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Nettleingham, David (2018) *Beyond the Heartlands: Deindustrialization, Naturalization and the Meaning of an 'Industrial' Tradition*. *British Journal of Sociology*, 70 (2). pp. 610-626. ISSN 0007-1315.

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## **Beyond the Heartlands: Deindustrialization, Naturalization and the Meaning of an 'Industrial' Tradition**

### **Abstract**

Deindustrialization is a complex and multifaceted series of processes and transitions, reflecting the equally complicated web of social relationships and interdependencies that constitute(d) an industrial society. Contemporary scholars have looked beyond just the economic impact of industrial loss, to the cultural, temporal and spatial legacies and impacts wrought by the mass closures of the 1980s, as well as the continuing presence of an industrial identity in struggles over representation and regeneration. However, deindustrialization has a history that precedes the volatility and culmination of that period, and has impacted upon a more geographically diverse range of former industrial locations than are commonly represented. The narratives that surround some sites are complicated by their displacement in time, place and discourse; they lack the political capital of an 'industrial' identity through this disassociation. In this article I aim to go beyond what we might consider the industrial 'heartlands' of the UK to a place that has felt the impact of deindustrialization, but which falls outside of the usual representations of the UK's industrial past. I explore how the industrial identity and memory of a place can be naturalized and selectively re-worked for the needs of the hour, the very meaning of 'industrial' altered in the process. I argue that for sites unable to access or utilize the imagery of modern, heavy industry for community or promotional aims, deindustrialization becomes a process of re-writing an historic identity – one that sheds new light on industrial loss in diverse situations, and at an ever-increasing distance from closure.

**Keywords:** deindustrialization, industrial identity, naturalization, representation, tradition

## Introduction

Since the early 1980s, a developing interdisciplinary scholarship has sought to understand the loss of largescale industrial production in the UK, US and elsewhere. It has been fertile ground for explorations of the relationships between macro-processes of social change and their lived experience; of the losses felt in places where industrial work had dominated social and economic life for generations. It has been a process that has foregrounded the political and economic motivations and doctrines that shape ideas and practices of community, identity and resistance, and the *ongoing* presence of the industrial past in physical, social and cultural landscapes. Scholars have looked to the responses of communities, urban planners, politicians, heritage curators and artists to understand the experience and effects of industrial decline and absence (see Strangleman and Rhodes 2014). Deindustrialization then, is understood to be a complex and multifaceted series of processes and transitions: cultural, temporal and spatial, as much as economic. Its manifestations and effects are recognized as reflecting the equally complicated web of social relationships and interdependencies that constitute(d) an industrial society.

However, the rise and fall of forms of industrial work and the communities and cultures that developed around them, has a history that precedes the volatility and culmination of the mass closures of the 1980s. Deindustrialization has impacted upon a more geographically diverse and widespread range of former industrial locations than are commonly represented<sup>1</sup>. The narratives that surround some sites are complicated by their displacement in time, space and discourse: industrial loss occurring under markedly different political and economic conditions; industrial work and life more distant in the memory, and subject to representations punctuated and re-worked by subsequent events

and ideas over a longer period. Such sites present substantively different challenges to how industrial life and work come to be remembered locally as well as nationally – to how it is memorialized, re-worked and utilized to tell the story of a place, and in attempts to regenerate a local economy following industrial loss. In this article I aim to go beyond what we might consider the industrial ‘heartlands’ of the UK – vitally important though they are – to a place that has felt the impact of deindustrialization but which falls outside of the usual representations of the country’s industrial past.

I draw on interviews carried out in 2015-16 in the former shipbuilding town of Faversham, in the midst of a number of community campaigns for the economic and cultural regeneration of the town. Located in the South East of the UK, in Kent – a county famously described as the ‘Garden of England’, Faversham feels not just geographically, but culturally distant from the experience and legacy of the industrialized north, midlands, Scotland and Wales. Despite, and indeed because of this, and with its future still being debated, it provides a site through which we are able to explore how the trajectory of deindustrializing processes respond to localized needs and desires; to marginalization, and the kinds of limited discourses of industrial identity and loss that a place can access and utilize going forward. Faversham highlights the difficulties of attempting to engage with, remember and use the industrial past of a place within these limitations as campaigns to retain an industrial identity begin to reframe what, where and when ‘industrial’ can or must mean for them. It is a site of memory, imagination and action in which ideas of the industrial, urban and rural or *natural* compete and interact; where the narrative identity of a place can become established and *naturalized* according to localized conditions and needs.

My aim then is not just to foreground that which can be and has been overlooked but, through doing so, to speak to the problems of representing the industrial, and how for those living and working outside of an established industrial discourse, this representation can be a deindustrializing force in itself – overriding or erasing what we might think of modern industrial activity from a timeline. This shift in focus allows us to view a greater diversity of experiences during and following periods of major socio-economic change, but also to address familiar concepts and problems in new ways, new places and on new timescales.

### **Deindustrialization and Representations of the Industrial**

What had seemed so solid about industrial structures and landscapes, so permanent about industrial life, suggest Cowie and Heathcott (2003: 4), today reminds us of capitalism's fundamental instability. Industrial society was but a 'brief moment' in its history. What *the industrial* represents too is altered in transition. Deindustrialization is not just the loss of industry, but the undermining of an image of industrial prosperity. Industry no longer represents modernity or progress, but a *past* form of work – stigmatised as outdated and polluting – that must inevitably give way in a changing economy (High and Lewis 2007). As Short *et al* (1993: 208) note, the terms used to describe and distinguish the industrial and the 'post-industrial' are 'loose and vague. They are meant to be. We are discussing the hazy world of images and rough mental maps, not the hard solid outlines of empirical reality'. Industrial identities can be written and read anew, '(re)constructed as well as (re)interpreted, (re)produced as well as consumed'.

*Representation* – of the past, present and future – has played a key role in most 21<sup>st</sup> century studies of deindustrialization. Just as 'industrial' never simply described a form of

production but an *identity* (Byrne 2002), so the study of deindustrialization has never been 'purely a matter of work' (Strangleman *et al* 2013). Rather, the imprint of the industrial and of its loss, it is argued, have continued 'beyond the ruins' (Cowie and Heathcott 2003) – in the physical spaces of former industrial sites and an aesthetic and political interest in ruins (see Strangleman 2013). They are embodied in popular cultural figures and images (Rhodes 2013; Roberts 2007), 'public imaginaries' and prejudices (Mah 2012); in corporate and government rebranding exercises in aid of 'regeneration' (see Strangleman *et al* 1999, and Dicks 2000 on the 'labourist imaginary'). They endure in the 'constitutive narratives' of communities, how a sense of *place* and belonging is (re)produced in the divisions and struggles for identity that emerge after closure (Linkon and Russo 2002; Walkerdine 2010); and in attempts to define and utilise history and cultural experiences to protect against the shift to a new economic model (Stanton 2006). This representational dimension enables an understanding of how the boundaries of place-based identities, memory and lived experience, and the cultural imaginary of industrial work can become reinforced, blurred, altered and used.

The focus afforded to cultural responses measures what Linkon (2013) describes as the 'half-life' of deindustrialization: what is lost in the process of decay but also what remains, continues and develops. That which, following Stoler (2013: 9), we might call the 'the social afterlife of structure, sensibilities, and things'. Deindustrialization can be measured in the negotiations and struggles for the forms that collective memories and future imaginaries take. Studies of these ruptures and afterlives have, understandably, focused on places where large-scale industrial activity dominated local and regional economies, and which suffered the effects of mass closure – often suddenly. What would it mean then to look into sites where deindustrialization occurred in comparative isolation

from these areas, but where the impact was just as important to an economy, community and struggles over the future of a place?

In work by Johnson and Pahl we find glimpses of what is at stake. Johnson's (1995) work on the Languedoc in France identifies the first large-scale deindustrialization of its kind under modern capitalism, complete by the 1920s. As well as extending the timeline, the Languedoc for Johnson foregrounds the *regional* nature of the experience and impact of deindustrialization, and the active agrarian reinvention of a local economy. Pahl's (1984) *Divisions of Labour*, set on the Isle of Sheppey – also in Kent, and less than 20 miles from Faversham, discusses an industrial decline that begins in the 1960s with the closure of its naval shipyard. For Pahl, Sheppey provided a 'post-industrial laboratory' and, as Strangleman (2017: 55) notes in a volume that revisits Sheppey more than 30 years later, using this site in Kent 'identifies and unpacks a whole series of often contradictory processes involved in deindustrialization'. In documenting processes that occur much earlier than the political struggles and mass closures experienced two decades later, in a place so seemingly distant from the industrial centres of the UK, Pahl frames industrial decline in a much longer historic explanatory framework, drawing on notions of community, work, gender and the hopes and fears of the young to piece together a changing socio-economic environment.

Such work is important to studies of deindustrialization broadly, but also begins to highlight what is possible by looking into sites that do not fit an established or dominant narrative. In what follows I want to question how this kind of deep-rooted industrial/deindustrializing identity in a marginalized site comes to be developed and redeveloped by loss, but moreover where it emerges through a more temporally-distant, retrospective vision and with specific future-oriented goals in mind for *bringing industry back*.

## **The Unlikely Shipyard**

Built on the banks of a tidal creek – prone to silting up, occasional flooding, and difficult to navigate as it winds through the rural quiet of the North Kent marshes, the picturesque ‘medieval market town’ of Faversham seems an unlikely site for large-scale shipbuilding. Yet, as part of a network of waterways central to supplying London with goods and building materials for nearly two centuries, the town’s situation led to the development of a number of industries on the creek: shipbuilding and maritime trades, gunpowder production and brewing. Chief among these, from 1916 to 1970 the fortunes of the shipyard of James Pollock and Sons came to define life and work in the town. Pollock’s was, in many ways, a precarious enterprise. As well as the geography of the marshes and the problem of always chasing the tide, its birth derived from a need for additional shipbuilding capacity for war and its proximity to London and Europe, rather than because it was particularly well-suited to heavy industry. The narrowness of the creek meant that ships had to be launched sideways into the water. Yet, despite these obstacles the shipyard remained open for more than 50 years, producing more than 1000 ships including large steel tankers and even two concrete ships.

By the time Peter, who I interviewed in 2016, started work as a welder there in 1956, Pollock’s had become the town’s major employer of young men. Indeed, as he recalls, ‘when I left school there was only one place I could work and that was in the shipyard’. Work in the yard was viewed as a stable, secure and long-term form of employment. Colin, who reluctantly became a welder there in 1960 recalls his father’s insistence that this was



his best option when he left school. Yet, by 1970 Pollock's was closed. Its end as a viable concern did not come suddenly, but resulted from the cumulative effect of various changes – local and national – that gradually pushed the company out of business. Motorways had replaced waterways as the primary method for transporting goods and materials, provincializing the small inland port town in one far corner of the country. Where once the passage of vessels would keep the channel swept, less trade meant the increased silting up of the route into Faversham, reducing its capacity. A lack of investment in new technologies had also left the shipyard uncompetitive even within its own industry. Sixer, a welder who worked for Pollock's from 1960-66, describes realizing from the very beginning of his apprenticeship, 'how obsolete all the tools were'. Moreover, suggests Peter, a change of ownership following the death of Marshall Pollock (son of the yard's founder James) meant that 'it started to really go downhill because... I think it was a nephew of his took over and he wasn't very good at it!'

Poorly situated, out-competed and mismanaged, Faversham's shipyard closure represents a key moment in the deindustrialization of the town – an ongoing series of interwoven processes of economic withdrawal and investment, regeneration, remembrance and representation. The trajectory of this process has been defined by the town's unlikeliness as a place of heavy industry. In turn, attempts to remedy the economic and social problems that emerge as a result of deindustrialization, have developed a complex relationship with the idea and practice of 'industrial' work, infrastructure and social life.

Two campaign groups have emerged as key players in organizing around the regeneration of the site surrounding the old shipyard. While often working together, each has its own focus, membership demographics and purpose. The Faversham Creek Trust was established in 2011 with the aim of developing new opportunities for training in

boatbuilding, to promote the town as a tourist destination, as well as getting local people involved in decision-making on the creek's future. Its membership tends to be constituted of those living in the wealthier centre of the town and often those who have moved to Faversham later in life. The Brents Community Association was established in 2013 to represent the interests of those living on the Brents housing estate on the north side of the creek. It is a much more deprived constituency, in much closer proximity to former and existing industrial sites, and detached from the centre of the town by the creek itself. Its membership has mostly been drawn from this estate, and its meetings are held in the pub at the centre of its community, the Brents Tavern. Though working from different perspectives, the dynamic between the two organisations is, for the most part, collegial – they share a fundamental aim of utilizing the former working sites of the creek for renewed industrial purposes, and for community empowerment.

Two recent campaigns involving both groups are the restoration and transformation of a creek-side building into a workshop for an apprenticeship programme, and to open a swing-bridge that would allow boats access to the currently out of reach and disused creek basin – the point closest to the town centre. This latter cause has come to define an image of Faversham that has been adopted by those promoting the town and its businesses beyond these organisations. The opening of the basin is linked directly to renewing 'industrial' use of the land and water, and moreover around the desire to attract Thames Sailing Barges (and by extension, those who will come to see them) – to moor-up, to be repaired and restored. These wooden or steel barges, with their distinctive red sails, were the vessels that transported the bulk of the goods traded in and out of Faversham, into the Thames Estuary and up the east coast of England from their development in the 18<sup>th</sup> century until the 1940s. Following the closure of Pollock's, the repair and restoration of a number of

the barges that survived (or were retrievable) provided a limited, small-scale maritime industrial use on the creek. Through these historic and recent associations, they provide an image that has been reproduced and repurposed to signify the town itself – the tourist information centre is full of items bearing the barges, there is a *Red Sails* restaurant, a local beer of the same name, and so on. For the campaigners, they have become objects around which to rally, something tourists will come to see; the last hope for the town's delicate economy.

The 25 interviews that I undertook draw from both campaign groups – exploring the motivations, roles and desires of their members, as well as oral historical interviews with those who used to work at Pollock's shipyard, and those who have worked in maritime restoration and repair on the creek since. Through these varied perspectives I examine how the deindustrialization process in Faversham has been experienced and understood; how and why the memory and imagery of its industrial past is appropriated for community, political and economic purposes today. The analysis that follows is framed according to the key ways in which the past, present and future of the town were described and contextualized – three (re)conceptualizations that I am calling 'naturalizing' processes. In each, this term refers to the predominance of the *natural* in the narratives of Faversham's past and present, and brought into those on its 'industrial' future, expressed through ideas of rurality, wildlife, wood-working and the 'village'. Equally, it refers to *naturalization* – that which is normalized, taken for granted, reified – in narratives of the historic and authentic 'nature' of the town, of maritime and work-based 'traditions'. These are processes that guide the developing sense of place now (re)defining Faversham; that have been central to the visions and understandings of those fighting to reinvigorate it.

## The Rural-Industrial Imaginary

Brian Dillon (2015: 12), reflecting on the landscape of the North Kent marshes, notes the relationships of remembering, forgetting, imagining and storytelling that construct and reconstruct a sense of place:

Our sense of the strangeness of a place may increase rather than diminish with time... the way a landscape opens up to myth or invention as well as historical curiosity, the portals it offers to other stories and other timescales

His book, which tells the story of a disaster at a gunpowder works on Faversham creek in 1916, plays into a trend in writing on the area – conjuring vivid pictures of an industrially-marked but very rural landscape, or journeying along or beside the once bustling, but now quiet waterways that feed into the Thames Estuary (see Lichtenstein 2016; Millar 2016). Others have used this landscape as inspiration for artistic visions for regeneration. A 2008 project by Anthony Lau modelled a floating city made from recycled ships and the marine structures of the estuary as a solution to the difficulties of urban building on low lying areas in a world threatened by climate change. The stories, imagery and desires projected onto the landscape within which Faversham is historically intertwined, highlight a simultaneous fascination with both an area of industrial decline and a place where the traces of industry that remain are viewed as out-of-place and out-of-time. It is a fascination that also echoes areas of academic literature on the loss of industry. In relation to coalfields for example, the often isolated situation of a mine and its community have long animated the rural-industrial question (Crow 2008), and an interest in how to deal with former industrial sites that suffer what might be considered both *urban* and *rural* social problems (Bennett *et al* 2000).

One of the dominant themes to emerge in the interviews was an emphasis on how the industrial and the rural coexist in Faversham, and how this complicates its history of industrial use. In differing ways, this was expressed in recollections of working on the creek when the shipyard was at its peak and in images of what could/should be developed. Lyn, a lifelong creek-side resident, growing up on the marshes, recalls the rurality of the environment and an idyllic childhood:

my mind throws up lots of pictures so I can see myself and my sisters just playing around the creek edge... that would be our playground. There were no real boundaries then. You just played on the marsh.

To this day argues Angie, landlady of the Brents Tavern since moving to the town in 1986, the area around the creek retains 'a villagey feel', describing a 'close community' in which everyone knows their neighbours – a situation derived in her view as much from current levels of poverty as from an inherited sense of belonging to a place. Peter, a welder at Pollock's from 1956-66 and who grew up in Faversham, remembers fishing for shrimp on a co-worker's family boat, walks across the marsh and the wildlife he would encounter. These recollections point to a long-standing rural-industrial environment; that industry did not detract from it, but was part of a complete landscape with legacies in present economic and social life.

The picture painted by Ian, a welder at Pollocks from 1962-70 is quite different, taking an approach that centred on the immediate area of the shipyard, with no mention of the broader landscape. The creek here was a 'smelly and a filthy thing. Used to be all green with

algae and all that. It was horrible. If you had the misfortune to slip and fall into it – phwoar!’

The marshes also provided no protection from the elements:

You couldn’t get shelter anywhere... In the winter when they had sheets of steel that had been outdoors and your fingers would stick to them with frost. It was just like being burnt.

Exposure to the east wind across the flat marshes, the silt and mud revealed every low tide, combined with industrial activity and trades in fertiliser and manure, oil, coal, acids as well as general cargos of food and construction materials, created a landscape that would not have the residential or touristic appeal that the creek has today, suggests Ian.

However, the recent campaigns to bring forms of industrial work back to the creek, though often defined by a sense that the industrial and rural do not sit comfortably together in practice, are built on the idea that the appeal of this combination is precisely what could reinvigorate the town. Brenda, chair of the Brents Community Association, speaks of ‘the loss of the ambience of the creek, you know, what it means as a waterway’ that comes with having lost its industrial use. Nathalie, a local artist and Creek Trust member articulates this through the development of housing on *what should be* industrial land. On the question of what should be built she wants the creek’s regeneration to be driven by the nature of water: ‘Not something sterile like a house. It’s water, it moves’, and ships and boats move with it.

Now that some housing has been built alongside the creek, there is also a concern that those moving into the area do not understand or desire the return of ‘industrial’ work, and campaigners are constantly having to negotiate the need to get them on side. Frog, a

resident aboard a Thames Barge a short distance from the basin, discussed the tensions that the suggestion of a creek-side footpath had highlighted: 'all the people in the yuppy houses, they don't want people walking past'. With campaigners and longer-term residents all for the footpath as a way of utilizing access to the 'natural' landscape and wildlife for regenerative purposes, and newer residents often objecting to the disturbance this would cause to their own experience of the rural quiet of the creek, the issue of housing and community has come to the fore via an understanding that the creek is a *rural* space, and that this has connotations. 'Once you get a development', notes Colin (who worked at Pollock's, in subsequent smaller industrial activities at Faversham, and now in the campaigns and activities aimed to reinvigorate industrial use), 'then the occupants don't want heavy... dry docks and that sort of thing'.

For Ben, who lives and works aboard a Thames Barge moored on the creek, two different experiences define his frustration with both forms of the rural imaginary. On more than one occasion, he has been threatened with legal action by a neighbour for carrying out repairs to his barge – the noise of the work disturbing 'a peaceful afternoon'. This is an activity he has been doing on this site since long before the housing was built, and is precisely the kind of work that campaigners are pushing for. However, rather than see the campaigns for industrial reinvigoration as a potential remedy to this, something in the way they present their vision feels uncomfortable:

it was like we are an endangered species, you know. People were talking about us like we were slipping away... the way that people talk about wildlife

Hines (2010) has examined the processes and tensions of what he calls 'rural postindustrialization' as a form of rural gentrification. He argues that it is a process that colonizes physical and social space, but also that prioritizes the needs of the incoming 'postindustrial' groups. The rural-industrial environment becomes one of tension rather than coherence. Class-laden tensions come to define contrasting ideas on how land should be used, administered and envisioned, and, he argues, are indicative of a shift in a changing consensus on what constitutes its productive use. We have shifted from a perception of production and consumption in industrial terms, to the production and consumption of 'experiences' and the need to preserve the opportunity for these. Exploring the relationship between industrial identity and the residential, community and work-centred developments desired by different parties in Faversham, provides a sense of what both rurality and the industrial represent to long-term residents and more recent arrivals. In Faversham geographical reality combines with representational understandings to allow *the preservation of rurality* to become a key part of the approaches of each group, *even those dedicated to the return of industry*. Equally, rurality can help to halt industrial use. It is through not having a more straightforward narrative of industrial identity, or access to the political capital this affords as well as the predominance of the 'Garden of England' image, that Faversham's story develops. The tensions that emerge in the attempted imposition of competing visions highlight the problem of 'strangeness' for the town – that it cannot be viewed as simply an urban-industrial or rural place. Each party desires Faversham to represent something that blurs this distinction in ways that make the experience of implementing such visions incompatible with the situation at hand – one in which it can be both and neither.



## **Natural Materials, Timeless Methods**

There was lots of noise, hammering, sparks were flying and as the plates cooled, oxidization would take place and the mill scale – a form of rust – would form and they'd bash brooms to sweep away all the hot metal or that would burst into flames. There'd be smoke, there'd be cursing, they'd all be sweating

*Sixer*

it was a bit awesome... if you had been coming through the shipyard when the hooter went off and it was time to go home... all those men on bicycles or walking

*Lyn*

These accounts could describe any number of industrial settings. That they refer specifically to Faversham highlights the extent of that which is firmly in the memory of former Pollock's workers and older residents, and yet which is notably absent in the conceptions of 'industrial' put forward in plans for regeneration. The primary regenerative project of Faversham Creek Trust has focused on the provision of apprenticeships. In the words of Sixer, a key figure in the restoration of the building in which the apprenticeships are undertaken, 'to teach people a trade... the construction and repair of wooden boats... bringing the creek back to life and involving the community'. The Brents Community Association have also been strong advocates of the programme. Brenda, its chair, spoke with excitement about the processes involved for the most recent cohort – many of whom live on the estate:

They made prototypes, they started making cardboard cut-outs of this punt so they could get used to the shape – what it's going to be like and how it works, and then they graduated to wooden models and then they built the main thing.

However, the term 'apprenticeship' is, at the moment, as much a desired aim as a working reality. The funding and labour they are able to put into the scheme limits it to short courses of around seven weeks, though the hope is, as Alan – one of the boatbuilding tutors – describes, to go from turning a 'couple of 8x4 sheets of plywood into boats' to being a self-funding 'commercial venture and to provide training for apprenticeships in shipbuilding, shipwrighting'. The apprenticeships are not without their critics – once again residents of the new housing developments have expressed concerns over having the workshops so close to their homes. However, for its supporters, the scheme offers something important, as Mike, a filmmaker and Creek Trust campaigner notes:

We're using the techniques, we're using the skills, we're using the crafts that this town was famous for and could be famous for a long time to come

For the Trust and its supporters, this scheme takes on greater purpose. It is for the immediate benefit of local people and can be used to boost tourism. As Sue, the Trust chair puts it, 'offering a vision of what the basin could be like... what the creek generally could be like'. A number of those I interviewed looked to the town of Maldon on the Essex coast, where the restoration of wooden barges and boats have long been practiced and where tourism has been built around them. In Ben's words, and despite his cynicism: 'it creates a space for a town to exist, a small market town trading off of that'. Colin reflects on

Faversham's comparative failure in relation to Maldon, which sits a similar distance from London and shares an interwoven history, in ways which return to a vision of the rural:

the location on the waterside, without all the activities that go on around, it's like having a flower in the garden. If there's no bees going round it then it's just a boring flower, isn't it, but when you see bees and birds... it brings things to life.

Colin (who has a workshop in the restored building) also recalls being asked by the Trust to embody the kind of life he describes – to move his business as a blockmaker for sailing vessels to the creek basin: 'I think the Trust wanted me back here to say that they'd got *traditional* activities going on... for the longer term plan'. Indeed, for Mike, the promotion of 'traditional' wooden boatbuilding techniques is commodifiable, something that attracted him personally back in 2001, and is the hope of the town – 'tourists would absolutely die to see these sort of things – they can't get enough of people planing pieces of wood that aren't straight'. It is a sentiment that is extended to wider plans for the basin.

The role of the Thames Barges in maintaining some small-scale shipbuilding work on the creek following Pollock's end has been used as a model for the kind of work that might be carried out in the future. That those barges are survivors of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (with many built at Faversham as well as trading in and out of it, and for a while contemporaneous with Pollock's) acts to combine recent memories with a longer history. It constructs both a model for tourism and a story about what kind of 'industry' Faversham was and should be known for. For Brenda, it's about acknowledging and retaining that which once defined the town: 'that wonderful majesty of the Thames Barges and the big red sails which will really give a sense of place for Faversham as it used to be.' However, as Sixer

notes, it isn't about turning the town into a museum, but about activity extending into the future:

you could have ten sailing barges there double-backed, three where we are at the head of the creek and there'd be shipwrights there and know-how to repair them, and all sorts of wooden boats – so that Faversham is a stronghold of traditional sail in the western world again

Campaigner Mike again sees the potential in the saleable image of 'traditional' sail, focusing directly on the role of the barges: 'that's what people come to see; they want the history. They're iconic and that's part of the whole place really.' The romance of woodwork, 'traditional' methods of building, and vessels under sail are symptomatic of a wider view among campaigners in Faversham about what constitutes the 'industry' of its proposed revival. It also speaks to a broader academic concern with the 'craft' working identity.

As Marchand (2016: 3) reminds us, 'craft' means many things – it is working with your hands, skilfully, to a high standard, producing an air of 'bespoke exclusivity'. However, to be 'crafty' is also to deceive: 'craft' is marketable; it is 'to 'weave' histories and narratives'. The materials used in hand-crafting too provide and feed into narratives, as Ingold (2004: 14) notes, 'to describe the properties of materials is to tell the stories of what happens to them'. The focus on woodwork, and the notable absence of steel (and thus the absence of Pollock's shipyard, its workers and heavy industry), produces a specific narrative – one that feeds into the perceived rurality of the area; that can be sold as a more 'historic' and 'traditional' form of industry that gives the town an *appealing* past. For locals and campaigners, it does more. Craft work has been understood as a form of social movement

or resistance (Metcalf 2002); a model for human relationships, citizenship and dignity in work (Sennett 2008). It is a 'longing' for 'an alternative, idealized way of working... ethical... characterized by direct, unmediated connections between mind, body, materials, and the environment' (Marchand 2016: 3). Or, as Dudley (2014: 19) argues, for:

entrepreneurial independence in an era of growing economic precarity... the artisan's encounter with the liveliness of wood will endow the craft object and maker's labor with an absolute value that enables both to interrupt and revitalize the deadening effects of commodification.

It is, in Berman's (1970: 163) description, part of 'the symbolic antithesis of Machine and Tree [that] has served to define the essential polarities and alternatives of modern life': the 'rigid, compulsive, externally determined or imposed, deadening or dead' of the mechanized modern, pitted against 'all man's capacity for life, freedom, spontaneity, expressiveness, growth, self-development'.

These interwoven meanings, and the hopes and fears that are expressed through the promotion of these kinds of activity, manifest in the campaigns for Faversham's future. From heavy industry to working with hand-tools; from steel, red-hot rivets and flames to wood; from the production of tankers to the restoration and maintenance of 19<sup>th</sup> century trading vessels and wooden punts. From one form of occupational training, to a plan defined by concepts of heritage and regeneration detached from the class and community relations that inspire it. It is an image of industry, but one that values *the right kind of industry* for current needs. In the words of apprenticeship manager Alan, building and

attracting 'the traditional craft – not the plastic ones, the modern ones – but the traditional craft that draw the crowds of people and their cameras'.

### **Rejecting the Modern *or* Faversham's True Nature**

Reflecting on the changes to the town that have occurred since he was an engineer on an oil transport tanker (1974-84) that worked out of Faversham, Gordon takes a long view:

I think it will always retain that character.... hold the real essence of the place and protect it... that's so important, isn't it, in any ancient village... not spoilt... I mean modern's great... it's always got to sit side-by-side, hasn't it, but I think when you walk down a street and you could be walking down that 100 years ago... I think it's lovely.

For Gordon, the ancientness of a place must be preserved and cannot be erased by the 'modern'. He also draws on the framing of Faversham as a 'village' as a way to emphasise his argument. For Peter too, there is an association between the changes occurring at the creek and a creeping modernity:

You've seen the modern houses going up even on the shipyard site and I think that distracts from how the town used to be, because it's been a sea port for centuries

The relocation of the town to an undisclosed time in the past, yet one specified by certain conditions, occurs on a number of levels. It is a form of resistance that goes beyond

resurrecting historic skills and suitable materials, and attempts in some cases to stop the threat of redevelopment in simpler ways. Lyn spoke about the road she lives on and her struggle to keep it a certain way, one seen as much more meaningful, appropriate and desirable (indeed, reflective of her childhood):

a newcomer wanted to ring the council up and get the lane tarmacked and we went “No, we want puddles! We want a bumpy lane!”... there’s something that sort of doesn’t feel right in having everything pristine and just so... it’s not always good to be moving so fast into the modern day because then things, like tactile things, things that actually make your heart sing, get lost.

Change is translated here as both personal and collective loss, as she reiterates: ‘I just don’t want too much of its tradition and history to be taken away by something that actually isn’t really that meaningful’. It also pits her against the ‘newcomer’ – they who do not understand.

When considering the campaigns that aim to redevelop Faversham and its creek, but in ways that are guided by a certain understanding of its past, this kind of sentiment gets drawn into much wider issues related to social change and place-centred identities. For Frog, ‘Faversham is a quaint, little town. I mean it’s still got a market’, and the natural extension of this identity would be to create a vision that fits: ‘to have traditional boats because it’s a traditional town.’ This resounds with what Mike refers to as the ‘glory days’ of Faversham, defined by ‘the wooden boat craft and the shipwrights that have plied their trade here for hundreds of years’. In terms of promoting the town (or at least a representation of it), this idea gains even more impetus. Sue, in her plans for the direction

of Faversham Creek Trust, reflects on the maritime legacies of Britain, and how Faversham belongs to that story:

I think people still feel that Britain is a maritime nation and they still like anything to do with the sea, but you can't get excited if you go to Thamesport or anywhere like that and you see these huge rocks of tankers... big containers to and from other parts of the world. What people do get excited about is the sight of a sail.

The persistence of the encroaching 'modern' other (houses, tarmac, tankers, 'rocks' not wood) is a device that does a number of things. The image of a pre-existing industrial modernity gives way to a 'traditional' image of the town and its work that pre-dates the *modern* – a term applied only as a contradiction to what should be. The capacity to style the town as a place of maritime industry owes a great deal to Pollock's shipyard and steel shipbuilding. Though sustaining the 'working' nature of the creek following Pollock's demise, the Thames Barges' trade had died out shortly after the Second World War, and these vessels were *not* that which fuelled the local economy from that point onwards. Indeed, Faversham entered a period of economic decline that it is only now beginning to recover from. Barge restoration was not an 'industry' that could sustain the economy. So the shipyard is both essential for the narrative to exist at all, and yet written out of the story. Indeed, what it represents is presented as a danger to the *nature* of the town. This nature is made possible in part due to the transitory notion of 'sail' – that which defines the place is something that is, by its nature, not fixed to the location. The 'maritime' can thus take on varied applications and impositions – the town remains but is made or lost by that which



comes and goes. This provides an inherent adaptability to the temporal and spatial frameworks of memory and projection involved.

## **Discussion**

As this paper has progressed, following the narratives of those looking to Faversham's past, present and future, for the most part Pollock's shipyard has slipped from view. In the naturalization of specific aspects of Faversham's maritime past as more appropriate, saleable and desirable, the shipbuilding that was once the heart of the town's economy and community has in direct opposition to this, become inappropriate, unsaleable and undesirable. This naturalization works in two ways: to create a more convincing narrative for a site nestled in marshland in the 'Garden of England', and to normalize that narrative through representations of the town's future as well as its past. The selectivity employed in what industries are to be utilized is important in itself, minimizing the experiences of the shipyard's workers and community, and creating a representation that could become *the* image of Faversham over time. The reasons for doing this are made clear by those I interviewed – it ensures Faversham has a future at all, and their approach implies a great deal about what locals and visitors desire of a place; about what is viewed as the 'authentic' identity of an 'ancient market town' in an area like Kent. As Dicks (2003: 49) has argued, 'destinations' are expected to play pre-conceived roles in the imagination. The active construction of a place like Faversham – where detachment from the 'heartlands' means that it lacks the political capital of being 'ex-industrial', or the kind of regenerative investment often put into former industrial areas – must rely on telling a story *all* will wish to hear. The very meaning of 'industrial' can be transformed to accommodate necessity.

That lifelong residents also welcome a specific portrayal is testament to the appeal of the image.

These processes also provide an insight into deindustrialization as a series of interrelated processes – of memory, materiality and representation. It is not just that representation is an important element in deindustrialization processes, or that identities and memories are negotiated and fought for over time. Through representation, a particular identity – one once central to the constitutive narrative of a place – can be erased (through both the physical and symbolic redevelopment of a site) to ensure the continuation of the association of the ‘industrial’ in circumstances that do not favour a vision of industrial modernity. Foregrounding marginalized and lesser-known sites, allows us to view a range of important new facets to deindustrialization as a social and cultural process, and the complex relationships to time and place that emerge. A site such as Faversham shows that the naturalization processes – in collective memory, in the stories that are told about a place, in the meaning applied to ‘industry’, born of necessity, are actively *deindustrializing*. They become part of the longer-term trajectory and ‘half-life’ of places that are *not supposed to be industrial*; of a society in which industry is seen as a thing of the past and its history malleable. Without the out-of-place and out-of-time, without broadening how we frame what constituted and reconstitutes the ‘industrial’, the experience and impact of deindustrialization as it progresses can never be fully understood.

## Notes

1. By comparison, numerous studies have focused on Youngstown, Detroit, Pittsburgh and Flint in the US; Easington in the North East, South Wales and the Clyde in the UK.

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