

Historical Summary – Victualling Yard

Construction of the Victualling Yard was authorised by the Navy Board in July 1807 and works started the following year. Prior to this date, navy warehouses were situated in the town area, which was deemed to be inconvenient and difficult to access.

Admiral Sir John Jervis, created Earl St. Vincent for his victory at the Battle of Cape St Vincent, wrote to the Admiralty about the shortcomings of Gibraltar for watering a fleet. Jervis was instrumental in getting the works started at Gibraltar on the large water reservoir in 1799 and a few years later the Victualling Yard itself.

Several plans were put forward, but those by a local builder Giovanni Maria Boschetti, which included a mole in Rosia Bay for the loading and unloading supplies, were favoured. The yard works were completed in 1812, as was the wharf (Rosia Bay pier). The result was a massive building, 190 by 160 feet, with eleven vaulted rooms in each of the two floors. The walls are of stone and the vaults of brick. The walls and ceilings are so thick that they not only provide a dry temperature controlled environment for provisions, but was also considered bomb-proof in term of short fired from unrifled muzzle loaders. The project cost a total of £60,000, equivalent to approximately £2.5 million today.

Over the main gate of the Yard, Boschetti set up the inscription G.III D G M B & H R &. which signifies Georgius III Deo Gratia Maiestate Britanniae et Hibernias Rex & c. and means: 'George III Monarch of Britain and King of Ireland etc'. It is thought he chose this archaic form because it carried his own initials, GMB, in the centre. This gate leads to a small enclosed courtyard with a two storey office for the Agent Victualler to the right and a range of store sheds at the back, while the entrance to the main building is on the left.

The main entrance to the yard is listed under the Gibraltar Heritage and Antiquities Act 2018.