

WAR-TORN PORTSMOUTH

Then, After and Now

Robert Hind

Portsmouth, with the great and historic Naval Dockyard at its heart, was a prominent target for Luftwaffe bombs in the Second World War. Great swathes of the city were laid waste, the destruction so complete that when reconstruction did occur eventually, some parts of Portsmouth were completely unrecognisable compared to what had gone before.

Although the need for national security meant that little was publicised at the time, after the war images published by the *Portsmouth Evening News* recorded the devastation wrought by the blitz, whilst the subsequent clearance of damaged sites was also captured in photographs.

Using contemporary images – many sourced from the *Portsmouth Evening News* – well-known local historian Robert Hind has compared each view with the current scene, laying the pictures side by side to show not only what has been lost forever, but in some cases what has, remarkably, stayed the same.

War-torn Portsmouth – Then, After and Now celebrates how this great city has risen phoenix-like from the ravages of war.



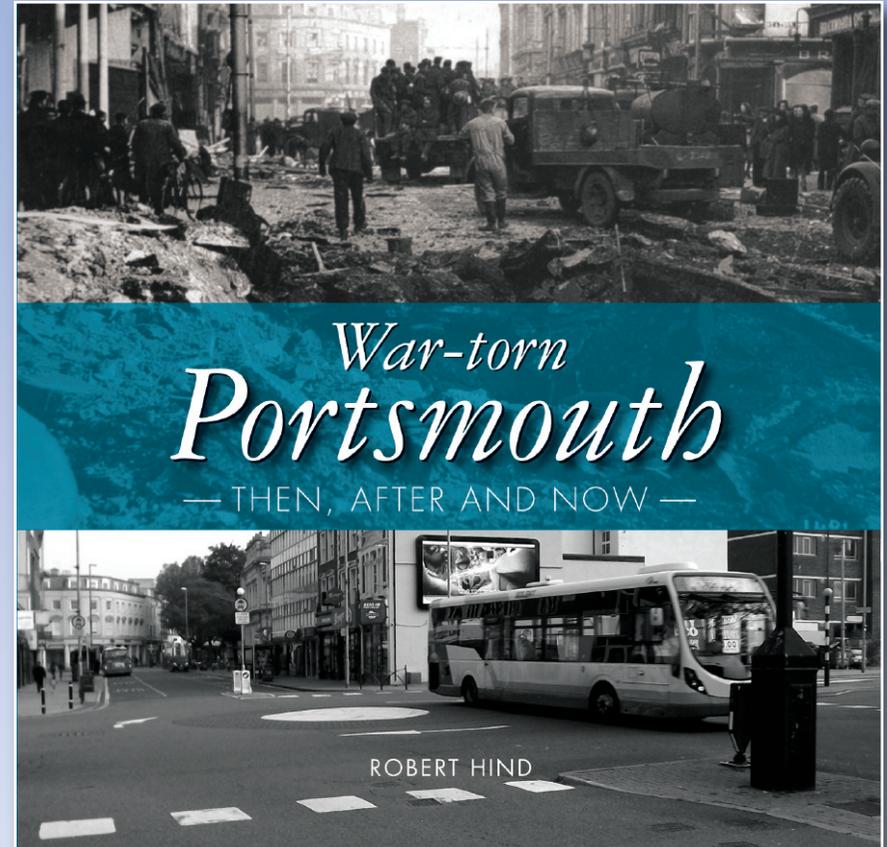
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert Hind began his writing career when working as a railway guard in 1989: always good at “composition” at school, he volunteered to put together a staff magazine and has been writing ever since. Now living in Havant, he is a regular nostalgia correspondent for the *Portsmouth News*, with a column every Saturday, and has to date written three books.

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WAR-TORN PORTSMOUTH

Here we see the Connaught Drill Hall in Stanhope Road after taking a direct hit. To the left can be seen part of the *Evening News* offices.

The hall was rebuilt after the war and is now a Grade 2 listed building. It became a night club around 2005.



Example of a double-page spread.

WAR-TORN PORTSMOUTH

We are looking west down Queen Street with the Royal Naval Barracks, HMS Victory on the right after the premises took a hit in March 1941. I believe this photograph was taken on the morning of 11 March, 1941 when, on the previous night, one of the fourteen direct hits suffered by the barracks was a bomb on the parade ground shelters near the Main Gate, seven ratings were killed. The damaged building on the right looks like it could be the structure that the sailors were sheltering in. Many sailors can be seen in the street outside the Main Gate which is behind the lamp standard.



The Royal Naval Barracks, HMS Victory, Queen Street, Portsmouth 1941.

centre photo. In the distance is the Royal Naval Arms public house which was demolished in 1972. Attached to the railings can be seen corrugated sheeting which denied passers-by looking onto the parade ground.

After this incident the editor of the *Portsmouth Evening News* wrote to the Admiralty asking if the sheets could be taken down on a permanent basis. It was agreed to and thereafter civilians could be spectators when the Royal Marine band played at divisions and other parade ground activities. It has since been built on.



The Royal Naval Barracks now renamed HMS Nelson 2015.

The modern image shows the same scene today with the brick wall and railings back in situ. Since that time Queen Street has altered behind camera with a large junction and the road widened. The Main Gate is still in situ but not used as a traffic entrance into the barracks although there are gates if required. Part of the wall and railings either side have been removed and the gate stands in its own ground enabling taxis to treat it as a

roundabout and drop off without entering the barracks as such.

The Royal Naval Arms has long since gone and the wall to the far side of the Main Gate demolished and a lawn area laid. The majority of the old barracks block and all other buildings seen in the photograph have since been demolished and new buildings built to modern standards.



Above left: Looking along Green Road, Southsea as men of the Pioneer Corps bring down a dangerous wall. Above right: Looking along Green Road, Southsea 2015.



Above: Looking down Fifth Street on the morning of 17 August, 1943.

Below: The same location in 2015. All the houses on the right of the former photo have been demolished down to the houses with bay windows

