

UK Heritage Harbour Initiative

INTRODUCTION – A joint initiative by the Maritime Heritage Trust (MHT) and National Historic Ships (NHS) Shipshape Network; with strong support from the European Maritime Heritage (EMH), proposes that historic Ports and harbours in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland become officially recognised as ‘Heritage Harbours’. The developing Heritage Harbours recognise the great value in sensitively developing their, often superb, historic buildings; waste land; mooring; and maintenance facilities for both local and visiting historic vessels and are identified within the NHS Shipshape Network regions.

SOUTH EAST REGION:-

MEDWAY HH1 – The proposal to designate Medway as the first British heritage harbour was presented to a meeting, of the local maritime heritage community and associated stakeholders, at the Sun Pier House tea rooms, on 10 December 2018. The meeting, at Sun Pier House, Chatham, was well attended by some forty enthusiastic representatives from; the local historic vessels; the Medway Council; MHT Trustees; the Thames Sailing Barge community and; representatives from Faversham.

Medway Council have appointed a senior officer to represent the council on the Medway HH forum group. We are in discussions with the directors of Sail Training International, with a view to Medway being a Tall Ships race port in 2025. This will be the main agenda item at the next Medway Heritage group meeting. The ‘Boat Shed’ and other historic buildings and wharfs, which form part of the historic Sheerness naval dockyard, may lead to Sheerness becoming an integral part of Medway Heritage Harbour.

FAVERSHAM & OARE HH2 - Faversham & Oare Creeks Heritage (FOHHG) have met regularly since early 2019 at Faversham Guildhall. Aims and objectives have been developed and considerable work in optimising balanced development and improvement of the creeks has already been carried out by group members. An exciting feature is that Kent County Council has continued the design work for the replacement Faversham upper creek bridge through the lockdown.

MALDON & HEYBRIDGE HH3 – Maldon and Heybridge HH is moving at even greater pace. A full public meeting was held, at the Maldon Little Ship Club (MLSC), mid-September during the Maldon Heritage Weekend. The enthusiasm from the Maldon riverside community and Maldon Town Council was palpable. The Maldon and Heybridge Heritage Harbour Group (MHHHG) was formed and literally sprang into action, designing a notice / flyer for the public open meeting, within hours. The open meeting was successfully held during the Maldon Heritage weekend..

Several subsequent meetings have taken place at the MLSC and the group are already working with the Town Council and District Council to optimise the local plans to best secure Maldon and Heybridge Maritime Heritage for future generations. The MHHHG has decided to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and will henceforth be known as the Maldon and Heybridge Heritage Harbour Association (MHHA).

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FUTURE HERITAGE HARBOURS ACROSS GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

SOUTH EAST REGION:-

LONDON RIVER (ROYAL DOCKS DEVELOPMENT) – We are investigating the possibility of incorporating heritage harbour facilities within the Royal Docks development, as there is; surprisingly now few locations on the Thames for historic vessels.

BRENTFORD – See **under the Inland Waterways Association below.**

SANDWICH – The Sandwich Port and Haven Commissioners and Dover District Council are at the early stages of investigating nomination of Sandwich as an Heritage Harbour.

SOUTH REGION

COWES – The harbour commissioners and the Cowes Classic Boat Museum have expressed interest.

BUCKLER'S HARD – Although over development is far less likely on the estate, the management team are interested in nominating Buckler's Hard as an Heritage Harbour.

SOUTH WEST REGION

FALMOUTH - 2020 Marks the 150th anniversary of the Falmouth Harbour Commissioners and establishing the nomination of Falmouth as an Heritage Harbour is being considered as an objective in this anniversary year. An introductory meeting with the Harbour Master has taken place.

WALES REGION

CARDIFF BAY – Trevor Godbold, a fellow Trustee of the MHT is also a Trustee of The Heritage and Cultural Exchange, who, with the Cardiff Bay harbour authority, are investigating the mutual benefits of HH nomination for Cardiff Bay, one of the best stretches of secure safe lock / barrage controlled waters in Europe.

EAST REGION

CLEY-NEXT-THE-SEA – We held a video conference and discussed the potential for grouping Cley-Next-The-Sea, Blakeney and Wells-Next-The-Sea, as an Heritage Harbour group.

BRIGHTLINGSEA and the River Colne have expressed interest.

WOODBIDGE and the Deben are discussing nomination as an Heritage Harbour.

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SCOTLAND REGION

LEITH – Edinburgh docks, although still a commercial port, has a considerable historic unused dock area and has the benefit of being the berth port for; the Royal Yacht, HMS Britannia; the Fingal (ex Windsor Castle) previously the Northern Lighthouse Board tender and now a luxury floating hotel, and; SS Explorer, a steam reciprocating powered trawler turned fisheries research ship.

NORTHERN IRELAND REGION

BELFAST - ‘PERICLES’ is an EU-funded research and innovation project, about international maritime cultural heritage, running until 2021. There are eight case regions across Europe, one being Scotland-Ireland. One of the project's main heritage focus is Belfast Port and the city's maritime heritage, in particular any 'hidden' or overlooked maritime heritage. The academic team from Queen's University Belfast invited a representative from MHT to contribute to their research through a one to one interview on the subject of Belfast's maritime heritage. Although the actual interview has yet to take place, we have had ZOOM meetings and discussions about the possibility of Belfast being nominated as an Heritage Harbour, to provide a structure for the port's maritime heritage. We are also looking at the possibility of EMH developing a stakeholder link with the PERICLES project to provide sustainability of the valuable maritime cultural heritage case studies that they are achieving.

HEART OF ENGLAND REGION

Hot off the press is the recent ZOOM meeting between MHT trustees and officers of the Inland Waterways Association (IWA), where we discussed the similarity of problems experienced by ports within the canal network to those of the coastal heritage harbours. The IWA have lost no time. We are already working on the development of **BRENTFORD, CHESTER, STOURPORT and WARWICK BAR** (Birmingham), as Inland Waterways Heritage (Ports) Harbours.

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT – With an increasing number of Port and Harbour organisations and communities interested; their representatives will be invited by the chairs of the established heritage harbours to a Zoom Conference, to set the scene and invite questions.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT – Even hotter off the press is the assistance given to the Classic Yacht Association of New Zealand and the City of Auckland City Council with the resolution of some maritime heritage problems related to the preparations for next year's Americas Cup. This was a joint effort by the Association of Yachting Historians (AYH), the MHT and the EMH and involved an extremely enjoyable ‘virtual’ weekend in Auckland.

We are, with a member of the PERICLES team, looking at the feasibility of Malta being recognised as a group European Heritage Harbour.

Please don't hesitate to contact **Brian Corbett, the OGA MHT Trustee and OGA EMH Representative at Email; brianacorbett@aol.com** if you would like to know more about the Heritage Harbour initiative.