The Royal Arsenal and Woolwich is imbued with history, much of which is linked with the British military. The former was responsible for the vast majority of developing, testing and processing weapons of war for the British Army and Navy for over 300 years, employing more than 80,000 at its peak and making it one of the most significant manufacturing sites in the UK. Until recently, much of what went on inside the walls of the Royal Arsenal was kept secret. Today, as a result of its decommission in the 1990s and subsequent revival and redevelopment, much of it is open for the public to experience and explore. These military roots have extended throughout Woolwich, the remnants of which are still present today.

**WHICH TRAIL WOULD YOU LIKE TO FOLLOW?**

- **Royal Arsenal Walk**
  The Royal Arsenal Walk highlights a selection of the most impressive foundries, factories and warehouses in the compound, that were integral to the production of British weapons.

- **Wider Woolwich Walk**
  The Wider Woolwich Walk explores the historical and present military services in the area, as well as offering a glimpse of life in Woolwich today.
  
  - additional loop including the Barracks & Mallet’s Mortar
  - additional loop including the Barracks & the Rotunda

**OR DO IT ALL!**
The Guardhouses

These Grade II Listed guardhouses were built in 1814. They flank the river entrance to the Royal Arsenal, originally its main entrance.

Assembly
by Peter Burke

The 16 cast-iron figures, entitled Assembly by Peter Burke, were installed in 2005 and aim to depict a collective human presence.

The Grand Store

The buildings that you are walking around now are known as the Grand Store, a complex of imposing military warehouses storing tools, tack, guns and carriages, shells and cannon balls. It was originally built to cope with the demands of the Napoleonic Wars. The Grand Store was converted into flats in 2002.
The Shell Foundry

The Shell Foundry was built in 1856 in order to meet demand for shot and shells during the Crimean War. The 400ft (120m) long single-storey building was made up of three internally iron-framed workshops. The two-storey gatehouse, with its magnificent and extravagant wrought-iron gates, is all that survives. The gates were finished with bronze and gold enamel, royal arms, monograms and numerous lit shells around a warrior’s mask in the arch. There are flanking thistle- and rose-patterned window grilles and, to the rear, cast-iron plinths with moulded shot and shell patterns.

Carriage Works

Until 1803, when work began on this building following the recommencement of war with France, there was no proper accommodation to produce gun carriages. This impressive, large and well-organised factory comprised of twenty-two workshops and was completed in 1805. It was here that steam power was first introduced to manufacturing at the Arsenal.

Dial Arch

This impressive arch lead to a large quadrangular compound, built in 1720, with workshops and gun-carriage storehouses for both sea and land service. Brass cannons from the nearby foundry were brought here for turning, washing and engraving. The central arch is flanked by battered pylons topped with pyramids of shot. Originally, this would have been visitors’ first view on arrival to the site. Its aim was to astound. The original sun dial was added in 1764 to regulate work.

Dial Square Football Team

Arsenal Football Club originated in the Royal Arsenal. A group of engineers working in the Dial Square formed the Dial Square Football Club in 1886. They changed their name to the Royal Arsenal in 1888 and adopted the name Woolwich Arsenal when they became professional in 1891. In 1913, the team moved to Highbury and settled on the name Arsenal.

Verbruggen’s House

This house was built in 1772-3 at government expense for the Verbruggen’s, the new Dutch masters of the foundry. They improved the facility, increased quality and advanced the technology of British cannon manufacture by introducing horizontal cannon boring machines already being used in Continental Europe.
The Old Military Academy
From 1764, the Old Military Academy provided training in Latin, French, Maths, fortification, gunnery, mining, laboratory-works, fencing and dancing. Originally, the ‘gentlemen cadets’, ranging in age from 10-30, lodged in Woolwich but were soon moved to a strictly disciplined Cadets’ Barracks within the Royal Arsenal after gaining a reputation for riotousness. The Old Military Academy was moved to Woolwich Common in 1806, after which this building became part of the Royal Laboratory.

Royal Brass Foundry
The Royal Brass Foundry was built in 1717, most probably by Sir John Vanbrugh. The impressive structure could accommodate a vertical boring machine and the tall doors allowed for the easy transfer of newly-made cannons. Guns for government service were cast here until around 1870.

Royal Laboratory Pavilion
This is one of two Royal Laboratory Pavilions, with its twin hidden from view behind it. The pavilions are the only remains of the Royal Laboratory complex, which was taken down in 1950-1 and 1972-4. They are the oldest part of the Arsenal, constructed and enlarged in 1694-6 and 1802 respectively, and are possibly the oldest Ordnance buildings in the country. Manufacture of gunpowder and fireworks was conducted in these buildings, integral to many military campaigns, although production here ceased after the First World War.

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General Gordon Square and Private John Pattison’s Memorial

General Gordon Square is named after Charles George Gordon, the Victorian military general and imperial warrior of China and Sudan, who was born in a house on Woolwich Common. Today, it is a green open space in the town centre. Prior to its transformation, the square was known as the ‘smokehole’ in the 1900s due to the soot and fumes from the open ventilation cutting above the railway tunnel. A Victoria Cross paving stone, dedicated to Woolwich-born John Pattison (1875-1917), is located in front of the water feature. Pattison’s widow accepted the medal on his behalf for his venerable valour and heroism during the First World War.

Victorian stenchpipe

On the corner of Woolwich New Road and Grand Depot Road you will see a Victorian stenchpipe. These were erected around 1900 in response to The Great Stink of 1858 that brought the city to a standstill for weeks due to the overwhelming stench radiating from the River Thames. This hollow steel tube on a cast-iron flute columnar plinth vents gas from sewers deep underground, releasing it above street level.

Connaught Mews

On the corner of Grand Depot Road and John Wilson Street is Connaught Mews, which can be seen through the gates. The three buildings of the Mews between 1780 and 1801 and formed England’s first military hospital. The brick wall surrounding the Mews is part of the original dating from 1806. The wrought iron lamp holders above the doors are made from old cannons and the Red Cross symbol is still painted on one of the walls in sight. In the early 1990s they were converted into apartments.

St Peter’s Church

St Peter’s Church was built in 1842 and designed by A.W.N. Pugin, also responsible for decorating the interior of the Houses of Parliament. The legendary Spike Milligan, who served in the Royal Regiment of Artillery during the Second World War, played a significant role in campaigning for the restoration of the south entrance.

The Royal Garrison Church of St George

The Royal Garrison Church of St George, a former Italianate church, it was built in 1863 by Thomas Henry Wyatt. It houses valuable mosaics, one of which commemorates members of the Royal Artillery awarded the Victoria Cross. Much conservation work is taking place since bomb damage in 1944 left this Grade II Listed building at risk.
The impressive Georgian façade of the Royal Artillery Barracks is said to be the longest of its kind in Europe at 1,000 ft long. It used to house as many as 4,000 people, although now the modern facilities behind the frontage accommodate 700 men of the Royal Regiment of the Artillery.

Crimean War Memorial
Located on the parade grounds of the Royal Artillery Barracks is a Statue of Victory, a Crimean War Memorial, designed by John Bell and unveiled in 1860. The large, bronze female figure is situated atop a tall granite plinth, on which bronze cartouches carrying symbols and inscriptions are located around its upper part. 12 genuine cannon posts, with spiked cast iron rails linking them, surround the statue.
The Rotunda

This Grade II* Listed building was originally a large bell tent erected in St James’ Park in 1814 as part of the festivities celebrating victory in the Napoleonic Wars. It was moved to Woolwich in 1816 and converted into a permanent structure with a lead roof by the renowned architect, John Nash, in 1920. It housed the artillery museum from 1840 until 2001, when the exhibits were moved to another museum. It is now used as a boxing ring by the King’s Troop, Royal Horse Artillery.

The Green Hill Garrison School and Mallet’s Mortar

The Green Hill Garrison School is a Grade II Listed building dating from 1850s. In front of the building, and opposite the modern entrance to the Royal Artillery Barracks, a 36-inch Mallet Mortar weighing 42 tons, the largest ever built in this country, is located. Although never used in war, in tests it was recorded to fire a 2359 lb. shell a distance of 2759 yds.

The King’s Troop, Royal Horse Artillery

The King’s Troop, Royal Horse Artillery are a British Army mounted ceremonial unit that fires royal salutes on royal anniversaries and state occasions. The unit’s soldiers drive a team of six horses that each pull an original First World War-era 13-pounder field gun. The building itself has training areas, an indoor riding school, a veterinary clinic, stables for up to 140 horses, a saddler’s and tailor’s workshop where all the tack is stitched by hand and the largest, most modern blacksmith’s forge in the Army. Furthermore, biomass boilers generate renewable energy to provide heating and hot water from the 40 tonnes of waste produced by the horses each week.
Major John Little memorial
This imposing, Ancient Egyptian-style obelisk on the edge of Woolwich Common remembers ex-Royal Marine staff officer Robert John Little. Carved from marble and standing about 4.5m tall, it was unveiled in 1861 and was originally a drinking fountain. Its bronze working parts are now missing, but much of the lettering remains.

Ha Ha Road
Ha Ha Road is named after the ‘ha ha’ that separates the Royal Artillery Barracks Field from Woolwich Common. The sunken ditch was installed around 1774, serving as a boundary marker and preventing sheep and cattle, grazing on the Common on their journey to London meat markets, from wandering onto the Royal Artillery gunnery range.

61st Battery Royal Field Artillery Boer War Memorial
This memorial, made out of pink granite, commemorates the 18 soldiers of the 61st Battery of the Royal Field Artillery who lost their lives in the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902).

Woolwich Town Hall
This is a Grade II* Listed building and a rare example of an Edwardian Baroque town hall in London. The galleried entrance hall has a grand staircase which divides in two below the venetian window, and on both sides of the stairs there are bronze Second World War memorial plaques. A Book of Remembrance for soldiers in the Royal Artillery who have lost their lives can be found in the main hall.
There are many other wonderful sites around Woolwich to visit including Charlton House, the New Royal Military Academy and Severndroog Castle.

**Charlton House**

*Charlton Road, London SE7 8RE*

Standing for over 400 years, Charlton House is one of the finest surviving Jacobean manor houses in the country. The original oak staircase remains, as do many fireplaces and plasterwork ceilings.

**The New Royal Military Academy**

*Red Lion Lane, Woolwich, London SE18 4LE*

Originally located in the Royal Arsenal, the New Royal Military Academy was moved to Woolwich Common in 1806 and remained active until 1939. It is a collection of Grade II Listed buildings and was used for the training of commissioned officers of the Royal Artillery and Royal Engineers.

**Severndroog Castle**

*Castle Wood, Shooters Hill, London SE18 3R*

Severndroog Castle is a Grade II* Listed building, constructed in the 18th century. It is a Gothic-style castle standing 63ft (19m) high on Shooters Hill. From its elevated position, it offers views across London, with features in seven different countries visible on a clear day.

In addition to John Pattison in General Gordon Square, there are three other Victoria Cross paving stones in Greenwich dedicated to local war heroes.

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**Sergeant Henry Edward Kenny**

*(1888-1979)*

*Maryon Park, Charlton*

On 25 September 1915 near Loos, France, Private Kenny went out on six different occasions under very heavy shell, rifle and machine-gun fire. Each time he carried into a place of safety a wounded man who had been lying in the open. He was himself wounded as he brought back the last soldier.

**Rear Admiral Eric Gascoigne Robinson**

*(1882-1915)*

*1 Diamond Terrace, Greenwich*

Robinson was awarded a Victoria Cross as a lieutenant commander for going ashore and single-handedly destroying a Turkish naval gun battery whilst the fleet was stationed off the Dardanelles during the Gallipoli campaign in the First World War.

**Lieutenant Cecil Harold Sewell**

*(1895-1918)*

*To be laid in August 2018, Greenwich*

In August 1918, Fremicourt, France, Lieutenant Sewell got out of his Whippet light tank and crossed open ground under heavy fire to rescue the crew of another tank which had slipped into a shell-hole, overturned and caught fire. Sewell dug at the ground to free the jammed door and release the crew. He then crossed open ground again to assist a wounded soldier. Whilst dressing his wound, Sewell was hit fatally.

You can download the trails for adults and kids, and discover a lot more information and background on our website.

[greenwichheritage.org/woolwich-walks](http://greenwichheritage.org/woolwich-walks)