

Royal Naval Armaments Depot, Marchwood Conservation Area



The Royal Naval Armaments Depot (RNAD) is an important site at a key location between Eling and Hythe on Southampton Water. The site developed between 1812 and the 1890s, initially as a depot for the storage and management of gunpowder, and later for the storage of other munitions. The survival of Georgian military works from the period of the Napoleonic wars is relatively rare and the site is therefore of both local and national importance. RNAD is clearly a planned site, the buildings are highly specialised and enough survives for the history of the site to be easily understood. Many of the buildings and walls are individually listed. Since the site was decommissioned and closed the historic buildings have fallen into disrepair and a number still need new uses to give them a new lease of life. Designation as a conservation area recognises the special historic interest of RNAD, and focuses attention on the scope for the environment of the area as a whole to be improved, and on opportunities for the waterfront and links to Marchwood village.

In 1812 Napoleon invaded Russia and Russia formed an alliance with England. As a result the Inspector General of Fortifications ordered a depot for 20,000 barrels of gunpowder to be built at Marchwood to supplement the magazines at Gosport. By 1814 three magazines and Examining Rooms had been built linked by a canal system to transport the barrels. Earth banked blast walls and high walled enclosures protected each building. An office and guard house and a barrack block were built on Magazine Lane. There was a rolling stage, a raised planked barrow way, built out to a landing stage in deep water. A sea wall was added fronting Southampton Water and returning along the Creek. In the 1840s Receiving Rooms were built at the end of the rolling stage. The depot closed briefly in 1850 but was reopened during the outbreak of the Crimean war and in 1856-57 four new and larger magazines were added. Further protecting walls linking the original magazine compounds and a new western boundary wall were built. RNAD continued in use for the storage of munitions into the 20th century. War damage in 1940 destroyed some of the magazines. Stocks of munitions were reduced after the war and the site was finally decommissioned and closed in 1961.

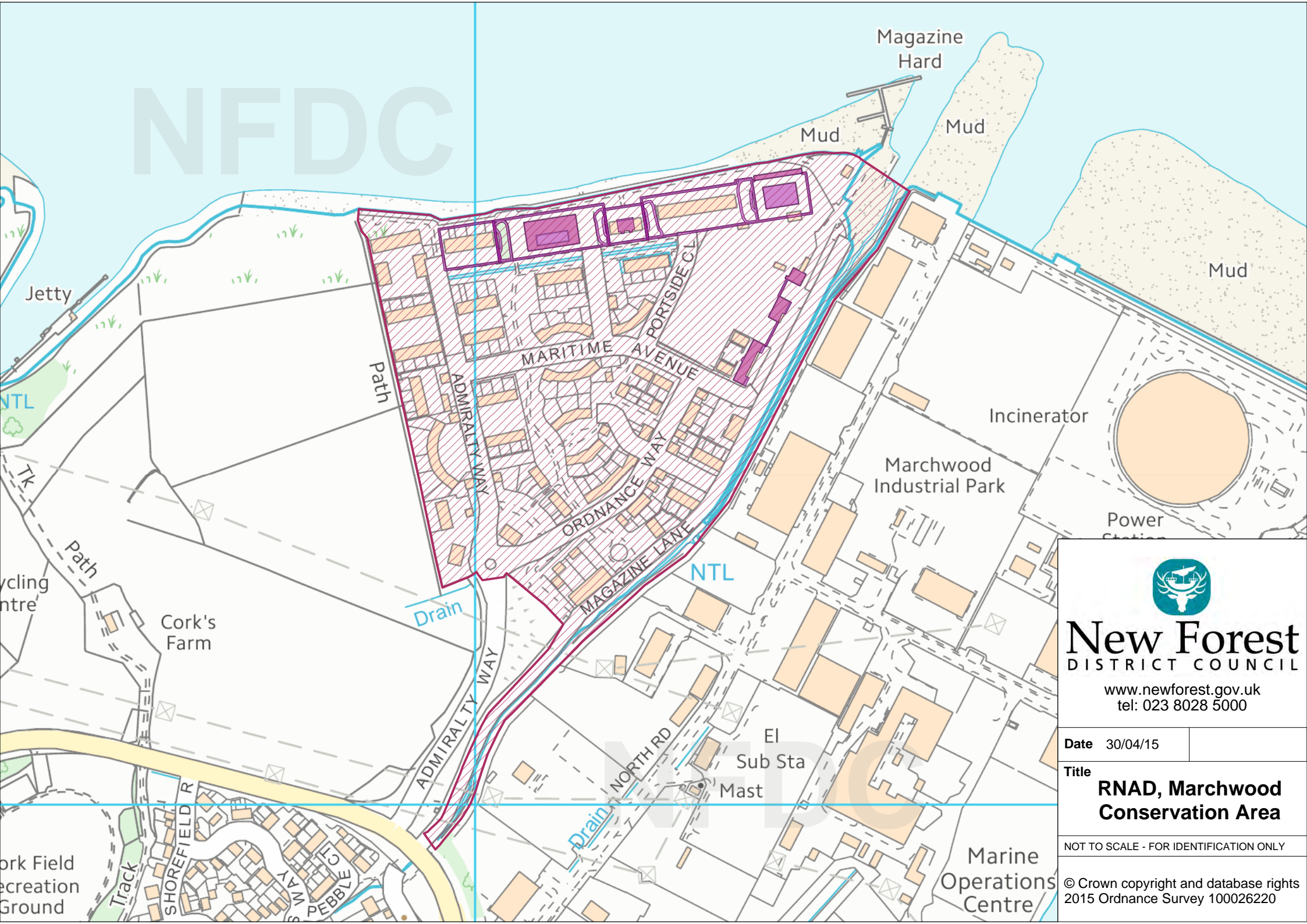
These are key features in the conservation area:

- **Magazine C** with its surrounding walls is one of the surviving magazines added in 1856-7. A large red brick building with few window and door openings. Much of the original roof structure survives. Internally, one large space was laid out in bays for the storage of powder barrels. Since it was highly dangerous it was essential that the gunpowder was securely stored. The magazine was therefore solidly constructed with double skinned brick walls and a heavy slate roof.
- The **barrack block** now restored and converted to apartments and known as Frobisher Court.
- **Magazine A, the Receiving Rooms and surrounding walls.** Magazine A dates from the original development of 1814. The roof covering of this magazine consisted uniquely of huge slates underlaid by clay tiles - again a protective measure.
- The **Examining Rooms** dating from the original development of the site. A single storey building consisting of two rooms with entrance porches. The roof structure survives under the temporary covering. The Examining Rooms were used for inspecting and repacking powder barrels - strict regulations were enforced and no barrels were ever opened in the magazines.
- The **office and guardhouse**, two small lodge-type buildings, dating from the original development of 1814, now occupied by Marchwood Yacht Club. The colonnaded porches were added to the front of the buildings in 1856. Original doors and window joinery survive.
- The **earth banked blast walls** around existing and former magazines. These are impressive six metre high walls which lean in towards the banks. They are now consolidated by mature vegetation and oak and pine trees.

These are some of the things that make RNAD special - they need to be looked after:

- **History**
The increasing importance of rare military survivals from the period of the Napoleonic wars.
The layout of the site which was determined by the way the buildings were used.
- **Buildings**
Buildings and walls are of red brick, of English Bond, with slate roofs, although some have temporary roofs. Brickwork has fine detailing with decorative recesses, raised panels, rubbed brick arches and detailed copings.
The individual purposes of the buildings are particularly evident in their character. The magazines are uncompromising with few openings for windows and doors. The accommodation buildings have a more domestic scale with more windows and doors.
Windows are typically sashes of the period, of 6-pane over 6-pane.
The separation and enclosure of the buildings by the large scale earth banked blast walls and high brick walls sought to contain accident damage.
- **Landscape and Setting**
The approach to the site along Magazine Lane which still retains the character of a narrow country lane.
The spaces contained by the walls around the building compounds.
The promenade to Southampton Water - an important open space with stunning views of the docks, and backed by the continuous frontage wall bounding the magazine compounds.
The sea wall, part original, part rebuilt - a key landscape feature.
Magazine Lane, with the accommodation buildings on one side and the creek on the other.
Groups of trees on the earth banks to the blast walls and valuable trees across the site are especially prominent when the area is viewed from the water.
- **Potential for enhancement**
Retaining and repairing the historic buildings is a key factor in the future of the site.
The Council's intention is for this to become a residential site with development respecting the conservation area and the listed buildings. As much of the site has long lain derelict, there is much potential for improvement and enhancement through any new development.
The waterside promenade, including the completion of the sea wall, could be an attractive amenity.
Magazine Lane, including the adjacent Creek from the public hard to the cottages, is a key area which could benefit from pedestrian priority.

NFDC



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