

# Rochester 11 May 2022

The weather forecast was not good, but with a front coming from the West, we escaped for most of the day as we went to Rochester. The coach with Pete, our driver, arrived on time at the Harpenden Rugby Club, and we set off just after 9am with 31 members of TASHE on board.



A surprisingly easy run to Rochester via the M25 and Dartford Crossing, and we were free to explore the delights of Rochester and especially the newly opened Dickens exhibition in the Guildhall. It was opened by the Duchess of Cornwall in February this year and is funded by the National Lottery. The Guildhall is a beautiful Regency building with ornate plasterwork, and some wonderful portraits of benefactors to the city, including Sir Cloudesley Shovell!



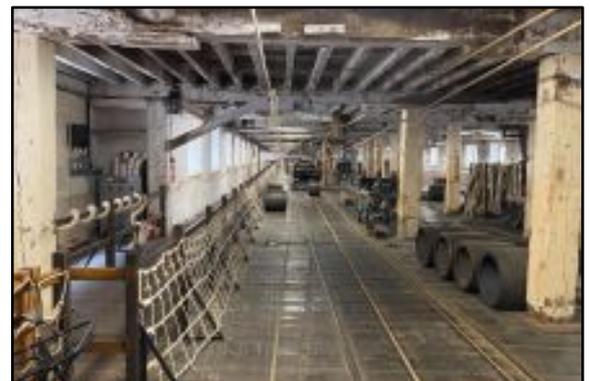
The exhibition was very well laid out with informative boards throughout and references to Dickens' numerous publications.



Then on to the Historic Dockyard at Chatham, and a quick lunch stop at the Mess Deck. At 2pm a guide called Malcolm joined the coach and explained the history of the various ships in the docks as well as the collection of RNLI lifeboats. At the far end of the dockyards is the Ropery, an amazing long building where ropes are still being made.



Original machinery from the 19<sup>th</sup> century is used for the rope making and it is only one of 6 roperies left in Europe.



The Dockyard is a charitable organization and it

gets some income from the buildings rented to the University of Kent as well as income from many film productions. The most famous is "Call the Midwife" which uses many of the listed buildings.

The rain arrived just as we were getting back to the coach and it was a very interesting "taster" of the delights of Rochester and the Medway.

