



## Historian Dan Snow opens Buckler's Hard's new exhibition 'Beaulieu River at War'

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Author:

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### The Buckler's Hard team tells us...

(Photographs and all images from them).



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**BUCKLER'S  
HARD**

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The Buckler's Hard Shipyard Trust has officially opened its latest exhibition, *Beaulieu River at War*, with historian and broadcaster Dan Snow attending the launch. Running from 1<sup>st</sup> June through to the end of October, the exhibition explores the profound impact of the Second World War on the Beaulieu River and surrounding estate.

Dan Snow said:

*"From the Second World War to medieval history and 18th-century shipbuilding, Buckler's Hard is a truly remarkable place of layered history."*

Before the outbreak of war, the Beaulieu River was a quiet, working waterway. However, once requisitioned for naval use, it became part of a much larger and largely hidden wartime operation. Activity intensified dramatically, with vessels moving constantly along the river, shore facilities rapidly adapted, and land across the estate repurposed to support Britain's war effort.

The threat of invasion reshaped daily life in the area. Beaulieu village became part of a wider defensive network, with measures introduced to slow and disrupt any potential enemy advance. As preparations for D-Day gathered momentum, the estate took on increasingly vital roles. Training exercises escalated, secrecy tightened, and the river became a testing ground for innovative military techniques and equipment linked to the Allied invasion of Europe.

The exhibition also highlights the area's contribution to the Mulberry Harbour project, with elements constructed locally, and the transformation of Buckler's Hard's historic shipyard, which pivoted from its traditional role to wartime production – building essential naval vessels.

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*Beaulieu River at War* has been curated by local historian Marc Heighway alongside Mary Montagu-Scott. This free exhibition is open every day 10am – 4pm in The Shipyard Gallery until October.



Speeches outside the exhibition.

Buckler's Hard Wartime Weekend

To complement the exhibition, visitors can enjoy a free [Wartime Weekend](#) on 13 – 14 June. Visitors can meet a wide range of heritage organisations and exhibitors, including Friends of the New Forest Airfields, Solent Sky Museum, the Coleshill Auxiliary Research Team, Exbury AA Gunsite Group, the Air Raid Precautions team from Wimborne and many more.

Re-enactors, private collectors and enthusiasts will also be on hand throughout the weekend, alongside an impressive display of authentic World War Two vehicles lining the High Street, where visitors can meet their owners and hear the stories behind the vehicles and equipment.

The weekend programme includes access to the new *Beaulieu River at War* exhibition, as well as a series of expert talks exploring subjects including the Spitfire, the Special Operations Executives from Beaulieu, the Women's Timber Corps 'Lumberjills' and HMS Medusa.

Visitors can also step aboard HMS Medusa itself, watch D-Day model boat re-enactments on the Beaulieu River by the Portsmouth Model Boat Display Team, and on Sunday, enjoy *We'll Meet Again: A Day to Remember*, a moving performance from West End actors and local talent, combining music, poetry and local wartime stories.

### About Buckler's Hard Shipyard Trust

The Buckler's Hard Shipyard Trust is dedicated to bringing the story of Buckler's Hard to life. Its mission is to preserve and share the site's rich heritage – from its medieval origins and 18th- and 19th-century shipbuilding heyday to its crucial role during the Second World War, as well as the global legacy of ships built there and its enduring village community.

Buckler's Hard is open seven days a week, nestled in the heart of the New Forest National Park. Visitors can explore its picturesque riverside setting and discover its fascinating history through the [museum](#) and [historic village](#).

For more information:

[www.bhshipyardtrust.org.uk](http://www.bhshipyardtrust.org.uk)

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