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Archaeological dig at Buckler's Hard hopes to reveal more

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Author:

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Site with volunteers from the Master Builders House. © Bucklers Hard Shipyard Trust.

The Buckler's Hard team tells us...

From July 20th - 7th August the Buckler's Hard Shipyard Trust will be partnering with the

Maritime Archaeology Trust and local volunteers to continue the work of surveying the historic village slipways and shipyard. Following on from last year's dig, when so much remaining structure was revealed and artefacts found, the team hope to find more in the lower intertidal area of slipway 2 as well as the locations of a building and shipyard Capstan positions.



Boxes of Finds from the 2025 dig. © Buckler's Hard Shipyard Trust.

There will be a free exhibition in the 'Dig Tent' by the slipways of the story of the shipyard which will include last year's artefacts that were dug up and any newly discovered items. A team of volunteers will be digging both in the land as well as divers working in the Beaulieu River at the lowest part of the slipway. A team of Army divers from 17 Port and Maritime



Regiment Royal Logistic Corps (RLC) from Marchwood, Southampton will be joining the archaeologists to assist and train in river diving operations.

There is a free family archaeology day on 31st July from 10am – 4pm when there will be special activities and displays with prizes for families to win. Help us identify objects, take part in quizzes and try digging.

The dig is being funded through the Buckler's Hard Shipyard Trust through donations and with help from the Beaulieu Estate and contractors Pete and John Niccolls. A large number of enthusiastic volunteers from local history, archaeology groups and the nearby community and students will join to work on the excavation of the site. Last year the dig featured on the BBC's Digging for Britain series 13, episode 3, which is still available on BBC iPlayer to view to see what was revealed last year.

It is hoped that the remaining structures will shine new light on our understanding of the historic shipyard where 55 ships were built for the Royal Navy between 1744 and 1815.

The Maritime Archaeology Trust along with volunteers from the Southampton Archaeological Society recently carried out a ground penetrating radar survey to try to establish the areas most likely to have structures in the ground.

Buckler's Hard Shipyard Trust chairman Mary Montagu-Scott (pictured below) said:

"There is so much to learn about this historic shipyard that remains buried under the ground. We hope that we will find evidence of our industrial past, both on land and in the river mud."



Mary Montagu-Scott Buckler's Hard Shipyard Trust Chair. © Garry Momber.

Lauren Tisbury from the Maritime Archaeology trust said:

"No other private yard built as many ships for the Royal Navy during this period and this makes it uniquely suited for learning about traditional shipbuilding due to its remarkable survival. At Buckler's Hard you can actually see the whole of the infrastructure needed to build ships of that size all set in the perfectly preserved 18th century village. This has been a wonderful opportunity for students and volunteers to take part and expose the structures, revealing them for all to see and from which we have increased our understanding of the shipyard site."



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Following the dig, the area will be backfilled to protect the structure and work will be done to record and conserve the artefacts.

For more information of the dig follow @bucklershardshipyardtrust on social media.

The Buckler's Hard Shipyard Trust's mission is to bring the story of Buckler's Hard shipyard alive, with its rich history from medieval times to shipbuilding in the 18th and 19th centuries, its role in WW2, the global footprint of ships originating from it and its rural village community and preserve it for future generations.

Buckler's Hard is open seven days a week in the heart of the New Forest National Park, with its beautiful riverside historic setting and maritime museum telling its story.

For more details see www.bucklershard.co.uk or call 01590 616203.



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