

Royal Arsenal 12 July 2019

15 members met with Richie Smith-Gore our guide for our walking tour of Woolwich Arsenal.

We started at the river front learning that Woolwich has been an important military base since roman times primarily as an early-warning outpost in case of invasion.

Woolwich next appears in history as a royal dockyard where Henry VIII built his warship The Great Harry.



Moving inland past a modern art installation called The Assembly by Peter Burke to the first building called Tower Place. This was originally a house for well off middle class people. However as the area became less fashionable and the price of property fell it was bought by the government for a knock down price in 1670 and became the Board of Ordnance. Here in May 1716 the Royal Artillery and Royal Engineers were formed.

Continuing inland, founded in May 1717, is the Brass Foundry. This factory moved here from Moorfields in London following a major accident which killed 17 members of parliament. The building housed the foundry where the cannon were cast. The building now acts as a repository for artefacts from the Maritime Museum and is not open to the public.



Opposite is Dial Arch, the guns came here to be finished off before going to the stores

then onwards to see action. One corner of this building houses the morgue. There were plenty of accidents in the days before health and safety.

Between these buildings and the Middle Gate is a large open grassed area. Arsenal football club has its origins here. Starting out as The Dial Square Football Team it quickly became renamed Royal Arsenal and now just Arsenal.



Round the corner from Dial Square is the Carriage Works where they built the carriages that supported and transported the cannon.

Our final building facing the main entrance to the Carriage Works is the Central Offices. Built at the beginning of the 1900's this was the bureaucratic centre following the nationalisation of Woolwich Arsenal.

The majority of the buildings at Woolwich have now been converted to residential dwellings with plenty of additional building work some of dubious aesthetic value.



The final port of call was a well earned pint at The Dial Square pub.

Thank you to John Beecham for organising the tour and Richie as our very informative guide.