

LAUGHTON UNIT

ABOUT US

The Laughton Unit [Laughton Naval History Unit] provides the ideal basis for original and challenging research on all aspects of naval history, seapower, sea power studies and maritime strategy, preparing the next generation of thinkers from all around the world, ready and able, for a spectrum of career possibilities and destinations.

The Laughton unit was setup in under the direction of Professor Andrew Lambert. The unit is named after Professor Sir John Laughton (1830-1915) who as a Professor of the Royal Naval War College, gave Kings College London, the leading role in the development of academic naval history in Britain. He linked the professional educational interests of the Royal Navy with the academic standards set by the English historical profession, which he helped to create. After many years of neglect the subject was revived at Kings in the 1970s. Reflecting on the narrative of the development of naval history and maritime strategy, such as those of British historian and theorist, Sir Julian Corbett (1854-1922) and American Admiral Alfred Mahan (1840-1914), Professor Lambert reflected on the state of the subject and its future. From this reflection, the Laughton Unit was created to tackle these problems and engage with future opportunities.

Under the guidance of the first Laughton Professor of naval history, the unit has delivered researchers, thinkers and historians whose output has impacted a broad spectrum of debates, organisations, governments, industries and armed services around the world. These researchers as civilians or armed services personnel have reached out across a range of topics and fields with the scholarly skills and knowledge, they have developed in the unit from bachelor level through to Masters certification and doctorates. The Laughton chair of naval history is designed to continue permeance of naval history in British and global academia but also public life.

The unit continues to build an intellectual forum for the exchange of ideas across a global audience, with several former students working from defence education, historical centres and related activities. The unit engages with other research groups within and outside higher education such as the United States Naval War College, Society of Nautical Research, Naval Records Society, National Museum of the Royal Navy and Defence Academy of the United Kingdom.

Our researchers can be found during and post qualification publicly engaging with a wide spectrum of debates, many can be regularly found across a selection of media such as television, podcasts, journals, public debates and literature. You can find our members and students, past and present researching and discussing classic naval history of Rome and Greece, leadership of Lord Nelson, tactics and technology of equipment, education and organisational development, to Maritime Strategy in the 21st century. This clearly demonstrates the vibrancy and dynamics of the field and its impact and influence on the world we live in. Within Kings College London, the unit furthers research with other research units such as the Sir Michael Howard centre for the History of War, Centre for Grand Strategy, Security and Defence studies, Cyber Security, Wargaming and International Relations. This again highlights the Laughton Unit as home for Naval thinking.

