

New Command of the Oceans exhibition unveiled in Chatham

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Children look at the remains of the Namur warship Rikard Osterland

The new permanent Command of the Oceans exhibition at The Historic Dockyard Chatham is opening to the public on Friday 27 May.

It's the first chance to see the 260-year-old skeleton of the warship the *Namur* since she was discovered by chance under the floor of a building in 1995.

The *Namur* was one of the principal ships to fight in all the key battles of the golden period of the Age of Sail and was captained by Jane Austen's brother Charles between 1811 and 1814.

Her remaining timbers are the must-see part of an exhibition which captures 400 years of history and explores the role of the dockyard in creating ships for the Royal Navy.

Visitors can also see personal items and objects from the *Invincible*, an 18th-century French warship captured by the Royal Navy in 1747.

It's been made possible thanks to a £4.8million Heritage Lottery grant and builds on the success of other HLF-supported projects that have helped to establish the dockyard as a unmissable museum since it ceased working life in 1985.

Stuart McLeod, Head of HLF South East, said: “As a major supporter of The Historic Dockyard Chatham, we have always had confidence in the Trust’s ability to successfully reinvigorate this site. Command of the Oceans is the latest in a string of inspiring projects that brings alive the town’s maritime history as well as keeping up a commitment to share its story with the local community and visitors from further afield.

“We do our very best to spend National Lottery players’ money wisely so it’s hugely satisfying to see our £4.8m investment resulting in a gallery which sets a tone of excellence at the very start of the Dockyard experience.”