

Chapter 2: The Burial Ground and Greenwich Pensioners

THE BURIAL GROUND

The earliest map of the development area is *A Survey of the King's Lordship or Manor of East Greenwich*, dated 1695 (OA 1999b, fig. 3). The development area is located in the south-western corner of the then newly-founded Royal Hospital, within a square plot of open land surrounded by four roads (Romney Road which bounds the northern edge was then called Turpin Lane). Its use as a burial ground dates from the mid 18th century. It was not an extension of St Alphege's church cemetery as was previously believed (OA 1999a, 1).

The architect Nicholas Hawksmoor acquired the plot of land for the hospital, and in 1742, at the end of a long lease, it returned to the full possession of the Royal Hospital and opened as the Royal Hospital Burial Ground. The first pensioner, a John Meriton, was buried there in 1749. A grander vault, the Mausoleum, was made ready for officers by the following year (Newell 1984).

The new burial ground, covering three and a half acres lay between Romney Road and the Park on part of 'Goddard's Ground', and provided a much needed extension to the original hospital cemetery at Maze Hill, c. 600 m to the east. The Maze Hill cemetery was by then full (Newell 1984, 73). Re-use of the Maze Hill burial ground had involved a considerable number of exhumations and reburials and required a radical change in the previous burial method. 'The Board considered the present practice of burying 3½ feet [0.91 m] deep and in a very irregular manner' [to be unsatisfactory]. 'In future, [graves were to be dug] 8 feet deep [2.46 m] and in a regular orderly manner.' (loc.cit.). The re-use of the Maze Hill cemetery had to be abandoned following a public outcry. In 1747 it was described by locals as a 'very great nuisance and desired that it should be shut up' (quoted by Newell 1984, 73). The Board's alternative request to extend the hospital cemetery into Greenwich Park was also refused. The new burial practice briefly adopted at Maze Hill prior to its closure does not appear to have been implemented in the new Royal Hospital burial ground on Romney Road.

Rocque's Map of Greenwich (1744) is large-scale and shows a number of buildings (OA 1999b, fig.4). Three rectangular buildings are shown to the east of King Street (now King William Street) on the central/west side of the square plot of ground. It would appear that a rectangular building on the site of the proposed student accommodation block is located near to or on the site of one of the buildings shown on Rocque's map. Archaeological investigation did not reveal any evidence for this building.

On the 1778 Map of the Hundred of Blackheath (Fig. 3) buildings are shown but are only representational. Although there is no indication of a burial ground, the scale of the map is such that it is unlikely that 'burial ground' would be marked. A rectangular building is shown on or near the site of the proposed student accommodation and is probably the same as the building shown on Rocque's Map of 1744.

The first plan of the area that explicitly marks out the development area as a burial ground dates to c. 1780. A Plan of the [Royal Hospital] Burial Ground (Fig. 4) shows its exact extent bounded by four roads: King Street (now King William Street); Romney's Road (now Romney Road); Friars Road (a road that once ran along the north-eastern side of the cemetery and mausoleum) and an unnamed road (no longer extant) bordering Greenwich Park. In the middle of the burial ground is a rectangular building marked 'The School', and a square building adjoining marked 'School Master's House', both of which are presumably surrounded by graves. These buildings may be those shown on the maps of 1744 and 1778.

In 1777–1783, a hospital school infirmary was built within the precinct of the Royal Hospital burial ground, possibly following the demolition of the building(s) shown on maps of 1744, 1778 and c. 1780. The school infirmary survives as a Grade II Listed Building and is incorporated as a rear wing of the Devonport Buildings (built in 1926–9). The 1999 Trenches 14 and 15 lie immediately west of this building. Construction of the infirmary also involved tree planting, levelling and grassing. At the time the new Royal Hospital burial ground was described as being in 'a very rude and disorderly state due to the quantities of rubbish thrown there during the building of the School Infirmary' (Newell 1984, 100). It is noteworthy that the sandy silt subsoil, in which burials were discovered during the OA watching brief in July 1999, contained frequent brick, tile and mortar fragments, which would appear to support the reference to this dumped material. Residents complained of '... an unpleasing disagreeable sight, burials being very frequent and the Graves from necessity being larger and kept open longer than is usually practised' (loc. cit.). Presumably this was for the purpose of multiple interments, a number of which have been excavated (see Chapter 5 and Appendix 2 below).

A plan of the parish of St Alphege, Greenwich (c. 1824) shows the infirmary building with 'Hospital Burial Ground' written beside it. There are no other buildings within the burial ground. The map shows

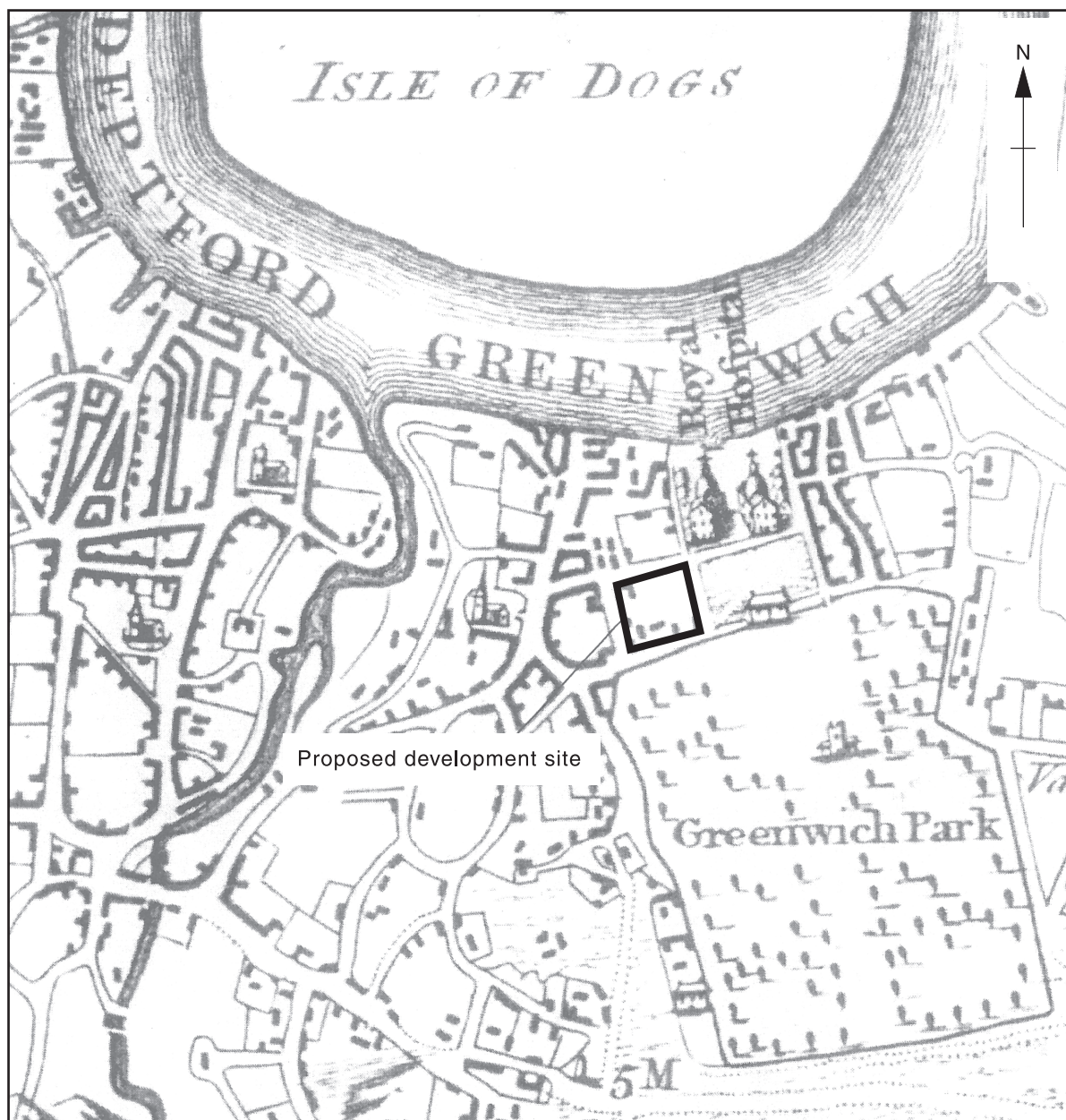


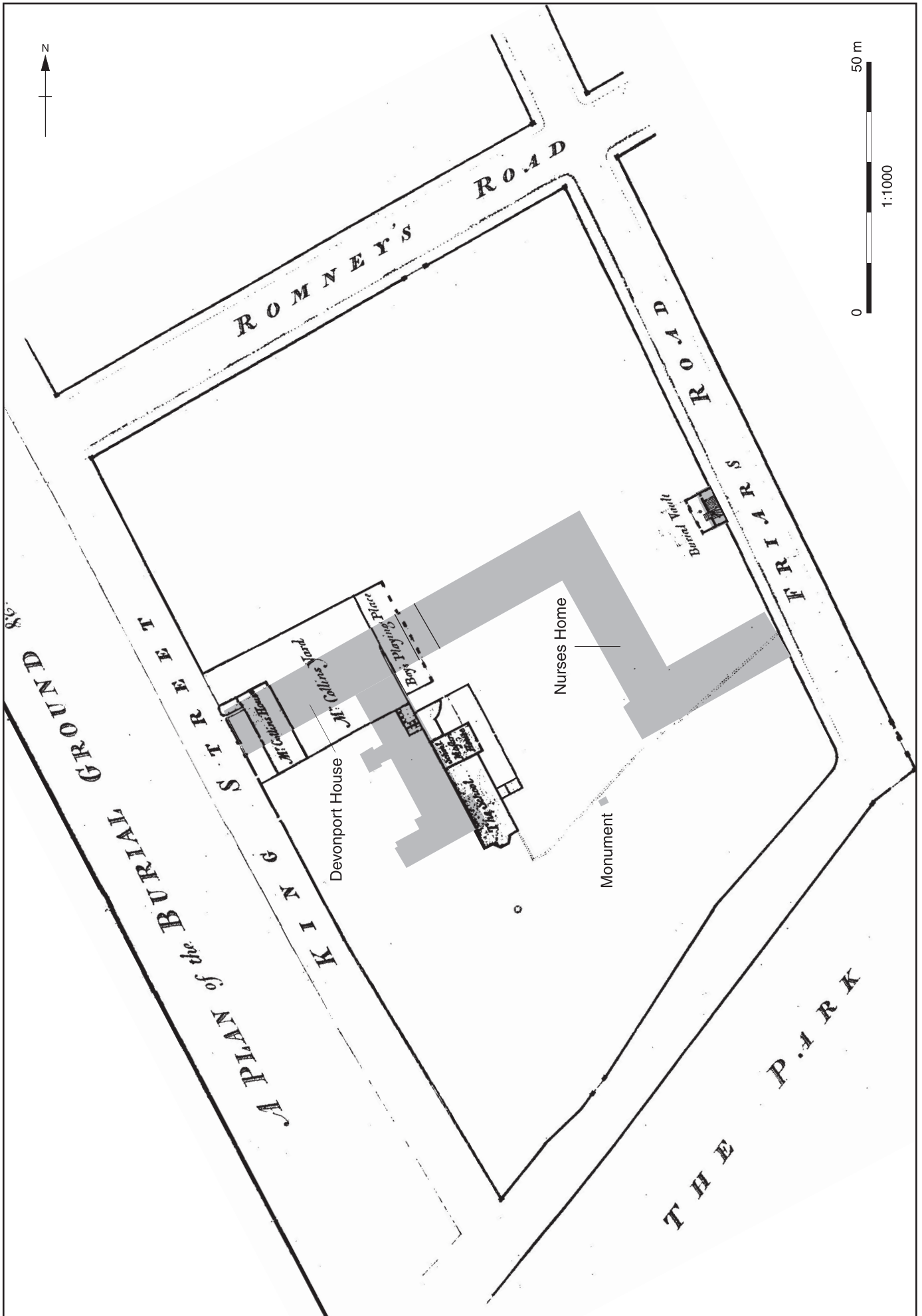
Figure 3 Map of the Hundred of Blackheath (1778). (Reproduced courtesy of the Greenwich Heritage Centre).

St Mary's church just south of the burial ground. The church, which was demolished in 1936, was a 'daughter' church to St Alphege to the east and is not known to have had a separate cemetery.

In just over a century the Hospital burial ground was full, and was closed in 1857. Daniel Drewett

(aged 60 years) was the last pensioner to be buried there. A poem by George Hewens (1857) commemorates the closure of the burial ground, and is reproduced here. A new cemetery was opened well to the east of the hospital at East Greenwich Mount Pleasaunce.

Figure 4 Plan of the (Royal Hospital) Burial Ground, c. 1780 (?Credit).



ROMNEY'S ROAD

DORSETT'S FERRIS

A PLAN of the BURIAL GROUND

KING STREET

THE PARK

Devonport House

Nurses Home

Monument

M. Collins's Yard

Bural Vault

Devonport House

**OF CLOSING THE CEMETERY OF GREENWICH
HOSPITAL (ROMNEY ROAD)**

Monday, August 31st, 1857

Daniel Drewett, aged 60.-Finis.
'Per Mare. Per Terram'

*'Tis finished! Now his corse must close the scene,
And, undisturbed, the grass shall flourish green;
No more a friend deplored we here may trace,
We seek their exit in a distant place;
On the dread locale here the gates we close,
And leave their brethren to their last repose.*

*Could one historic candidate be found
From Nature's page to cull their work around,
What golden legend would the spot then unfold!
What tales of heroism might be told!*

*How many a hoary veteran here laid low,
What patriotic furor once could glow.-
The humble shipmate here, the chieftain great,
Their dust commingled in a common fate;
All animation once in England's cause,
And bade the inveterate foe respect her laws;
They fought, they bled, and privations groan,
And braved the storm for country and their home.*

*Ah! Many a gallant head, reclined in death,
With animation fraught, with kindled breath,
To wonder-stricken, eager, motley, few,*

*Some ancient battle strife would oft renew;
And youthful aspirants, with ardour beam,
Drink in his eloquence, and court the stream,
And so, with watchful ear, they list' and learn
How they, time hence, might laurels earn;*

*And thus, full many a votary of fame
Have passed away and left behind A NAME!
In peace they rest, and on this bourne no more
Will they be harrass'd by the clangs of war!
Yet unborn ages shall their names revere
And say "England's patriots lie buried here!"*

GEORGE HEWENS.

The Ordnance Survey (OS) 1st Edition 25inch map of 1865 is the earliest detailed map of the area of development (Fig. 5). The map shows the area marked as the 'Grave Yard' as a landscaped area with trees, footpaths and a monument. Two further maps of Greenwich dated 1869 and 1884 show the words 'burial ground' across the whole area beside the Infirmary.

The burial ground is estimated to have contained the burials of 20,000 Royal Navy pensioners - a mixture of retired seamen and marines (Newell 1984, 217). The remains of many were disturbed by later development. In the 1870s, a tunnel for the London-Greenwich railway was cut east-west across the northern half of the Royal Hospital Burial Ground c. 50 m north of the area of the development. It necessitated the exhumation of an estimated 1,400 bodies. In 1925 statutory consent was given for the exhumation of bodies prior to the construction of the Devonport Nurses Home for the Dreadnought Hospital. Over 4,000 bodies were removed and reburied in the Mount Pleasaunce burial ground (Newell 1984, 217). In 1991, developments undertaken by the National Maritime Museum to the

south of the west wing of the Queen's House revealed undated burials. No further details are known.

Today there are no upstanding memorials to the ratings in the burial ground, and no grave markers or the cuts for the bases of such memorials were discovered during the excavation. Although many memorials were destroyed in the Blitz, transcriptions of some have survived in the National Archives (Greenwich Hospital Memorial Inscriptions). It appears that some memorials from the earlier and later burial grounds are still extant. One of half a dozen such memorial stones commemorates the colourful life of the seaman and Greenwich pensioner Edward Harris (Memorial number M2415). Today it lies in the floor of the Devonport Mausoleum. The inscription reads as follows:

Here lyeth interred ye body of / Edward Harris
Born at Dover / in Kent, Mariner / A man just in
his actions / Kind to his family / was 18 years a
slave in Barbary / & steadfastly kept to ye Church/
of England, Served the Government / at sea faith-
fully / Received His Majs Royal Bounty / of this
Hospital / & died in ye faith of ye said church ye 27
day of June 1797 aged 75 years Ex dono . . .

Like so many other pensioners Edward Harris died at an advanced old age.

THE ROYAL HOSPITAL OVER TIME

Just as the size of the Royal Navy varied over time, so too did the number of seamen and marines eligible for a pension. Numbers rose during the wars with the Spanish, Dutch and French from the mid-18th to early 19th centuries, as the number of enlisted fighting men increased, and those injured in service became more numerous. In 1708 there were 300 pensioners and 40 staff (Newell 1984, 32). By 1729 there were 700 pensioners (Newell 1984, 64). The capacity of the hospital was increased by 200 in 1731, and by 1738 there were 1,000 pensioners (ibid., 66, 71). By 1750 the number of pensioners had risen to 1,100 (ibid. 76). In 1763, the out-pensioner scheme was established by Act of Parliament. Out-pensioners could live at home and draw a pension of £7 per year (Newell 1984, 84-5). At this time there were 1,800 in-pensioners. By 1811, there were 12,000 out-pensioners. The number of in-pensioners peaked at 2,710 pensioners in 1814. Enlistment of seamen and marines into the Royal Navy fell following the 1815 peace with France. However, veterans of the war continued to require aid, and this need became more acute with their increasing age. The hospital was fullest in the 1830s when many veterans of the Napoleonic Wars were in their dotage.

Veterans from earlier conflicts, however, were beginning to die off. For example, at the 1836 commemoration of the Glorious First of June (Lord Howe's naval victory over the French Republic in 1794) attended by William IV, all the pensioners who had fought in the battle were paraded before the King him. Of the original 1,700 servicemen, only 176 were



Figure 5 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25 inch Map (1865) with the area of proposed development outlined.

present. Between 1815 and the 1830s the hospital was full, but by 1851 there were only six candidates for 88 vacancies, by 1857, five for 835, and by 1859 only three for 956 vacancies. The hospital had clearly outlived its function, and in 1869 the few remaining pensioners were paid to find alternative accommodation, and the hospital was closed (Newell 1984, 178). By that time the Romney Road burial ground had been closed for 11 years. The Royal Naval College took over the hospital buildings in 1873 and remained there until 1998.

SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE GREENWICH PENSIONERS

Introduction

The Royal Hospital at Greenwich was intended as the Royal Naval counterpart to the Chelsea Hospital for soldiers. In the words of its Royal Charter, it was an institute for 'the relieve and support of Seamen serving on board the Ships and Vessells belonging to the Navy Royall . . . who by reason of Age, Wounds

or other disabilities shall be incapable of further service . . . and unable to maintain themselves.' Other aims stated in its Royal Charter of 1694 were 'the sustenance of the widows of seamen', and the 'maintenance and education of children of seamen'. The hospital was funded by a number of sources, including the proceeds of confiscated lands, unclaimed prize money, wages of men who 'ran' (ie. deserted) and a regular collection from both Royal Navy and merchant navy seamen of 6d per month, deducted automatically from their wages (Lavery 1989, 130). Royal patronage was also courted. A statue of George II was unveiled in the Great Court of the Hospital in August 1735. The same year George II granted the Hospital the estates of the disgraced Jacobite Earl of Derwentwater, who had been executed in 1716, and the Hospital entered a phase of real prosperity.

From 1705, the Hospital housed and cared for those long-serving seamen and marines who were mentally and/or physically unable to look after themselves. It should be stressed that the Hospital served a very different function from the other three major Royal Navy hospitals of the day at Gosport, Chatham and Plymouth. These hospitals had been established to care for injured and diseased sailors still on active service, rather than old and retired sailors. For this reason, it comes as no surprise that a large proportion of the skeletal sample excavated at Greenwich comprised older adult males. This contrasts strongly with the much wider age distribution of skeletons buried in the Paddock, Haslar Hospital, Gosport. The latter ranged from 16 to 50 years, the majority being 20–30 years old (Boston 2005).

Documentary sources

A wide range of documents pertaining to the Greenwich pensioners was consulted by Lorraine Lindsay-Gale (2002). These are held in the National Archives at Kew and the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich. Although this research is of considerable value in vividly bringing to life some of the individuals who comprised the pensioner population of the Hospital, it must be stressed that her work was not exhaustive, and that considerably more research in the future will undoubtedly prove highly valuable. The sources consulted by Lindsay-Gale are listed below:

- ADM 73 Pensioners' Admission Papers; files 1–69
- ADM 73 Register of Graves at Royal Hospital from 1857; file 463
- ADM 73 Hospital Burial Registers 1844 – 1860; file 460
- ADM 65 Letters relating to Pensioners Admissions; files 81–97
- ADM 36–39 Admiralty Ships Musters
- ADM 97–99 Sick and Wounded Seamen 1702–1862, 1742–1833, 1698–1816
- ADM 102 Naval Hospitals and Hospital Ships, Musters and Journals 1740–1860

The *Ayshford Complete Trafalgar Roll* (Ayshford and Ayshford 2004) was also consulted. This roll lists the records of all officers and ratings, who fought at the Battle of Trafalgar. Although highly useful, this record only covers a very small proportion of the seamen who eventually became Greenwich pensioners, the roll being limited to protagonists of a single battle. Nevertheless, it offers a useful snapshot of the lives of seamen and marines during the Napoleonic Wars, 703 of whom later became Greenwich pensioners. The Ayshfords used many of the sources listed above, but consulted other records, such as the Index of Seamen's affects; Index of the Wills of Seamen; Royal Marine description books; Wage Remittances; Wage Allocations; Naval medals; Royal Marines Effective and Subsistence records, and Chatham Chest contributions.

A number images of Greenwich pensioners and sailors are reproduced in Plates 2 to 9. They clearly reflect the advanced age and many mutilations and disabilities recorded in the written sources. The discharge certificate of Corporal George Frederick Eller (Plate 10), 'earnestly recommended [him] as a proper object of His Majesty's Royal Bounty of Greenwich Hospital'. Eller, who had been a marine corporal on board *Orion* was discharged following the amputation of his right leg at the Battle of the Nile. It should be noted that Eller was only 21 years old. Historical accounts of injuries and diseases will be discussed below (Chapter 4).

Composition of the Greenwich assemblage

Naval hierarchy in life and death

In interpreting both the burial archaeology and the osteology of this assemblage it is essential to place the men in their social context, both within the Royal Navy and the wider society. Burials at the Royal Hospital include both marines and seamen, and a small proportion of officers, the most famous being Admiral Sir Thomas Masterman Hardy, who was Nelson's flag captain at Trafalgar and who served as Governor of the Hospital until his death in 1839. Officers were interred in a separate burial ground from the ratings. The OA excavation investigated part of the ratings' burial ground.

The skeletal population examined in this report largely comprised the rank and file of the Navy (the ratings or 'the lower deck') – including landmen, ordinary and able seamen – and petty officers, and amongst the marines, privates and non-commissioned officers. Gunners and gunner's mates, cooks, carpenters and other skilled workmen were also part of this fraternity. The investigated graves also included a small number burials of women and these will be considered further below.

On coming aboard ship, seamen were assigned a rating by the first lieutenant on the basis of their sailing experience and ability (Lavery 1989, 129). 'Landmen' had no previous experience of the sea and performed uncomplicated tasks, and provide muscle

power for hoisting and lowering sails, swabbing decks and moving loads such as barrels from one part of the ship to another. A man rated as an 'ordinary seaman' was 'useful on board, but is not an expert or skilful sailor' (Burney 1815, 327). An 'able seaman' was 'not only able to work, but is also well acquainted with his duty as a seaman' (loc.cit.). Pay and prize money was dependent on grade (Ayshford and Ayshford 2004; Fremont-Barnes 2005, 12). Ratings were overseen by warrant officers and commissioned officers.

Marines were not generally employed in handling the ship, although they often manned the capstan when raising the anchor (Lavery 1989, 170-71), and would provide extra muscle power for hauling on braces when tacking ship (ibid., 196). Most of the marines were assigned to the ship's gun crews in action (ibid., 199). Nonetheless, they were essentially sea-going soldiers whose principal role was to fight using virtually the same tactics and weaponry as soldiers on land, their standard weapon being the flintlock musket or 'Brown Bess' (Lavery 2004). Captain William Glascock drew attention to the different skills of marines and sailors:

But in most of the affairs we were able to relate, marines and seamen were able to work most perfectly together; the former, efficient soldiers as they were, holding the enemy's troops and covering the no less efficient cutting out and demolition work of the seamen. (quoted by Lavery 1989, 152)

Onboard duties of marines included acting as guards and preventing desertion amongst the sailors. They were berthed separately from the seamen in order to reduce fraternisation (Lewis 1960, 273). They were also sometimes employed for impressment duties. Marines were deployed in small detachments aboard ship, and comprised a relatively small proportion of the ship's crew. For example, the total proportion of marines in the ships' crews at Trafalgar was 15.6% (calculated from the Trafalgar Roll, Ayshford and Ayshford 2004). In the 1790s and 1800s a 74 gun ship would have had a detachment of 100-120 marines out of a complement of some 590 to 640 men; that is about 17% of the crew would be marines.

Manning the Royal Navy

With the nation's defences almost entirely dependent on the strength and readiness of the Royal Navy, the need for seamen was insatiable, and even at the height of the Napoleonic Wars the force was never able to achieve full manning of all its ships (Fremont-Barnes 2005). The Royal Navy easily constituted the nation's largest employer. There is no single source that can provide figures for the numbers of sailors and marines serving with the Royal Navy during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, but two series of figures are available, one series presented by the Hardwick Commission in 1859 (hereafter HC), and the second compiled and published by Lloyd (1968,

286-90) (hereafter LL) (see also Rodger 2004, appendix vi). The manpower figures in the Naval estimates voted during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, give a sense of the scale of naval operations, although they cannot be taken to give the exact number of sailors and marines in service at any one time since the figures were a 'financial abstraction' that 'bore no fixed relation to the number of real men actually serving' (Rodger 2004, 198). In 1793 Parliament voted monies for 45,000 sailors and marines (Clowes 1899, 153) when there were between 59,042 (HC) and 69,868 (LL) men on ships' books. By 1801 the figure in Parliamentary estimates had risen to 130,000 men, and the number of men serving was between 131,959 (HC) and 125,061 (LL). With the resumption of hostilities in May 1803 after the brief Peace of Amiens, Parliament voted funding for 50,000 sailors and marines rising to 100,000. The numbers serving were 67,148 (HC) / 49,430 (LL). By 1810 when the numbers serving peaked at 146,312 (HC) or 142,098 (LL); the annual estimates allowed for 145,000 sailors and marines (Clowes, 1900, 9). In 1805, the year of the Battle of Trafalgar, numbers of men entered on ships' books stood at 114,012 (HC) / 109,205 (LL) (Rodger 2004, 639) in a year when the naval estimates allowed for 120,000 sailors and marines.

Manning the fleet to meet the increasing demands made upon it was a problem. There was no system for training sailors for the Royal Navy, and it had to compete with the merchant fleet for men from the finite pool of available sailors (Rodger 2004, 499). The Navy's pay rates were poor by comparison with merchant rates, but in some other respects – better food and conditions – service in the Royal Navy was advantageous (Rodger 2004, 499).

It took years of experience to train an able seaman and most expert seamen were 'bred to the sea', starting a sailing career in their early teens. Nonetheless, because the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars lasted 20 years, the pool of sailors did increase to meet in part the increased demand from merchant fleet and Royal Navy. Many sailors were from seafaring families or at least lived in ports and were familiar with ships (Lavery 2004, 47). Admiral Collingwood considered that the ideal age for recruitment was fourteen to sixteen years, when boys were strong enough to begin to work hard, but young enough to learn. 'Such boys soon become good seamen: landsmen very rarely do, for they are confirmed in other habits' (cited in Lavery 2004, 48). It seems that seamanship was rather like a language best learnt early.

Seamen were recruited by a number of means, some were volunteers, others were pressed into the service through the Impress Service (Rodger 2004, 496-500; Lloyd 1968, 124-49), and others were recruited under the Quota Acts (Rodger 2004, 443-44). Men volunteered for a number of reasons, to escape the poverty so widespread amongst the rural and working classes of this period, some to escape creditors and the debtors' prison, and some were in search of adventure and the possibility of prize money (Fremont-Barnes 2005, 6-8).

In 1795 and 1796 five successive Quota Acts were passed to raise fixed numbers of volunteers for the Navy. The 1795 acts imposed quotas on English and Welsh counties (35 George III, c. 5), English, Welsh and Scottish ports (35 George III, c. 9), and Scottish counties, burghs and cities (35 George III, c. 29). The two 1796 acts levied the English and Welsh counties, and Scottish counties, cities and burghs, respectively.

The Admiralty had to rely on impressment to maintain the manning of the fleet. In theory, foreigners, boys under 18 or men over 55 years, apprentices, harvesters, merchant seamen in their first two years at sea, and fishermen could not be taken up by press gangs. Although there were undoubtedly abuses, it is nonetheless true that press gangs were after the experienced seamen essential for the successful operation of a ship (Rodger 2004, 497). It is difficult to ascertain true proportion of 'pressed men' within the Royal Navy from ship's musters and other records, as many pressed men were encouraged to 'volunteer', thereby making themselves eligible for the Bounty, to which pressed men were not otherwise entitled. (Lewis 1960, 137; Lloyd 1968, 132).

Because of the real threat to the health of the crews by disease – epidemics could spread like wildfire in the crowded confines of a ship – newly pressed men, quota men and volunteers had to be passed by a naval surgeon to ensure that they were not infectious (Kemp 1970).

Away from home, Royal Navy captains often supplemented their crew with foreign and/or merchant seamen. Foreign seamen were often pressed men or volunteers 'recruited' in foreign ports or taken from enemy prizes. Another not uncommon but unofficial means of gaining new or better sailors was to commandeer parts of the crews of merchant ships, often British or American, but sometimes foreign. A Royal Navy captain might exchange his inferior hands for more able seamen by this means. Merchant crews, whence many Royal Navy seamen were drawn, had an eclectic mixture of origins, and hence, many such exchanges included foreign nationals. For example, in July 1803, the distinguished Royal Navy captain Sir Edward Pellew (who otherwise preferred his native Cornishmen aboard) intercepted the merchant ship *Rushdale* of Hull, taking three able seamen; then the *Coromandel* returning from China was stopped and nine mostly prime seamen 'volunteered'. In the following two months, Pellew 'acquired' seven indifferent hands from the *Recovery* and *Ramble* of London, and the *Walker*, a Spanish ship; three from a privateer, the *Speculation*, and four excellent men from the battleship *Spenser*. Pellew recaptured an East Indiaman, the *Lord Nelson* from the French on the 27th August 1803 with her prize crew of 42 Frenchmen. From her crew he took two Americans, a Swede, a Norwegian and a German, and two of his French prisoners who volunteered (Clayton and Craig 2004, 42-3).

Unlike the recruiting of experienced seamen, recruiting marines for the Royal Navy was much easier. In comparison to sailing a ship, the duties

of marines required relatively little training. Posters stuck up in market places advertised the service, and sergeants roamed the land trying to recruit young men with tales of adventure and prize money. Men were offered a substantial bounty, which had reached the princely sum of £26 per man by 1801. Most marines were recruited from the unskilled working classes, a large proportion being listed as 'labourers' in the Marine Musters (Ayshford and Ayshford 2004).

Nationality

Despite the Admiralty's prohibition on enlisting foreigners, most Royal Navy ships contained a significant proportion of foreign seamen. Lindsay-Gale (2002) found that Britain's 'hearts of oak' were not entirely manned by loyal British patriots. The 'place of origin' of sailors recorded in ships' musters revealed that the majority of seamen originated from England, Wales and Scotland, but these were by no means the exclusive source. Often a captain favoured officers and crew from his own place of origin, so crews might be predominantly Scottish, Irish or Cornish, depending on the captain in question (Clayton and Craig 2004, 41). For example, Sir Edward Pellew, the famous Cornish frigate captain whose squadron took numerous prizes in the wars with the French Republic, brought with him a core of followers who always sailed with him, moving with him from ship to ship. This core (officers, seamen and marines) was predominantly West Country in origin. The muster books of one of his ships, the *Tonnant*, reveal that of the 272-strong crew whose place of origin was stated, 57 came from Devon and 52 from Cornwall. The remainder was from Lancashire, Wales, Cumberland and Scotland. Marines were drafted from the Plymouth division (Clayton and Craig 2004, 41-42).

Amongst natives of the British Isles, a very large contingent of seamen was Irish (particularly from Cork and Dublin) and far fewer were Scots or Welsh. The next largest group was European: Dutch, Germans, Swedish, Danish, a few Portuguese, Prussians, Hungarians, Swiss and Italians. Interestingly, a small proportion of seamen fighting with the Royal Navy at Trafalgar were French and Spanish in origin (Ayshford and Ayshford 2004). Rodger (2004, 498) gives a breakdown by nationality for a sample of men from ships commissioned at Plymouth in 1804-5: 47% were English, 29% Irish, 8% Scots, 3% Welsh and 1% from the Isle of Man or Channel Islands. Other nationalities comprised 11%. There were a few Americans from East Coast states, who at this time were counted as being British, and quite a number from the West Indies. Several individuals came from Africa. Sometimes 'a black' or 'blk' was written alongside their name in the register. Interestingly, though, not all Africans or West Indians were identified as black, making it probable that racial identity was not systemically recorded. 'Blacks' were also recorded as coming from Bengal and Madras, East Indies, and

from Macao, China. This suggests that this was a general term applied to non-Caucasians. Cartoons and illustrations of seamen of the Royal Navy of this period often depict negroid seamen at work or play with their white colleagues (Plate 11).

Most marines were recruited from within the British Isles, the south-west counties (particularly Devon) contributing the largest numbers (from Ayshford and Ayshford 2004). An exception is the Prussian marine discussed below. Examples of foreign seamen and marines included:

- **Joel Britain**, aged 63 in 1803. Height 5ft 3in. He was injured in the head whilst serving on the *Victory*. His previous ship was the *Tremendous*. He was born in New York, and had a wife called Mary.
- **Phoebus Sandwich**, a 5ft 7in tall 'black' who came from Africa; had a wife in the West Indies; and was hurt in the loins whilst serving on the *Victorious*.
- **Frederick Dalwick** was 5ft 5in tall with light brown hair, blue eyes and a fair complexion. He originated from Wesel, Prussia (now Germany). In 1804 he enlisted as a private in the Royal Marines in the 134th company of the Plymouth Division. He had previously been a labourer. Frederick served in the *Swiftsure* at the Battle of Trafalgar and was awarded a Naval General Service Medal with Trafalgar Clasp. He was 27 years old. He was injured in the left hand whilst 'cutting out' when serving on the HMS *Defence*. He served in the Royal Navy for 16 years and 6 months, and was admitted to Greenwich Hospital in 1833, aged 55 years.

Lewis (1960, 129) notes that on the evidence of the Ship's Books in May 1808 14% of the 563 strong crew of *Implacable* were foreigners, and in 1812 17% of the crew of the *Warspite* were foreigners (ibid., 131). Even the crew of the *Victory*, Nelson's flagship at Trafalgar, contained 8% of foreign seamen and marines (ibid., 129).

Greenwich Pensioners on the Trafalgar Roll

A sample of 100 Trafalgar veterans who died at the Greenwich Hospital was compiled from the Trafalgar Rolls (Ayshford and Ayshford 2004), and is summarised in Appendix 1. From these records it is apparent that most of these in-pensioners survived into old age, despite many suffering severe injuries from enemy action, and prolonged exposure to the hazards of life at sea (such as scurvy, accidents and infections). The majority of the men in the sample died in their late 60s and 70s, the mean age of death being 70.01 years (Fig. 6). There was considerable variation in their length of service in the Royal Navy, which ranged from 2 years to 25 years with an average of 14 years. Lewis (1960, 415-6) reports an even greater average age of Greenwich pensioners and length of service. He found that in 1803 there were 96 pensioners over 80 years, 16 over 90 years and one more than 100 years of age. In his sample of 100 pensioners, the mean age-at-death was 82.5 years, and the average length of service was 25 years, with six having served for over 50 years (ibid., 416). The impact of such longevity of service and the advanced age of the pensioners is clearly reflected in the skeletal remains found in the cemetery (Chapter 4 below). The difference in results between the two samples

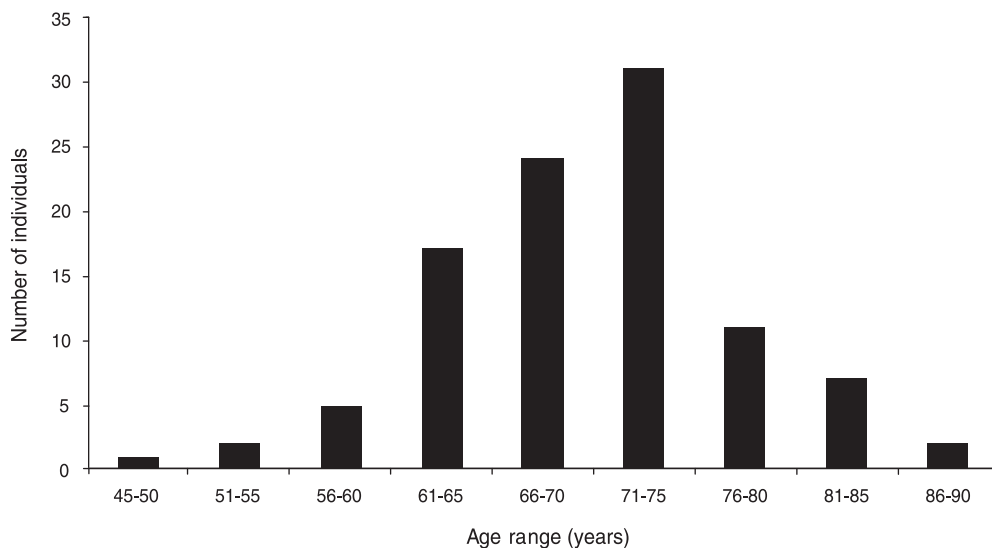


Figure 6 Age-at-death at Greenwich Hospital (data taken from Ayshford and Ayshford, Trafalgar Roll); N = 100.

above reveals that considerably more documentary work is required.

Many servicemen were demobilised following Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in 1815. The Trafalgar Roll records that many marines with a stature below 5ft 4in were discharged at this time on the grounds that they were 'undersized'. During the conflict this had not appeared to be an issue. Older marines (over 40–45 years) were discharged on the grounds of advanced age.

Social class

Georgian society was highly stratified, and although some fluidity in movement did exist between the social classes, the majority of the population conformed to the roles, occupations, wealth and status prescribed by the class into which they were born. The vast bulk of the seamen and marines serving in the Royal Navy were working class in origin. This is evident from documentary sources that record the occupations of seamen and marines before joining and after leaving the Royal Navy. These were mostly working class occupations, which included many labourers but also skilled workmen. A few were artisans, such as carpenters, bakers or tailors.

The working classes of late Georgian England were exposed to considerable hardships brought about by the social changes that accompanied the Industrial Revolution and the mechanisation of agriculture. For many, life was precarious, with men, women and children working long arduous hours in unhealthy and often dangerous conditions. In the cities, the poorer sort of people populated crowded, polluted slums, where sanitation was poor and infectious diseases rampant. Poverty was widespread and food and clean drinking water was often in short supply. Even by the end of the Victorian age, 30,000 people did not have access to water from a communal pump or tap (Roberts and Cox 2003, 297). In the countryside, the enclosure of common land, the abandonment of partible inheritance, and agricultural mechanisation, all contributed to widespread rural poverty (ibid.). The physical effects of social depravation are reflected in skeletal assemblages of working class origin of this period, as for example from the Cross Bones burial ground, Southwark (Brickley *et al.* 1999) and St Martin's churchyard, Birmingham (Brickley *et al.* 2006). Childhood deprivation was also identified in the Greenwich assemblage (see Chapter 4 below).

Life after the Royal Navy

In the two decades following the Napoleonic Wars, these social hardships were made even more acute by economic depression, a succession of poor harvests and the spiralling cost of grain. Large numbers of men were discharged from the army and navy within months of Waterloo, often without pensions or other provisions to ease their way back into the society that they had left years earlier. Servicemen returning from the wars struggled to find employment in these dif-

ficult times, in many cases impaired by physical injuries they had sustained during the conflict. Of those who did find work, many returned to their previous occupations or used skills acquired during their time in the Royal Navy, whilst the more far-sighted saved their prize money and wages and started small businesses on discharge. Many other Royal Navy sailors continued their roving, seafaring way of life, and joined the merchant navy. A conspicuous number did not find employment, however, and drifted from place to place doing such work as they chanced upon.

Injured seamen were sometimes assisted officially from the Chatham Chest, a pension to which all seamen contributed 6d per month throughout their time in the Navy (Ayshford and Ayshford 2004). Assistance from the Chatham Chest was dependant upon the presentation of a smart-ticket or certificate of relief, which needed to be regularly renewed (yearly to five yearly) at a review held monthly. In his memoirs, William Spavens (2000, 98) described the scene at one such review:

Here you may behold perhaps 500 mutilated creatures of different ages and appearances, some clean and decently appareled; some dirty and almost naked, so that all the cloaths on their backs would scarcely make a kitchen-girl a mop; some with meager and emaciated looks, appear as if they never had a good meal of meat, while here and there one [sic] indeed retain some faint vestiges of their former likeness; some have lost an eye, and others both; some have a hand, some an arm off; some, both near their wrists, some, both close to the shoulders; others, one at the wrist and the other above the elbow; some are swinging on a pair of crutches; some with a wooden leg below the knee; another above the knee; some with one leg off below the knee and the other above; some with a hand off and an eye out; another with an eye out and his face perforated with grains of battle-powder, which leave as lasting an impression as though they were injected by an Italian artist [ie. tattoo artist]; some with their limbs contracted; others have lost part of a hand or part of a foot; some have a stiff knee from a fracture of the pettella bone; some have lost the tendons, and others the flesh from their arm-pits; while another has lost a piece from the back of his neck; another has had his skull fractured and trepanned, and a silver plate substituted in the room of what was taken out; some with their noses shot off; others with a piece torn from the cheek; another with his jaw bone of chin shot off, &c. &c. &c.

In Grose's *Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* of 1811, one of the slang terms given for a seaman was 'Jack Nastyface'. For so many of the above, this term was sadly very apt. Despite their disfigurements and disabilities, only a small proportion of these maimed and debilitated men eventually gained a place in the Hospital.

The Lloyd's Patriotic Fund was a private charity that assisted wounded seamen and marines (Ayshford and Ayshford 2004) and was set up by civilians enraged that Britain's conquering heroes could be brought so low. The government's heartless treatment of veterans was heavily criticised in many spheres of British society, and was perceived as a sign that something was seriously wrong with the Establishment (Erickson 1996, 206). Fuelled by economic hardship and Radical ideals, this widespread social and political dissatisfaction became overt amongst the masses. The resultant large-scale political meetings and demonstrations gravely alarmed the government (the example of the French Revolution being in the not-so-distant past). Its heavy-handed armed suppression of these rallies culminated in the notorious Peterloo Massacre of 1819.

It is remarkable, given the social background of the Greenwich pensioners, that so many survived into a ripe old age, far surpassing most of their contemporaries. Age at death estimates compiled from the London Bills of Mortality from the 1740s to 1840s by Roberts and Cox (2003, 304) showed that only 13.19-20.58% of the total London population (including all social classes) survived beyond 60 years of age, whilst only 7.56-11.03% survived beyond 70 years. Clearly, the Greenwich pensioners were amongst those few hardened survivors. In the words of Lewis (1960, 416) 'they were mostly the picked, brine-pickled survivors of a gruelling existence from which the weaklings had long since faded.'

Out-pensioners and in-pensioners

Whilst some of the Greenwich pensioners recorded in the General Register of Pensioners and their Families (ADM73/42) and in the Greenwich Hospital Records resided within the hospital, and were buried in the hospital burial ground on their deaths, a much higher proportion were out-pensioners. Out-pensioners lived in the community, many pursuing trades. A large proportion were married and some lived with their wives, although records suggest that many a man and wife did not reside in the same town. Some out-pensioners lived as far away as Dublin and Devon, whilst others appear to have elected to settle much closer to hand, often living in Greenwich itself (Ayshford and Ayshford 2004).

The Trafalgar Rolls (Ayshford and Ayshford 2004) record that most pensioners were initially out-pensioners, but moved into Hospital accommodation in the last few years of life, presumably when the effects of old age made coping with civilian life untenable. It would appear that the more debilitated individuals did enter the hospital at a younger age, however, with a few living as many as 25 years in the hospital. It was much more common, however, to spend only the last 5 to 10 years as an in-pensioner. Only a small proportion of injured

and disabled seamen gained a place in the hospital as in-pensioners.

LIFE OF IN-PENSIONERS IN THE HOSPITAL

In his memoirs, William Spavens (2000, 99) described Greenwich Hospital in the following laudatory terms:

which magnificent building is not to be equalled in the world, and its endowment is equal to its magnificence; its situation is eligible, close by the fine river Thames, where ships pass and re-pass; the air is salubrious, the park delightful, the chapel elegant, the clothing for the pensioners comfortable, and the provision wholesome and plentiful; all which conspires to render life, loaded with infirmities, tolerable if not happy in its decline, 'when safe moor'd in Greenwich tier'.

Like the Chelsea Pensioners, the Greenwich pensioners were supplied with a characteristic uniform. This comprised blue coat and breeches, a cocked hat of felt, blue worsted stockings, (three pairs to last two years), two pairs of shoes and three shirts. They also received two nightcaps, nightgowns, neckerchiefs and bedding, and the frail and aged were provided with a great coat (Lewis 1960, 415). Pensioners who breached discipline even in minor ways were sometimes required to wear their coats inside out, the bright yellow lining marking them out conspicuously. Special yellow coats with red sleeves or some other badge of disgrace were also designed to identify delinquents until they had 'worked their passage back to grace' (Lewis 1960, 415; Spavens 2000, 99). Punishment duties were also inflicted, such as having to sweep the Grand Square of the Hospital (Spavens 2000, 99). A few in-pensioners were expelled outright for bad behaviour. These included Trafalgar veterans James Bagley, a retired Royal Marine and stocking-maker (for striking a boatswain when drunk), George Baker (for 'misconduct'), Redmond Cafferty and John Ford (crimes not specified) (taken from Ayshford and Ayshford 2004).

Although housed in magnificent buildings, there were complaints about poor food, mismanagement and the pettiness on the part of the trustees. In addition, corruption and jobbery periodically surfaced. In 1771 Captain Thomas Baillie, one of the four captains of the hospital complained that the Secretary John Ibbotson was displacing pensioners from their 'cabins' to make office space for civilian clerks (Newell 1984, 86-7). In 1774 Baillie was appointed Lieutenant Governor of the Hospital. In 1778, Baillie went into print detailing 'the several Abuses that have been introduced into that great National Establishment' (Baillie 1778). An enquiry followed and the result of the enquiry was that Baillie was dismissed from his post. The case became something of a cause célèbre, there was even a debate in the House of Lords. Not satisfied that Baillie had been dismissed some of the Directors of the Hospital brought a case of libel against Baillie.

Baillie won the case thanks to speech by a young lawyer called Thomas Erskine (Newell 1984, 86-92). The speech made Erskine's reputation; he went on to defend Thomas Paine, he was briefly Attorney General and later to become Lord Chancellor. An earlier survey of abuses of Hospital accommodation led to the expulsion of 800 servants (footmen, coachmen and other menial servants) who had never served at sea.

Another scandal involved cheating the pensioners out of basic rations. The pewter tableware, probably made materials from the Hospital's northern estates, became the subject of a scandal and dispute when it was discovered that the depth of the bowls were altered, so as to reduce the daily food rations (Newell, 1984, 72).

Overall, by the standards of the day, however, the Greenwich pensioners were very well fed, and made extra money by selling what they could not eat to the poor of Greenwich. Food was served in a communal dining hall (Plate 12). The usual daily ration was 1 lb of bread, and 2 quarts (4 pints) of beer, with 1 lb of meat (boiled or sometimes roasted) (beef three days a week and mutton two days a week), 4 oz cheese. On Wednesdays and Fridays instead of meat each pensioner had pease pottage, 8 oz cheese, and 2 oz butter (Newell 1984, 82). This diet bore an uncanny resemblance to that aboard ship, but presumably was fresher. Small luxuries included an allowance of one shilling a week for tobacco, and on holidays and naval anniversaries, the daily intake of two quarts of beer was doubled. All in all, the life of an in-pensioner was happy and carefree, and, as Lewis (1960, 416) suggests, may have contributed towards their considerable longevity.

The pensioners were housed in wards. In the early days these were named after the famous ships, battles and military commanders of the day: *Royal Charles, Monk, Restoration, Royal William, Nassau, Barfleur, Marlborough, Blenheim* and *Ramilles*. In the same tradition, later ward names commemorated Admirals and naval commanders, such as Anson, Hardy, Sandwich, Rodney and Duke. The pensioners of each ward selected from amongst their numbers a 'Boatswain' and two 'Boatswain's mates', who were in charge of the ward and received a crown rather than a shilling a week (the pocket money of an ordinary seaman) for their troubles.

At the enormous state funeral of Nelson, on 8th of January 1805, the Greenwich pensioners received national recognition of their role in defeating the French in several recent wars. The funeral was a huge outpouring of national grief, on a scale not seen before and probably only equalled by the funerals of Churchill and of Princess Diana in the 20th century. Nelson's remains were brought home from Spain and lay in state in the Painted Hall of Greenwich Hospital. The hall had originally served as the dining hall for the Hospital but had proved too small for the purpose. Fifteen thousand paid their respects here, whilst many thousands more could not get in (Clayton and Craig 2004, 366). During the funerary procession, as the cof-

fin left the Hall, 500 pensioners who had served under Nelson marched in front. Captain Hardy carried the standard. Other pensioners lined up in double rows. The coffin was rowed up the Thames by Royal Navy seamen, and a great procession accompanied it to St Paul's cathedral. Forty-eight pensioners took part in this part of the procession dressed in black gowns and carrying black staves.

There were many official visits to the Hospital in later years as Greenwich was the quay from which many embarked or disembarked when making trips to and from the Continent. On these occasions, pensioners were lined up on parade. Visitors included King William (1834), Marshal Soult (one of Napoleon's commanders), Queen Victoria and Prince Albert (1840), the King of Prussia (1842), Tzar Nicholas of Russia (1844) and Ibrahim Pasha, Khedive of Egypt (1846). Clearly, Greenwich Hospital was an institution of which the Establishment was proud. In a less generous moment, Dr Johnson commented that the Hospital was 'too magnificent a place for charity, and that its parts were too detached to make one great whole' (Newell 1984, 83). There were many who did not share these sentiments.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN AT THE ROYAL HOSPITAL

In addition to helping aged and disabled seamen, the hospital also provided some support widows and offspring, who were unable to support themselves. Widows or spouses, and offspring or orphans of in-pensioners were not permitted to live in the Hospital (Newell 1984, 31), but often took private lodgings nearby. It was not until the 19th century that thought was given to the plight of the wives and families of pensioners, or to the provision of married quarters (Newell 1984, 175, 177, 260). Indeed in 1857, the new First Lord of the Admiralty noted that parishes were obtaining the release of pensioners from the Hospital so that they could support their families which were being admitted to workhouses (Newell 1984, 175).

However, some widows who were employed as nurses in the hospital and school at Greenwich, did live in (Ayshford and Ayshford 2004). This may well explain the presence of the six females in the skeletal assemblage. The offspring of pensioners were also provided for, and a school was opened for these children in the Queen's House, which had been adapted for use between 1807 and 1816 (Newell 1984). The Queen's House was converted into the National Maritime Museum in 1937-9. It is highly probable that the two sub adults in the skeletal assemblage were the issue of pensioners.

It is highly unlikely that the female skeletons are those of women who had served in the Royal Navy. Much has been made by ballad-mongers, and in popular literature and on film of women assuming male identities in order to serve as seamen in the Navy.

Motivations are said to have varied from a desire to be reunited with a sweetheart, as a means of shaking off social and sexual mores governing the behaviour of women at this time, or like men, the thirst for adventure and/or the means of gaining untold wealth from prize money. By its very clandestine nature, it is impossible to get a true approximation of the number of such women serving in the Navy, although it is doubtful that it exceeded a few individuals (Lewis 1960, 286).

Historically known figures include Elizabeth Bowden, a black woman known as 'William Brown', and Hannah Snell. Elizabeth Bowden served six weeks aboard the *Hazard* in 1807 as a boy third class (Fremont-Barnes 2005, 48-9). The 'little female tar' was one of the principal witnesses at the court martial of a Lieutenant Berry, at which she appeared garbed in a long jacket and blue trousers (Lewis 1960, 286; Rodger 2004, 506). 'William Brown' was an impressive female who served for at least 11 years during the Napoleonic Wars as an able seaman and captain of the foretop - a post given to the most skilled and agile members of the crew - in the 110-gun *Queen Charlotte* (Harvey 1994, 114). Her true gender was only revealed after the end of the Wars in 1815 (Rodger 2004, 506). Slightly earlier in the 18th century, Hannah Snell (1723-1792), already a mother, had embarked on a career as a soldier, marine and seaman (Harvey 1994, 114). She served at least five years, during which time she was reputedly wounded in twelve places at Pondicherry. She had to remove one of the bullets herself in order to avoid detection. Her stoicism paid off and her true gender wasn't discovered until she returned home and revealed it herself. She was awarded an annuity (Lewis 1960, 286), and eventually married three times (Harvey 1994, 114).

Females aboard ship more commonly lived openly as women, and were usually the wives or lovers of seamen, marines and officers on board. Although some captains forbade women in their ship, it appears to have been an unusual position to take, and there are numerous passing references to wives of both officers and ratings (Lewis 1960, 280-87; Rodger 2004, 505). Captain's order books often prescribe regulations for women belonging to the ship (Lewis 1960, 280-82). Because these women were not entered on the muster books (*ibid.*, 282), it is impossible to quantify their numbers, but their presence is often overlooked in many modern historical accounts of the Royal Navy.

Women attached to members of the lower deck generally performed traditional female roles of cleaning, cooking and ministering to the sick and injured, but also often acted as 'powder-monkeys', bringing gunpowder to the gundecks during battle (Lewis 1960, 283).

In his memoir, John Nichol described the courage of the women on board the *Goliath* at the Battle of the Nile (1798). His station during the battle the powder magazine of the *Goliath*. He recorded that:

Any information we got was from the boys and the women who carried the powder. The women behaved as well as the men . . . I was much indebted to the Gunner's wife who gave her husband and me a drink of wine every now and then. . . Some women were wounded, and one woman belonging to Leith died of her wounds. One woman bore a child in the heat of the action: she belonged to Edinburgh. (quoted in Lewis 1960, 283)

In 2000, Dr Paolo Gallo's team excavated a number of burials on Nelson's Island in the Bay. Interestingly, these fatalities included a woman buried in her dress, who was interred within a wooden coffin marked with a large metal 'G' [possibly for *Goliath*]. This may well have been the unfortunate woman from Leith, or one of women attached to army regiments, who are known to have died aboard ships moored in Aboukir Bay in 1801 (Slope 2004).

In addition to the female burial on Nelson's Island there two newborns and one infant a few months old, the former either stillborn or having died in childbirth or soon afterwards. Childbirth aboard ship was not unknown in the Royal Navy, as already noted, with one woman giving birth in the heat of the Battle of the Nile (Lewis 1960, 283). The fear and excitement of engagement may well have precipitated labour. Another instance, is the birth of Daniel Tremendous MacKenzie aboard the *Tremendous* during the battle of the Glorious First of June. At the age of 53 he received the Naval General Service Medal engraved with his name, rating and ship: 'Daniel T. MacKenzie - Baby - H.M.S. *Tremendous*'.

Women who actually fought in these sea battles were excluded from this honour. Two women - Ann Hopping and Mary Ann Riley - later claimed the Naval General Service Medal for their actions in the battle, and although their claims were not denied, their applications were rejected on the grounds that it would 'leave the Army open to innumerable applications' (cited in Lewis 1960, 283).

Jane Townshend who had served in the *Defiance* at Trafalgar applied for the medal with the support of certificates from Philip Durham, Captain of the *Defiance*. Initially her application was accepted

The Queen in the Gazette of the 1st of June directs that all who were present in this action shall have a medal, *without any reservation as to sex*, and as this woman produces from the Captain of the *Defiance* strong and highly satisfactory certificates of her useful services during the action she is fully entitled to a medal.

However subsequently the decision was reversed and the Naval General Service Medal Roll annotated accordingly:

Upon further consideration this [application] cannot be allowed - there were many women in the

fleet equally useful, and it will leave the navy exposed to innumerable applications of the same nature. (TNA, ADM 171/1, ff 131v-132r)

It is far from certain whether any of the six women buried in the rating's burial ground of Greenwich

Hospital had ever sailed in a Royal Navy ship as the consorts of seamen, or whether they had remained on land throughout their lives. It is unlikely that isotope analysis will shed light on this question, as most women do not appear to have remained aboard ship for prolonged periods.