

Free exhibition about the Buckler's Hard 2025 archaeological dig now open

Published: December 11, 2025

Author:

Online version: <https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/free-exhibition-about-the-bucklers-hard-2025-archaeological-dig-now-open/>



Boxes of finds

The Buckler's Hard team tells us:

(All words and photographs from the Buckler's Hard Shipyard Trust).



The Buckler's Hard Shipyard trust has opened a new free exhibition at the historic shipbuilding village of Buckler's Hard telling the story and showing the finds of this summer's archaeological dig of the largest slipway.

Buckler's Hard village is famous as the private shipyard where 55 wooden warships were built on the banks of the Beaulieu River in Hampshire for the Royal Navy, including Nelson's favourite HMS *Agamemnon*.

The shipyard was in use from 1744 until 1971 when the operations moved upstream, leaving the historic site to be remarkably preserved and undisturbed.

A huge amount of 'finds' were discovered in the dig of the no 2 slipway, and these are now on display in the Shipwrights Gallery along with information on the history of the shipyard site and what we learnt about the revealed 18th century structures.

Iron nails, staples, copper plate and nails, ceramics, glass, bottles, clay pipes, bones and even some more modern 20th debris from the time when the slipway was used in WW2 were all found during the three-week summer dig.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

The dig was overseen by University of Southampton, Centre for Maritime Archaeology Department under Professor Jon Adams and Dr Rodrigo Ortiz-Vazquez, with supporting students and volunteers from the New Forest National Park Authority, the Maritime Archaeology Trust, local volunteers and community members. It has been funded through the Buckler's Hard Shipyard Trust through donations and with help from the Beaulieu Estate and contractors Pete and John Niccolls.

Buckler's Hard Shipyard Trust chairman Mary Montagu-Scott said:

"We are delighted to have this exhibition of the artefacts and evidence of our 2025 dig and hope that the visitors to the village will enjoy learning more about the history of the site. I



have had great help from volunteers Emily Haines-Furse and Morgan Edwards from the University of Southampton, in researching, recording, designing the exhibition and putting the artefacts on display.”

Volunteer, Emily said:

“We hope the exhibition will enlighten those with an interest in the intriguing history of Buckler’s Hard, connecting visitors directly with the people and families who lived and worked on the site. Guest handling of the artefacts retrieved will create a unique museum experience, allowing visitors an insight into the 18th-century shipbuilding life and the resources needed for its construction.”

Dig to continue in 2026

Following the dig, the area has been backfilled to protect the structure. The dig will continue in summer 2026 to explore the lower intertidal area where it is thought the structure will be even better preserved.

The Buckler’s Hard Shipyard Trust’s mission is to bring the story of the 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.

This free exhibition is open every day 10am - 4pm in the Shipwrights Gallery until mid-March, the building at the top of the riverside slipways.

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 Museum telling its story.

For more details see www.bhshipyardtrust.org.uk and www.bucklershard.co.uk