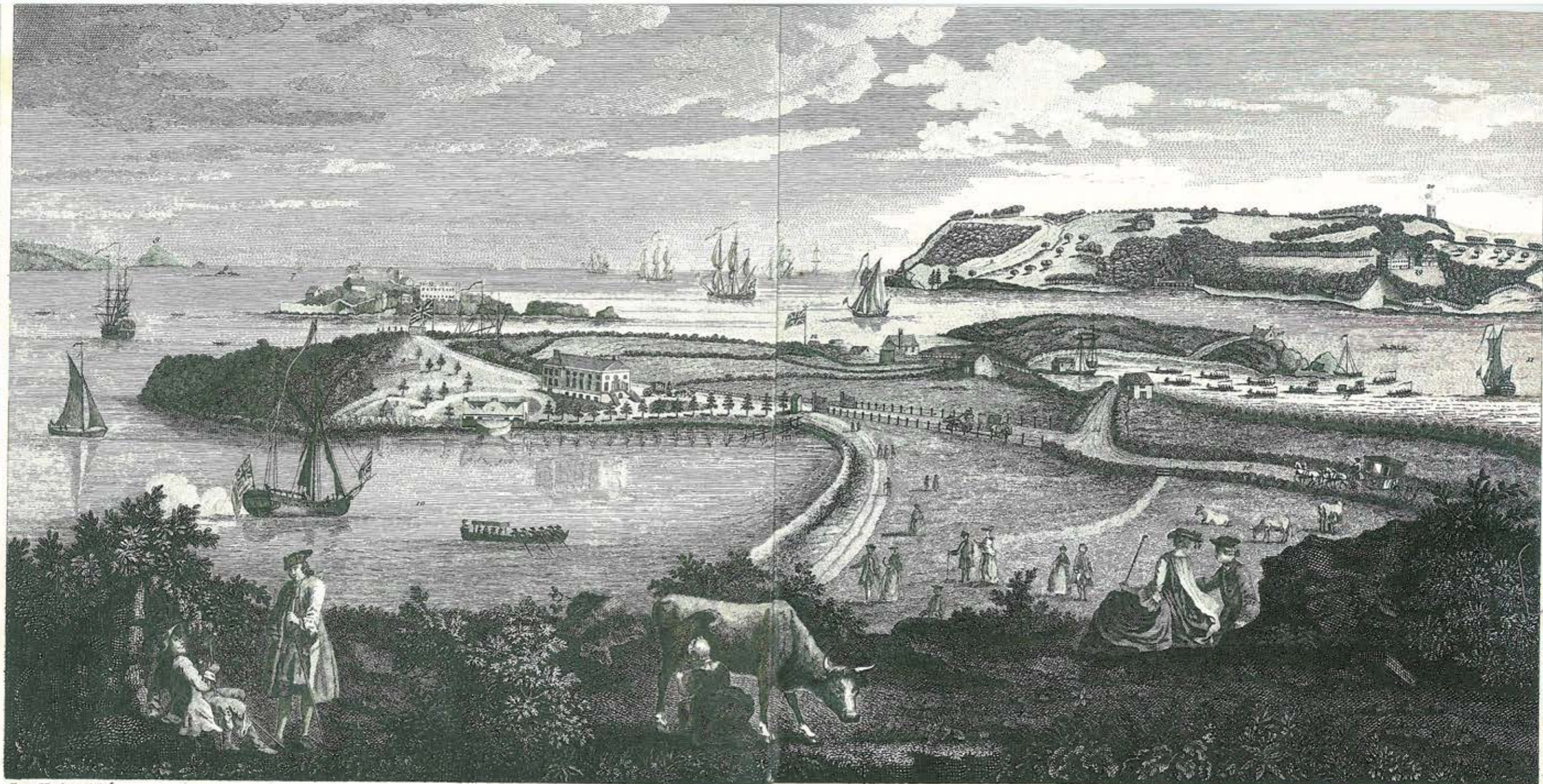
Transport links included a cable ferry between Plymouth and Devonport which was replaced, in the early-1770s, by the single-span Stonehouse Bridge, and the Cremyll ferry to Mount Edgcombe. Foulston's Union Street, laid out between 1812 and 1820, but heavily bombed in the last war, added to the elegance of the area.

Plymouth's early defences included an artillery tower at Firestone Bay and the Stonehouse town wall, both built in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth centuries. They also served to protect the quay facilities edging Stonehouse Creek to the north.



The Royal Naval Hospital, by J. Jehner, 1782.

Detail from a map showing Stonehouse during the siege of Plymouth, 1643.



James Northcote delin.

J. Mason sculp.

A View of the LONG ROOM and BATHS with the Country adjacent, near PLYMOUTH.

- | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|----------------------|
| 1. The Long Room | 4. Seats | 7. Plymouth Sound | 10. Mill Bay | 13. Reading Point | 16. Coach road thro Stonehouse | her Royal Highness the Princess Amelia, at her Embarkation for | 18. Crimhill Passage |
| 2. The Baths | 5. Bowling Green | 8. Shag Stone | 11. The Entrance of Hamoze | 14. Road to Crimhill passage | 17. The Boats of the Fleet, in the | Order in which they received | 19. Mount Edgcumbe |
| 3. Convenient Houses | 6. St. Nicholas Island | 9. Mew Stone | 12. Mount Stone | 15. Barn Pool | | Mount Edgcumbe, 23 July 1767 | 20. Maker Tower |



From a small thoroughfare village, this place, by the erection of the royal naval hospital, and the royal marine barracks, has risen within a few years, to a handsome and exceedingly populace town; and additional consequence is being attached to it from a new government victualling establishment, now erecting at Devil's Point, where is a magnificent supply of water . . . Besides its maritime connexion, and the business aided by the several government establishments, it has a trade in coal and timber; and in the neighbourhood are large and valuable limestone quarries.

Pigot and Co's Directory of Devonshire, 1830-31.

]

[Stonehouse] Pool, as it is called, . . . is of sufficient depth to admit vessels of heavy burthen, and is much resorted to, especially by ships in the timber trade. There are many extensive stores in its margin, and several boat and shipbuilding yards. Considerable water frontage in Stonehouse is occupied by docks and works of the Plymouth Great Western Dock Company. Extensive fortifications are now completed, which command the entrance to the Hamoaze.

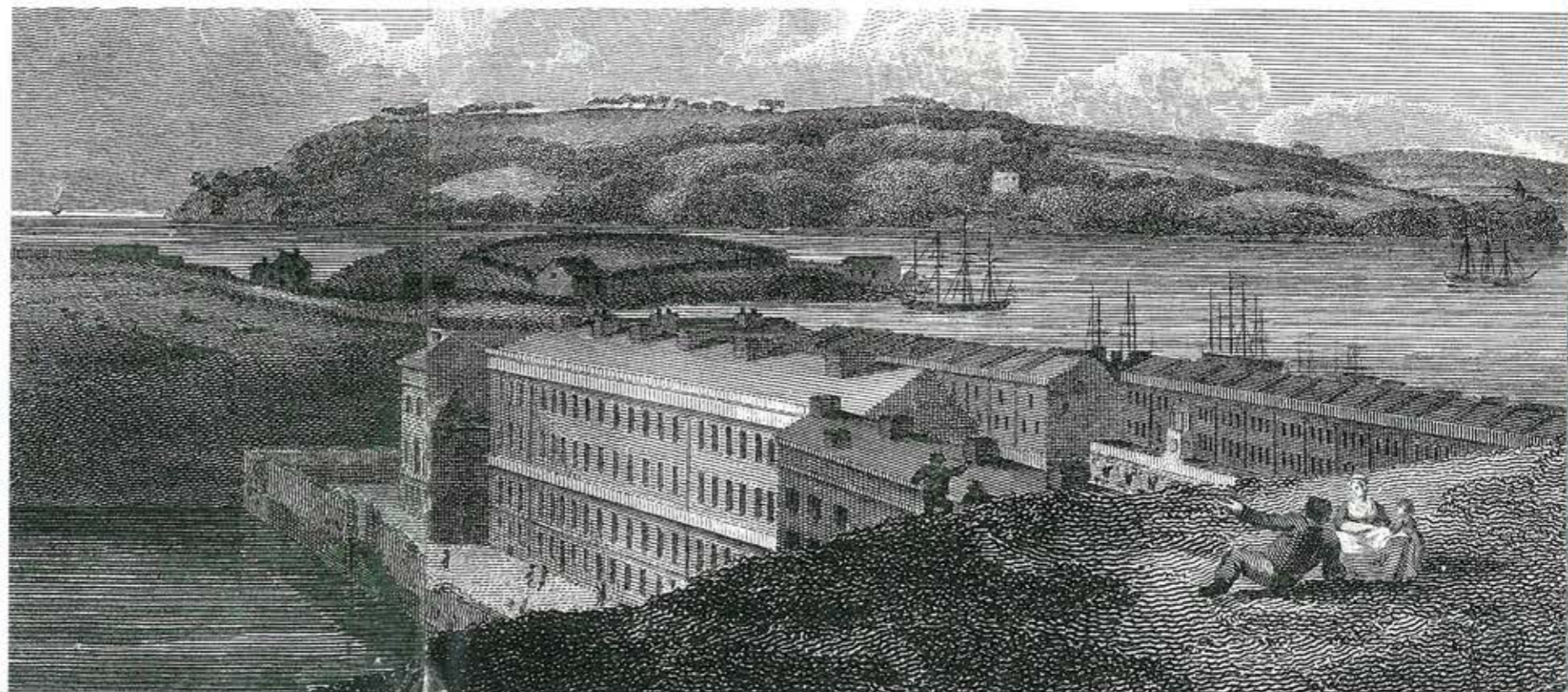
The Post Office Directory of Devonshire and Cornwall, 1873.

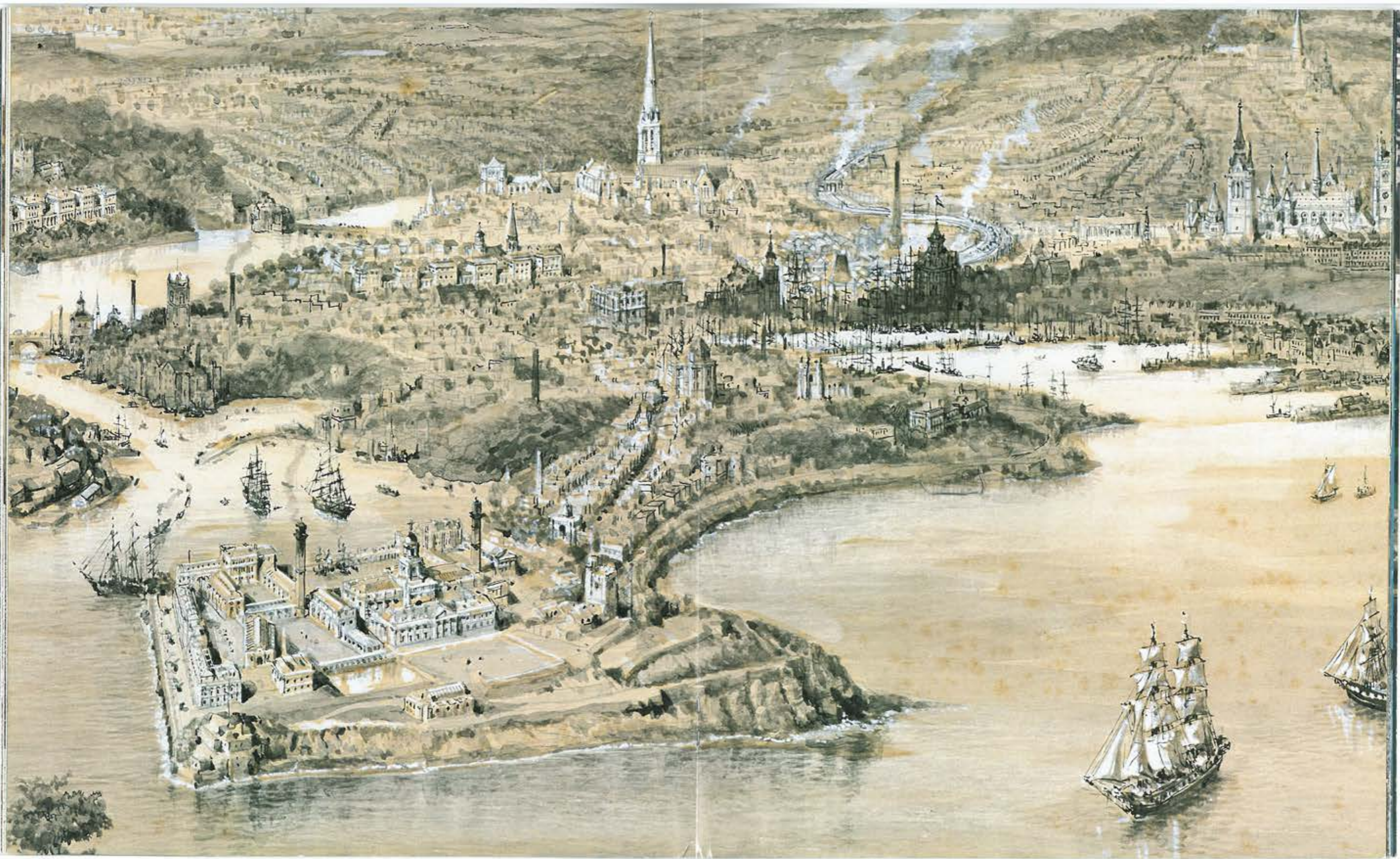
Previous page: A view of the Long Room and Baths, by James Northcote, 1769.

The Victualling Office, Stonehouse, by W Spreat, c.1850.

Marine Barracks at Stonehouse, Devonshire, by J Roffe, 1798.

Overleaf: An aerial view of Stonehouse and Millbay drawn from a balloon, by Henry William Brewer, 1891.







The Royal William Victualling Yard,
by William Williams, 1835.

A New Victualling Yard

In 1821 the Victualling Board, recognising the inadequacy of Plymouth's victualling operations in and around Sutton Harbour and Millbrook Creek, determined to centralise. Two years later, the site for a new yard at Stonehouse was approved.

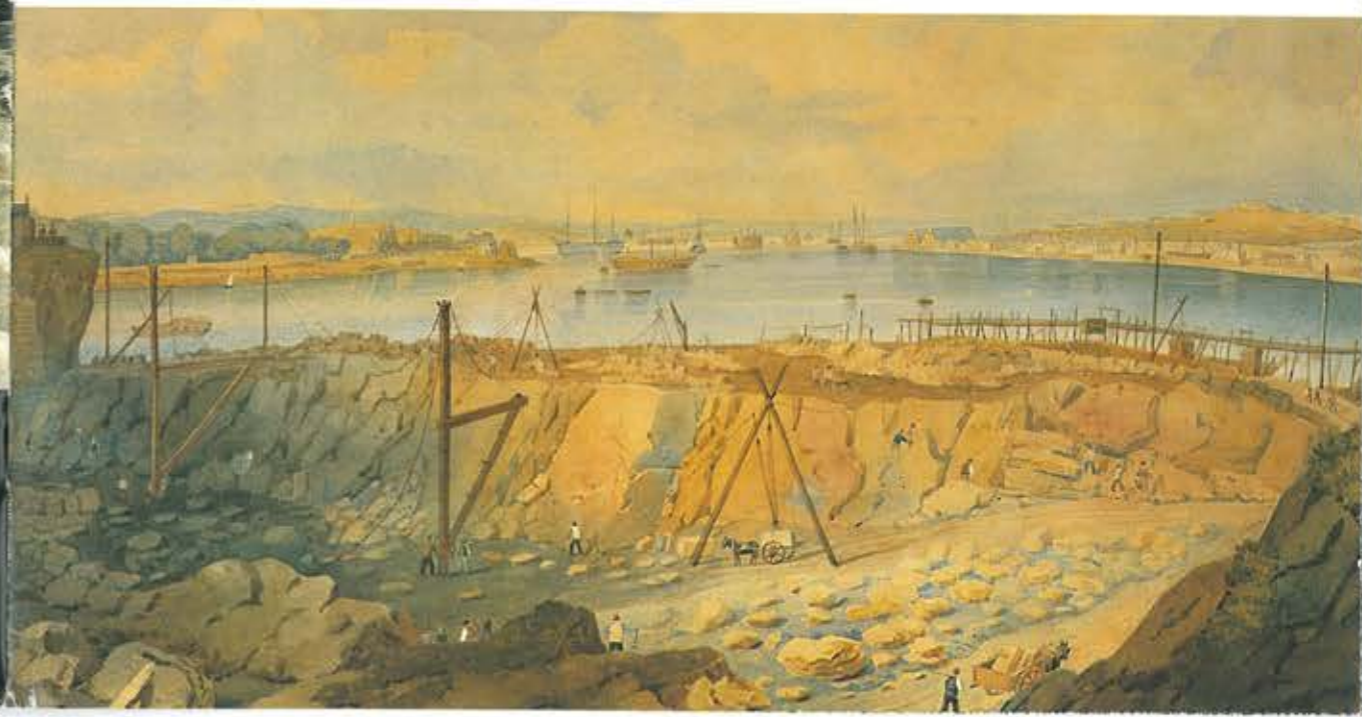
In June 1824 an act of Parliament sanctioned the purchase of land and detailed arrangements for the supply of water. Authorization was also given for moving the "Landing Place of the Ancient Ferry of Cremyll" into Stonehouse Pool, for creating a "Hard or Landing Place, in every respect fit and proper for embarking and disembarking His Majesty's Subjects", and for building a road to the new ferry.

Although the southern part of the promontory was left undisturbed to provide shelter, work was commenced on levelling an eight-acre area in 1825. Convict labour was employed and it proved to be a strenuous three-year undertaking. This engineering activity produced about 370,000 tons of rubble, used in reclaiming six acres from the sea, and building stone.



First page from the Act of
Parliament of 1824 which led to
the establishment of the Yard.

The New Victualling Office, from
the parapet of the Great Wall, by
Henry B Carter, 1828.





Access by Sea

Although the Royal William Victualling Yard is approached by visitors from landwards, the Yard is oriented seawards. To avoid the problems of limited tidal access at the old yard at Lambhay, a basin was included as part of the north wharf. It could accommodate, according to Rennie, "about six transports or merchant vessels of a large class". A swivel bridge, made by the Horseley Iron Company, was added as an afterthought and installed to improve circulation around the yard.

Further access to the Yard was provided by the Clarence Steps. Surmounted by a pair of cast iron gates embellished with crossed fouled anchors, they provided a seaward, ceremonial entrance for visiting VIPs.

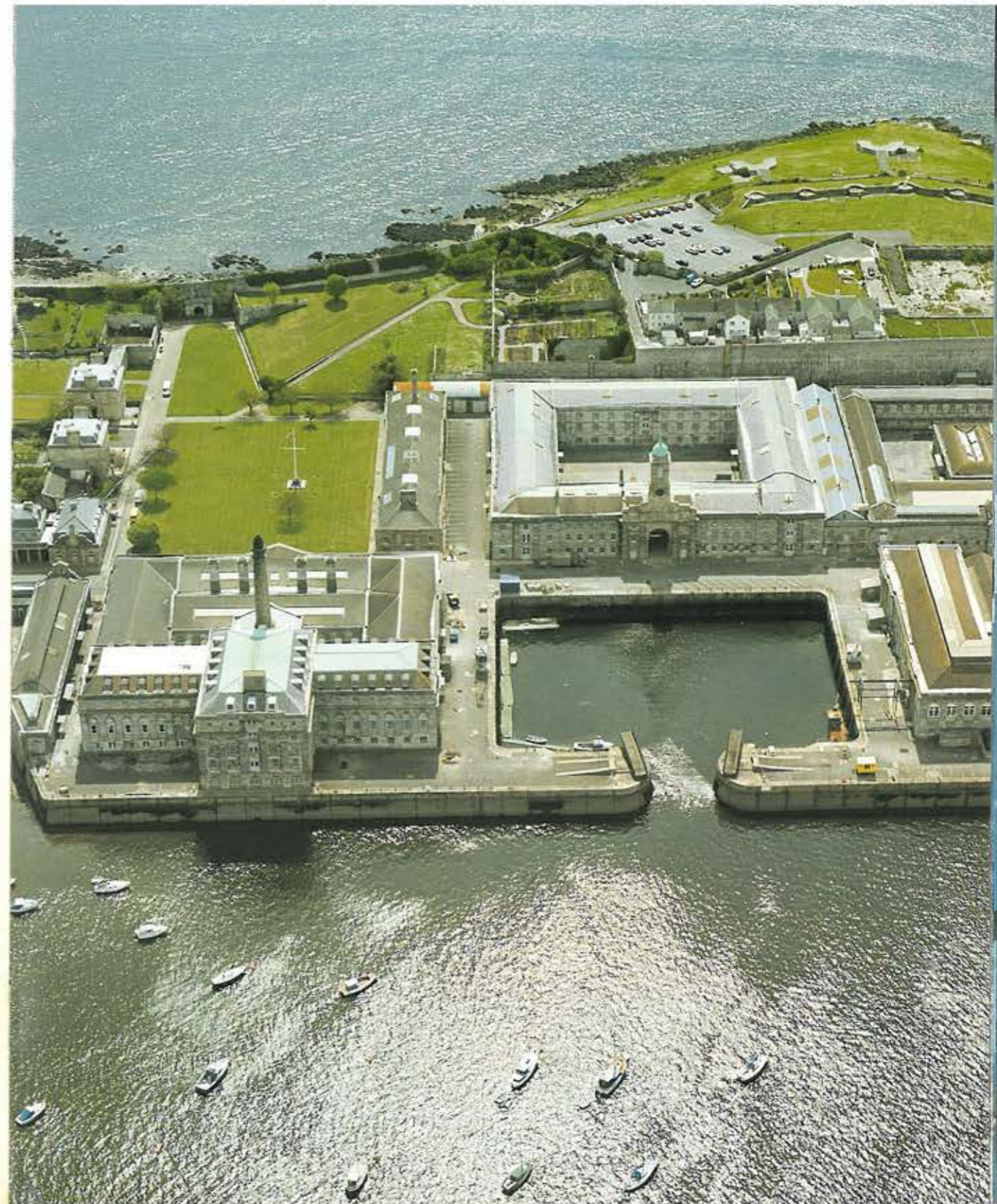
A tunnel leading from Firestone Bay gave an additional approach into the Yard. Its purpose was to provide occasional use for transferring light goods between ship and shore when the ebb tides were too strong for making a passage around the Cremyll Point.

The New Victualling Office, Devil's Point, by W le Petit, 1849. The engraving shows the Clarence Block and Steps.



THE NEW VICTUALLING OFFICE, DEVIL'S POINT, PLYMOUTH.

PRINTED BY OGDON, LONDON & PARIS.





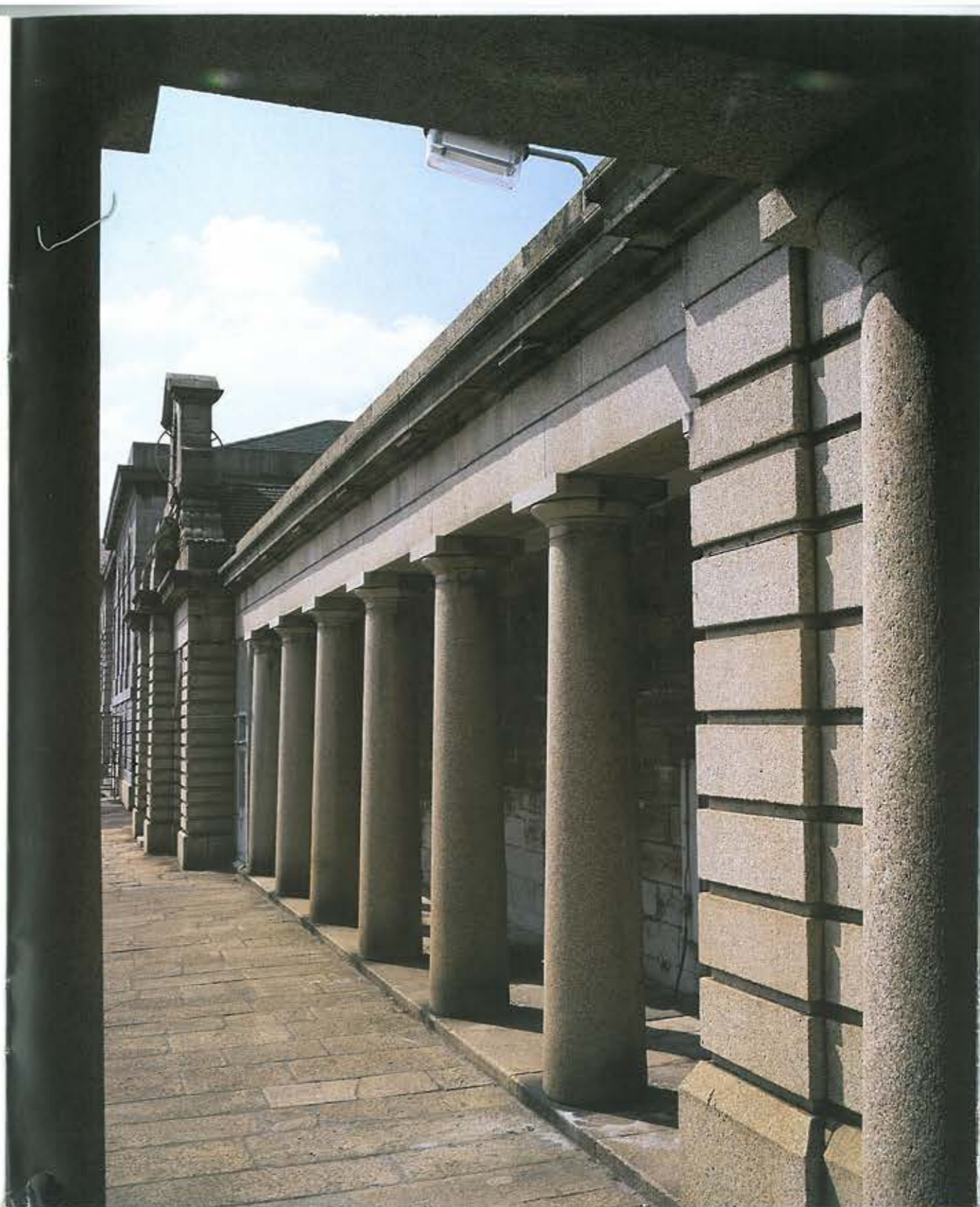
Access by Land

To enhance security, the Royal William Victualling Yard was surrounded by a high wall, with the main landward entrance through a gateway from Cremyll Street. The gateway is monumental in scale and surmounted by a 13 foot tall statue of William IV, after whom the Yard was named.

To the right of the gateway is the doorway into the slaughterhouse. The previous victualling abattoir was located on Cremyll Point, somewhere near the Brewhouse. Rennie's design was for fresh meat only and up to 100 animals could be slaughtered per day. Salted meat was imported from Deptford and stored.

To the left of the gateway is the police house. The police establishment consisted of an inspector, three sergeants and twelve constables. They were employed to prevent pilfering and to check on visitors to the Yard. It was a popular tourist attraction in the nineteenth century and guided tours were arranged.

Just inside the gateway, Rennie gave special architectural treatment to the slaughterhouse and police house walls fronting the entrance. By using colonnading, he provided the area with a sense of grandeur, unity and dignity.



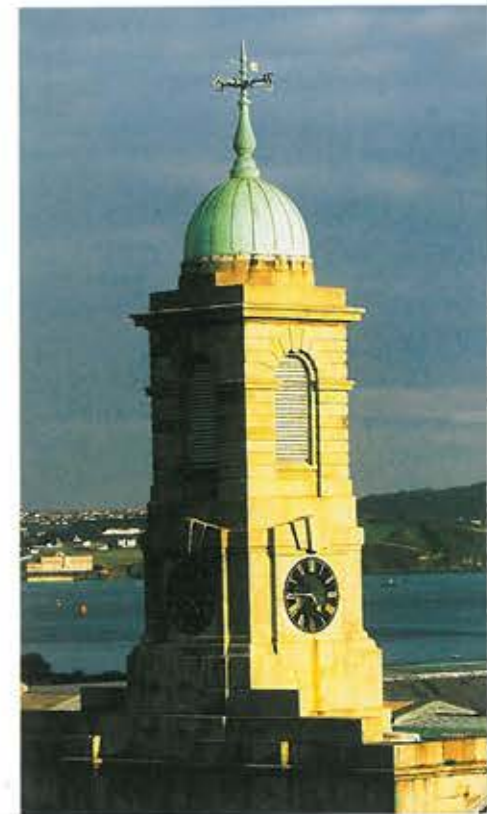


Clarence and Melville

John Rennie was instructed to design a yard which would be "*capable of embracing every requisite purpose*". He planned a self-contained food and drink manufacturing complex with sufficient storage for the varied necessities of a fleet.

Although the sea wall was started in 1826, the first building on the site, the Clarence store, was not authorised by the Victualling Board until the following year. It was named after the Duke of Clarence, later King William IV. The design of the store set the pattern for general masonry specifications and future building features.

Work commenced next on the Melville Square building which incorporated a vast storage space and administrative offices. Situated at the head of the basin, the three-storey structure was arranged around a central square. It was adorned with an elegant clock and bell tower. The clock, made from 1,393 parts, was purchased from Vulliamy of Pall Mall, London.



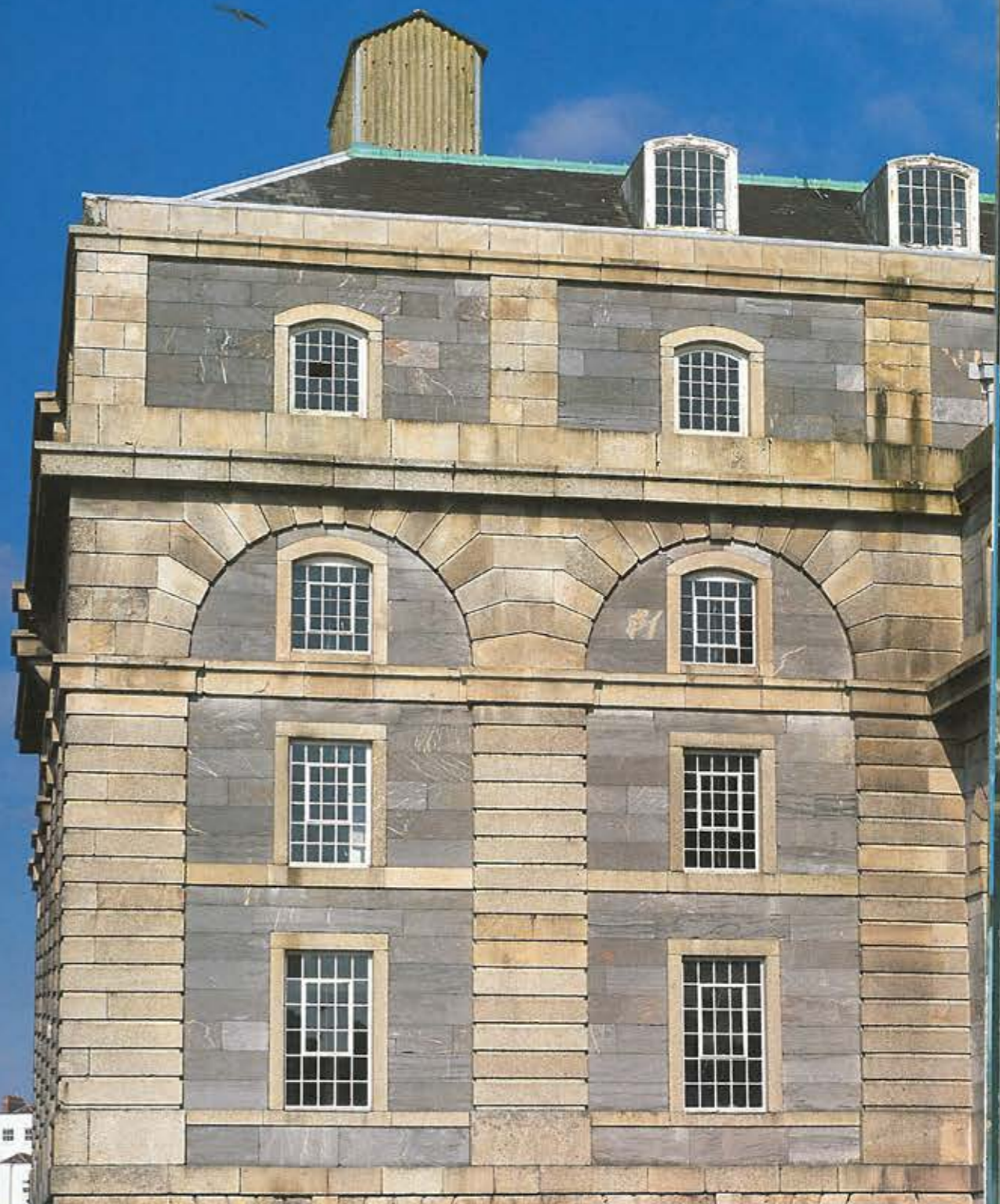
The Brewhouse and the Bakery

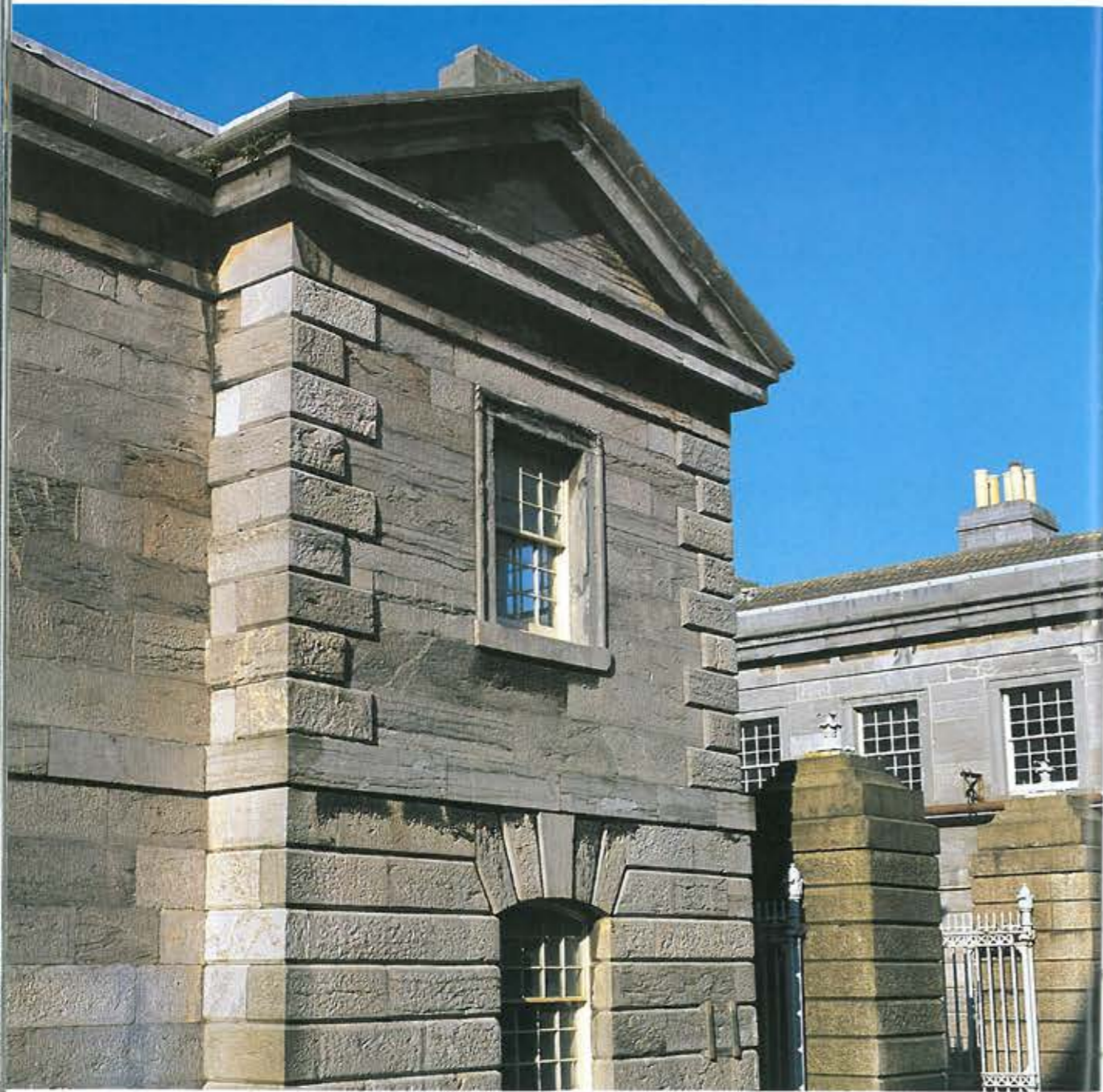
The old bakery at Lambhay in Sutton Harbour was capable of producing 50 tons of bread a week, but efficient production was difficult with the flour-mills and granary quarter of a mile away. Rennie's remedy to this problem was to incorporate all three functions into one building. By 1843, manufacturing had commenced, using two steam engines and 27 millstones. The mills and bakery were capable of processing 122,500 kilos (270,000 lbs) of flour per week.

The old victualling brewhouse was built in 1733 at Southdown, on the Cornish side of the Hamoaze. It could only be reached at high tide. Rennie's replacement was the massive Brewhouse which was capable of producing 137,000 litres (30,000 gallons) of beer a day. Unfortunately, the naval beer ration was discontinued in 1831 and only small quantities were produced for the Royal Naval Hospital and the Royal Marine Infirmary.

Rennie's design for the two buildings included specifications for machinery and equipment used in the making of beer and bread. Another feature were central bays which projected from both buildings to accommodate transhipment of supplies and goods by wall cranes to and from moored vessels.

The Victualling Office from Cremyll Passage, by R Martin, c.1835. The Bakery chimney is on the left and the Brewhouse on the right.





The Old and New Cooperages

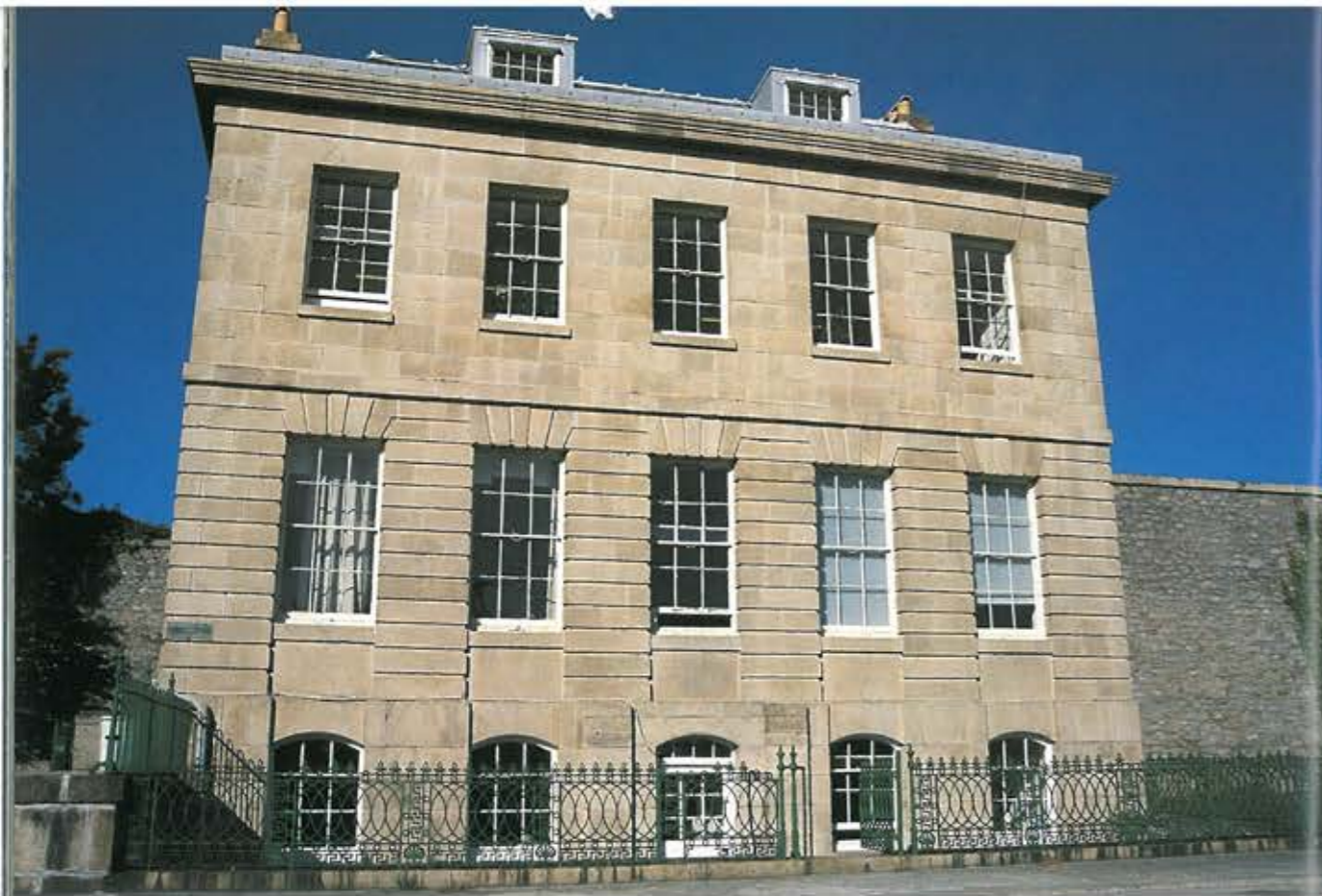
The Napoleonic Wars placed enormous demands on the supply of barrels for the storage of food and drink on board ship. Rennie, aware of the need for rapid expansion in production in time of conflict, took this into account when designing the first cooperage.

The cooperage consisted of an inner, fire-proofed building, where the barrels were made, and outer ranges for ancillary activities and storage. To become a cooper required a five year apprenticeship and was an extremely skilled job. A maximum of 80 coopers could be employed at the Yard.

Following the Comptroller of Victualling's decision to concentrate the manufacture of large barrels at Deptford in 1869, and the use of the old cooperage by the Naval Ordnance Department in 1891, a smaller cooperage was constructed. It was completed in 1899.



Top: Working in the New Cooperage, c.1950. Reproduced courtesy of Plymouth Naval Base Museum.

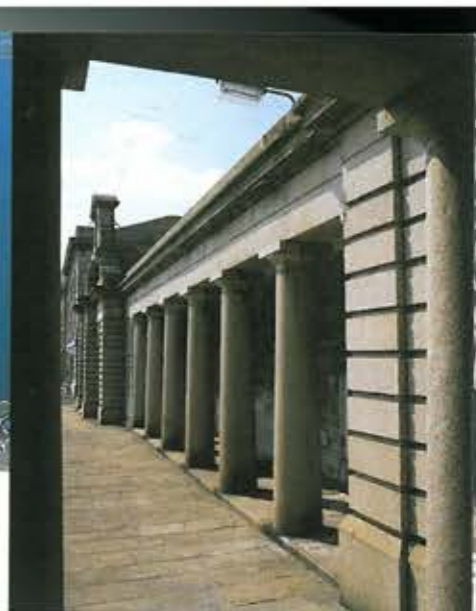
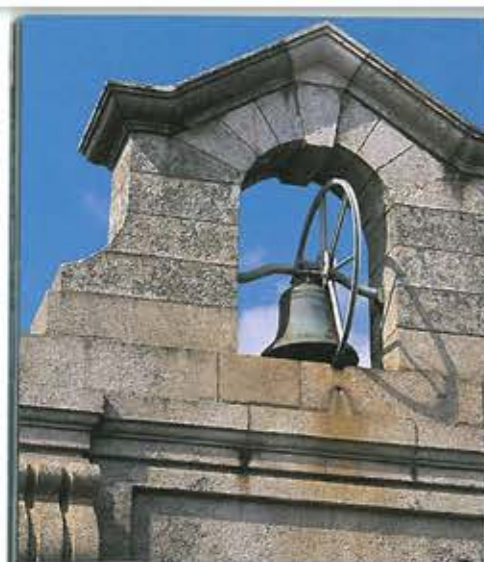


The Officers' Houses

The Yard's officers were accommodated in two houses on the east side of the site. Each residence was two rooms wide, with service rooms in the basement and a kitchen. There were also carriage houses and stabling.

At the rear of the houses were gardens with greenhouses which were supplemented by larger gardens near the Back Alley.





The Future of the Royal William Victualling Yard

On 1 April 1993 the Royal William Victualling Yard entered on a new phase of its life. The Government established the Plymouth Development Corporation to promote the regeneration of three former MoD sites on Plymouth's waterfront - including the Royal William Victualling Yard. It was given a budget of approximately £40 million for the three sites and a five year life span.

PDC's vision for the Yard is as a location which is open to the people of Plymouth as a place to visit, and in which to live, to work and to relax. With a combination of visitor attractions, cafes, restaurants, shops, new homes and office space, together with its magnificent architecture and setting, the Yard should also become a magnet for visitors from far and wide.

PDC has always recognised that the key to making this happen is to convince commercial developers that it is a practical and workable proposition. The essential precondition for this is to improve access and parking to

the Yard, which was originally designed to be served mainly by sea. This has been a slow process. Following a public inquiry decision in October 1996, the PDC was finally able to put its plans for improving roads and providing additional parking into action.

Repair and renovation of the ancient buildings and updating of services like electricity, telecommunications and drainage have also been part of the essential work of preparing the Yard for modern day use which has been undertaken by the PDC.

So, what of the future? Quite early on in PDC's life it became clear the the task of regenerating the Yard would take longer than the five year life span of the organisation. When the PDC closes on 31 March 1998, it expects to hand over responsibility for the Royal William Victualling Yard to a body set up specifically to continue, with the aid of public and private finances, with the task of bringing this beautiful heritage site back to life.



**ROYAL
WILLIAM
YARD**





Sir John Rennie

The Royal William Yard was designed by Sir John Rennie. He was the son of John Rennie, one of the engineers entrusted with the building of the Plymouth Breakwater for the Admiralty. With the death of his father in 1821, John was contracted to continue the work. One of his tasks was to build the Breakwater lighthouse which was based on the Smeaton's Eddystone lighthouse principle of dove-tailing the foundation blocks together.

Rennie was born in London in 1794. Practical knowledge in civil engineering was acquired working with his father. He assisted with the construction of Waterloo and Southwark Bridges and undertook the building of London Bridge, which was opened in 1831. Other work included Fens drainage and the layout of a system of railways in Sweden.

Rennie's conception for the Royal William Victualling Yard incorporated the need for rapid expansion in time of war. The old victualling establishment in Sutton Harbour had been stretched to full capacity during the Napoleonic Wars. The new Yard was therefore sufficiently flexible in layout to accommodate swift transformation in wartime.

The important role of supervising the site was undertaken by Philip Richards who "*invariably discharged his duties . . . with the greatest industry, zeal, skill and integrity for the Public Service*". He was paid £400 per annum and was provided with a house.

Cherry and Pevsner, in their book 'The Buildings of England: Devon', describe the Yard as "*the first and most grandiloquent of the monumental compositions created by the Victualling Board of the Navy after the Napoleonic Wars . . . [it] . . . is also among the most remarkable examples of an early 19th century planned layout of industrial buildings anywhere in England*". This is certainly a fine tribute to the work of Rennie and his colleagues.

