

Chris Ellmers - Littoral, river and sea: exploring the maritime history of Deptford, 1700-1850.

Supervisors: Brad Beaven, Karl Bell, Cathryn Pearce

This submission relates to key elements of the maritime history of the Deptford riverside area, or littoral, of south east London across the period 1700-1850. Whilst many famous historical characters – including Sir Francis Drake, Samuel Pepys, Admiral John Benbow, Peter the Great, Grinling Gibbons, Captain Kidd, and Captain Cook – have provided all too ready and easy proxies for the area’s maritime past, this has generally served to obscure far deeper, more complex and multi-faceted histories.¹ That rich and often hidden maritime history is primarily explained and explored through a detailed overarching contextual and integrative guiding commentary around the four published papers submitted here in partial fulfilment for the award of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) by Publication in the Department of History, University of Portsmouth. These papers all investigate core elements of Deptford’s maritime and related cultural history through a variety of connected lenses, including the ways in which the area’s littoral acted – physically, economically and culturally – as a liminal space, where the maritime met and interacted with the non-maritime. Centring on shipbuilding, the Greenland Dock and the Arctic whaling trade, the papers are also about how that littoral interacted with the Thames and reached out across the world’s seas and oceans. Given the specific subject nature of the submitted papers, a key section of this integrative commentary examines broader historiographies by way of a focused account of maritime Deptford. This helps to positively situate and ground this introductory commentary. It also demonstrates how the papers have contributed to a much fuller academic understanding of those key elements of the Deptford littoral and significantly advanced the historiography. As such, this section forms an essential component of the submission and is linked to the other contextual sections relating to rationales, methodologies, research standards, reflective analyses, and contributions to knowledge of the submitted papers. The Deptford littoral was an important and unique maritime place. Whilst only a mile-long, Deptford’s busy and imposing waterfront arguably punched well above its weight in terms of Thameside, national and international maritime history.