The Restoration of Portsmouth Dockyard Block Mills (built 1803), 2006-8

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A report on the reasons for and the restoration process of Portsmouth Dockyard Block Mills (1803), carried out 2006-8. The Block Mills, unique site of the Marc Isambard Brunel's innovative mass-production of rigging blocks using steam power, a Scheduled Ancient Monument and a Grade 1 Listed Building, had been on English Heritage's Buildings At Risk Register since it began in 1998. This £2.5m restoration removed the building from the Register, and won a Georgian Group award in 2008. The Naval Base and English Heritage have agreed a Conservation Management Plan to maintain it and find an appropriate long term use.
Portsmouth Dockyard Block Mills - showing the overhead belt drive system used to power the manufacturing machinery designed and patented by Marc Isambard Brunel. The Portsmouth Block Mills form part of the Portsmouth Dockyard at Portsmouth, Hampshire, England, and were built during the Napoleonic Wars to supply the British Royal Navy with pulley blocks. They started the age of mass-production using all-metal machine tools and are regarded as one of the seminal buildings of the British Industrial Revolution. Marc Brunel and the Portsmouth block mills. The Royal Navy in the C18th, used vast numbers of wooden pulley blocks and the ability to hand make the blocks at the rate the Navy needed them was becoming impossible. Moreover, the quality was inconsistent and the constancy of supply a major issue. They accepted his proposal and the Portsmouth Dockyard block mills were built. The block mills are incredibly important in terms of the Industrial Revolution. He set up a number of manufacturing mills, not all of them successful but he continued to design. In 1821, due to poor financial management, he was imprisoned for debt but was released after his friends obtained a government grant for his work. The Historic Dockyard Estate. Interactive Property Maps. Historic Dockyard Portsmouth. Dockyard Wall. Victory Gate. This dock was built as a replica of Dry Dock No 5 (formerly the Great Stone Dock) and was lengthened in 1859, at which time the entrance was widened to accommodate the wheels of paddle steamers. The Trust is currently negotiating with MOD Defence Estates to take over ownership of this dock, along with the Block Mills and Dry Dock No 5. Constructed. 1803 (year of completion). Status. Scheduled Monument & Listed Grade 1.