



TRANSFORMED BY WAR 1939 - 1945

Admiralty takes control of all shipbuilding

Admiralty control of all shipbuilding saved many small shipyards but at a price.

Faversham Heritage Harbour includes the site of the yard of James Pollock and Sons, a pioneering small shipbuilder, typical of the 20 or so small local yards around the east and south coasts. War brought much needed new work but for small yards like this an exasperating degree of Government control on top of the practical problems of losing skilled workers, negotiating steel supplies, and expanding production to meet Admiralty targets. Women joined the workforce and workers' facilities improved but, while maintaining their reputation for craftsmanship, Pollocks struggled with delivery.

Over the course of 1939-45 Pollocks built 9 powered vessels as well as barges, sections of naval projects and (most reluctantly, as they did not suit the commercial image) a pair of VIC steam puffers.

Their proudest achievement was the 990 ton aircraft lighter, HMS Seafox, in effect a small warship used for transporting aircraft to carriers still at sea



HMS Seafox at Pollock's
Image: Faversham Society



Another small yard revived by Admiralty orders, having survived near closure in the 1930s depression, was The Lytham Shipbuilding and Engineering Co, builders of a range of small vessels – river steamers, launches, tugs and for export to the Congo and W Africa.

In WW2 it built Admiralty steam lighters, landing craft, coasters and a class of 14,200 ton water carriers for naval support. The last of the class SS Freshspring is preserved at **Bideford and River Torridge Heritage Harbour**.

Like much of the wartime build steam propulsion was used – for its familiarity, ease of maintenance and availability (motor being prioritised for military needs).

SS Freshspring at Bideford
Image: Graham Hobbs