

1.1 Great British Railway Journeys Filmed at WMA - Roger Holt ([HoltR64](#))

The BBC TV documentary series, Great British Railway Journeys was premiered in 2010 and has now completed eight series. The series features Michael Portillo travelling around the railway networks of the UK referring to a copy of Bradshaw's Guide, comparing how the various destinations have changed since Victorian times. Apparently Bradshaw's included an advert referring to a Navigation School at Southampton which provided tuition for seafarers sitting their 2nd Mates, Mates, Masters and Extra Masters examinations and I was asked on behalf of the WA to contribute to his particular programme. It seems that in this Navigation School was almost certainly the Gilchrist Navigation School founded in 1909 and incorporated into the University College Southampton in 1932. It was renamed Southampton School of Navigation in 1935 under the direction of Capt G W (Whalley) Wakeford and was located at South Hill, Bassett. In 1937 pre-sea cadet training was introduced to the School which moved to South Stoneham in 1939 where it remained during WWII. In 1947-48 the School moved to Warsash on the River Hamble and the rest is history – our history.

I met with the researchers, production team and camera crew on the morning of 19th June and guided them around the WMA campus and grounds (we used to call this process a 'shovel' when accompanying a guest or guests on a visit). Film was shot at every conceivable location and the scenes were used to add interest to the final production.

I returned for further filming with Michael Portillo on 17th July. After a good breakfast and not wishing to outshine the presenter, I presented myself in Warsash Association tie, blue shirt, blazer and grey flannels. Michael arrived in an unmarked white van plus film crew. He wore his standard uniform of salmon pink jacket, open neck white shirt and lime green slacks. We were introduced and exchanged a few pleasantries then got down to business. There followed numerous scene locations, with and without dialogue, but all being repeated many times until the final version was considered acceptable.

The weather was perfect for filming and we spent quite some time on the foreshore with an intense question and answer session between the two of us – Michael asking the questions and me trying to keep up with suitable answers! Inevitably either one of us lost the thread of the contrived conversation but eventually everyone was happy to move on to the next scene which was the Seamanship Block. This location had excellent film content. Good footage was taken of the instructor teaching groups of students in the use of the bosun's chair, applying mooring line stoppers and various cargo handling methods. Michael seemed to be very taken with the union purchase and happily played with the runners discharging imaginary cargoes but was less keen on the bosun's chair. (Ed. – I wonder what the ghost of Bos'n Khulman thought of it all.)

The team then moved back to the upper site for further film shoots with Michael alone and I bade them farewell. He is a man of few words but I could not fault him for his professionalism and found the experience to be both enjoyable and challenging. It was something of an eye opener to consider how long it takes to put a relatively simple programme together. However when transmitted the first six minutes of the programme were devoted to Warsash out of nearly three hours spent filming on location which, all in all, was very good.

This programme, which also included two Officer Cadets being interviewed, will promote the Warsash Maritime Academy to a wider audience, albeit at a time of great change. It may provide an awareness of the maritime industry to the many that are currently unaware of its importance both nationally and internationally.

The production company [Boundless Productions](#) has kindly given its permission for us to use the following link to view the programme [BBC's Great British Railway Journey at WMA](#). It may be shared with family and friends but it must not be used for any commercial or promotional purposes. Some stills from the film are here >>[Gallery/Warsash Association/UK Events/2018 Great British Railway Journeys at Warsash](#).