"8th April. 1661. Then to the Hill House at Chatham where I never was before, and I found a pretty, pleasant house, and am pleased with the arms that hang up there. Here we supped very merry and late to bed. Sir William (Batten) telling me that old Edgeborrow, his predecessor, did die and walk in my chamber, did make me somewhat afraid but not so much as for mirth sake I did seem. So to bed in the Treasurer's chamber."

So wrote Samuel Pepys on an official visit to Chatham in 1661.

The Hill House at Chatham was the "Admiralty House" of its day. It was occupied and used not only for administrative purposes by the local naval authorities but also as lodgings for senior naval officers at Chatham and important visiting officers such as Samuel Pepys, Secretary of the Navy Board. Its use for naval purposes continued for a period of over 150 years during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries terminating about the year 1720 after which it continued to be used for a variety of other purposes before being finally demolished early in the nineteenth century to make way for the old Royal Marine Barracks then to be erected.

The Hill House was situated on a prominent site fronting the present Dock Road, where the parade ground to the former Royal Marine Barracks still stands and is now used for open storage purposes in connexion with Messrs. Palfrey's business of paper sack manufacture. The Barracks were sold by the Admiralty, together with the adjoining Gun Wharf to Messrs. Palfrey in 1959 and at the time of writing (1961) are partly demolished.

The plan attached as Fig. 1 is taken from the Ordnance Survey Sheet for the district and indicates the buildings forming the old Barracks together with the adjoining properties. The superimposed "hatched" portion indicates the site according to Lempriere's Plan of 1719 (see Fig 2) upon which the Hill House stood and the broken lines indicate the boundaries of Hill House garden and field (sometimes referred to as "Hill House meadow"). A block of property containing the old..."
Fig. 1. Part of O.S. Sheet T.Q. 7568, N.E. & S.E. showing the approximate site of the Hill House Garden and Field superimposed over the later buildings of the Royal Marine Barracks (now partly demolished). The land fronting the River Medway comprises the former Gun Wharf (shown as "Ordnance Wharf" in Fig. 2). The buildings on which are also nearly all demolished.
CHATHAM—THE HILL HOUSE (1567-1805)

"Queen’s Head" public house, a few small dwellings and other miscellaneous buildings stood between the Hill House and St. Mary’s Church being separated from the House and garden by a narrow lane. It will be seen from the plan that the Hill House, garden and field together with the adjacent block of property referred to, cover the entire site of the old Marine Barracks and have a total frontage to Dock Road of approximately 660 feet extending from the churchyard boundary wall as far as the lane leading to the old causeway on the River Medway.

The Hill House occupied a position at the top of what was once known as Chatham Hill and from its rear looked north-westwards across the old Dockyard (later the Gun Wharf), to the River Medway and beyond. It was approached by the roadway leading from the old land wall (now Globe Lane), northwards up the hill which in due course became Dock Road, leading to the present main entrance to the Dockyard.

What was its date of erection? According to the Victoria County History of Kent a mast pond was made in 1570 and a house, "the Hill House furnished for the use of the Lord Admiral and the Navy Officers". The authority for this is presumably the Pipe Office Account for the year 1569-701 which reads:

"Also the saide Accomptante is allowed for money by hym paide within the tyme of this Accompte for the rente and hyere of certaine storehouses and tymber yarde for the stowedge and safe keeping the provisions aforesaide and also for the rente of a house wherein the Officers of the Marine Causes doe mete and confere together of the weightie affaires of the said office viz. at Jillingham 7L. 18s. 4d. at Deptford Strond 8L. amounting in all as by the saide books published as aforesaide may appear 15L. 18s. 4d."

An earlier reference is made in the Pipe Office Account for 15672 (which is the earliest I have been able to trace), to what is possibly the same house. It is described in similar terms as in the above excerpt from the 1570 Pipe Office Account as a rented house "wherein the officers of the Marine Causes doe mete etc. . . ." The term "Hill House" appears to have come into use later, doubtless because of the commanding position of the House at the top of Chatham Hill (as it was then known). The date of erection therefore must have been some time prior to 1567 but I have no information as to the person responsible for its erection or its first occupant.

The site was the freehold property of the Dean and Chapter of Rochester who owned other land in the vicinity which was purchased for Dockyard Extension.

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1 Pipe Office Account No. 2206.
2 Ibid., No. 2204.
Fig. 2. Detail from Lempriere's plan of 1719 showing the Hill House Garden and Field, St. Mary's Church and the southern end of the Dockyard including the Main Gate.
In 1580 the House was apparently known as the "Queen's House". One of the earliest senior officers who lodged there was Peter Pett the master shipwright (of the well-known Pett family of shipwrights), who died in 1589. His son Phineas in his autobiography writes: "I was brought up in my father's house at Deptford Strond until I was almost 9 years of age and then (1580) put out to a free school at Rochester in Kent to one Mr. Webb with whom I boarded about one year and afterwards lay at Chatham Hill in my father's lodging in the Queen's House from whence I went every day to school to Rochester and came home at night for three years space."1

The lodging of the master shipwright would almost certainly be in the most important house held for that purpose in Chatham and there is at least a strong likelihood of the Queen's House being the same as the Hill House in which Samuel Pepys lodged on his visit to Chatham in 1661.

The freehold was not acquired by the Crown until late in the eighteenth century. During almost the entire period of the House's existence the Navy Board or the Admiralty had no more than a leasehold interest. An entry in the Pipe Office Account for 16202 states that in that year a rent of forty shillings per annum was paid to Sir Guildford Slingsby for a house and ground in Chatham and in 1623 a sum of £100 was paid to Sir Guildford for his interest in a lease of the "great house at Chatham Hill held by the heirs of Mr. Leare from the Dean and Chapter of Rochester".3

I have found two further references to the Hill House in Admiralty Papers of the seventeenth century. The first is dated 11th May, 1653, and described as "Order of Admiralty Committee". It reads as follows:

"50. Order in the Admiralty Committee on the petition of John Leare for payment of rent for the Hill House, Chatham, employed for the Navy and certified by the Navy Commissioners as worth £20 a year that this rent be paid from 25th December last and arrears according to the former allowance granted him."4

The second is dated 24th January, 1661, and is a letter from one Robert Fowler to the Navy Commissioners:

"The Dean and Chapter of Rochester reply to their application about the Pay House (i.e. the Hill House) at Chatham that the King orders pre-emption to be granted to all old tenants even though their leases are expired, if they can obtain a letter from

1 Navy Records Society, Vol. 51.
2 Pipe Office Account, No. 2255.
3 Ibid., No. 2261.
4 S. P. Dom (Interregnum), Vol. 36, No. 50.
CHATHAM—THE HILL HOUSE (1567-1805)

His Majesty to countermand that order their desire will be granted. The Dean is going to London and will give a further account thereof."

This was answered very promptly in the following letter from the Navy Commissioners to William Coventry, Surveyor General.

Navy Office,
28th January, 1661.

"It would greatly disadvantage the King if a lease of the Hill House at Chatham on which he has bestowed much money and which is necessary to the service were granted by the Dean and Chapter of Rochester to another." 2

The correspondence no doubt relates to legislation introduced by Charles II on his Restoration. As is commonly known he was recalled from his exile by the freely elected "Convention" Parliament but with powers considerably restricted by the Declaration of Breda. The terms of the Declaration were such as to disappoint many royalists who were thirsting for revenge, and instead, to introduce a general amnesty for past offenders and respect for the status quo of the Kingdom.

There was, however, a land hunger amongst royalists, as many had been deprived of their estates by confiscation, and on this question Clarendon effected a compromise. Church and Crown lands and private estates of Cavalier magnates that had been confiscated and sold by the rebel governments, were resumed, without compensation to those who had purchased them. In the case of leasehold property it appears that dispossessed tenants were also allowed to resume occupation.

So far as the Hill House was concerned, the above correspondence with the Navy Commissioners suggests that a claim for repossession had been made by a former tenant. He may possibly have been a private tenant who had taken occupation for a brief period during the Interregnum. This may have led to the apparent difficulty the lessor John Leare was experiencing in collecting his rent and his special application for payment quoted in the Admiralty Order of 1653. In that year at least, and presumably until the Restoration, the House was "employed for the Navy" and the Crown's continuous possession since 1567 must have been broken, if at all, for only a very brief period. At any rate, the Crown continued in occupation and no resumption by any former tenant was allowed.

Pepys again mentions the Hill House in 1667 when he visited Chatham immediately after the Dutch raid in the Medway, to enquire into the state of the Dockyard defences and to find out why the chain,

2 Ibid., No. 58.
stretched as a boom across the river, was completely ineffective. He records in his Diary (30th June):

"I met with no satisfaction whereabouts the chain was broke, but do confess I met with nobody that I could well expect to have satisfaction from, it being Sunday; and the officers of the Yard most of them abroad, or at the Hill House."

Whether the local officers were conferring or merely resting at the Hill House is not stated. If the former, one would have thought that a visit from Mr. Secretary Pepys would have been expected whilst he was in the district. The Diary, however, makes no mention of any such visit.

The most valuable detailed description of the Hill House in existence, so far as my researches go, is that contained in Chatham Dockyard records housed in the British Museum, dated 1698, comprising plans and elevations to a scale of 20 ft. to the inch together with an inventory covering all Chatham Dockyard buildings standing at that time. The inventory is prepared in meticulous detail and gives a description of each item with a plan reference covering 64 buildings in all. In appropriate columns are recorded the materials used in construction, the area of each building expressed in squares, feet and inches, and a calculation of value both before and after the Revolution based on a rate per square (i.e., 100 square feet).

Reproduced between pages 108 and 109 are the contents of the first page of the Inventory showing its general lay-out. The five items referred to are indicated on a plan attached to the Inventory (see Plate I). (It will be noticed that there is an arithmetical error in the left-hand column of the addition, the correct total being £6,295, not £6,294.) The Hill House is appropriately No. 1 on the list.

It is interesting to compare the elevation of Hill House depicted in Plate I with the view of Hill House in the later Engraving reproduced as Fig. 3. The former indicates a building of pleasing proportions having a ground and upper floor with three dormers facing Dock Road. The "pay room" projecting from the front appears to be a kind of annexe to the original buildings.

The engraving is clearly of later date but probably not later than Lempriere's plan of 1719. The viewpoint is somewhere near the "well house" shown approximately in the middle of Lempriere's plan, and shows the Hill House to the right of the Church as a large detached structure having seven first storey windows, and three dormers in a steeply sloping roof.

1 Kings MS., 43, Fol. 10 (British Museum).
2 Although Lempriere's Plan is dated 1719 he appears to have anticipated the Main Gate which was completed in 1720 or possibly the plan was completed at a later date.
A note in red on Lempriere's plan states that the House was "repaired and added to in 1703". Both the plan and the engraving suggest that the repairs and additions amounted to almost complete reconstruction.

The year 1698 in which the inventory was taken was a time of considerable expansion in Chatham Dockyard. New Docks and Mast Ponds had been constructed a short time before and more new building was contemplated. The tendency was to develop the land to the north of the existing storehouses where there was more room to expand. The oldest buildings at present standing in the Dockyard were erected early in the eighteenth century, e.g. the Main Gateway (1720), the Admiral Superintendent's Residence (1703), the Clock Tower Building (1722).

About this time also (early eighteenth century), the village of Brompton was growing and providing some of the living accommodation required by Dockyard workers. Hasted in his *History of Kent* (1798)\(^1\) writes:

"And further on, the Royal Dock, above which on the Chalk Hill lies the village of Brompton situated partly in this parish (i.e. Chatham), and partly in that of Gillingham, consisting of about 400 houses most of which have been erected within the memory of persons now living, and from its pleasantness and near situation to the Dockyard is continually increasing."

Alas, time's ravages have, after 200 years destroyed much of Brompton's former "pleasantness" as a residential area, and nearness to the Dockyard is no longer regarded as necessarily an amenity. Much of the old Brompton has been demolished to make way for twentieth century ideas of town planning, but a little of it, notably Prospect Row and Mansion Row still manage to preserve its eighteenth century character. A number of its houses are, happily, scheduled as of architectural and historic interest thus ensuring their continued existence in the meantime without material alteration to their external appearance.

The engraving of the same period depicts in addition to Hill House, the buildings in the immediate vicinity, together with a few more distant and better known landmarks. Hill House garden and field are immediately to the right of the house and have a frontage to the present Dock Road. The roof and upper floor windows of the building seen to the rear of Hill House field are those of a storehouse on the Gun Wharf. The entrance gates seen at the right hand end of this building led down a stairway to a causeway from which a river ferry ran until comparatively recent times. To the right of the gateway (comparing the picture with Lemprière's plan of 1719), the long building nearest the

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\(^1\) Vol. 4, p. 192.
river is the old storehouse built in 1686 and the two buildings inland from the storehouse are the "ropewalks". The gables and rooftops seen above the ropewalks to the right are storehouses, and beyond, near to the water's edge, are the boathouses and shipway. The flag is apparently hoisted on the officers' boathouse. The lantern-shaped tower is possibly over the old entrance gate.

The present main gate (1720) was apparently not then erected. Its position would be about two-thirds of the distance along the ropewalk from left to right. To the right on the hill on the east side of Dock Road was to be erected in 1827 the old Melville Hospital, later to become the Melville Barracks of the Royal Marine Pay and Records Office. The R.M. Pay and Records Office left Chatham in 1960 for permanent quarters near Portsmouth, and Melville Barracks has now (1961) become one more of the Admiralty's redundant properties in Chatham.

The footway crossing the foreground of the picture diagonally would, if produced in a north westerly direction join up with the present Brompton Hill. It is recorded that the road known as Brompton Hill was taken over from the Admiralty by the Board of Ordnance under an agreement in 1791.\(^1\)

The roadway fronting Hill House in the picture if extended in a direction to the left, passes downhill beyond the Church and eventually reaches the present Globe Lane which is on the site of the old Land Wall.\(^2\)

About 1815 the Parish Authorities consented to repair the portion of the road formerly maintained by the Admiralty extending from the Gun Wharf near Dark Lane (still in existence off Globe Lane), to the old "Queen's Head" public house situated at the corner of the Lane to the left of Hill House but not visible in the picture. This road included the old Land Wall which had been made and kept in repair by the Navy.

The road extending from the old Queen's Head past Hill House to the north-east corner of the team stables (i.e. at corner of the present Westcourt Street a short distance along Dock Road to the right of the picture), was claimed by the Parish in 1833 as shown by the following Resolution:

"At a vestry convened by public notice, held in the Vestry Room of the parish of Chatham on Thursday the 3rd October, 1833 for the special purpose of taking such steps as were necessary respecting a communication from Sir James A. Gordon (i.e. letter dated 21st September, 1833), it was resolved, 'That the road from the Queen's Head near the Marine Barracks to Westcourt Street,

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1 Admiralty Lands Records.
2 A.C., LXXIII, 78-82.
Brompton is a Parish Road, that it has been so from time immemorial, and that the Parishioners in this Vestry consider the same to belong exclusively to the Parish.\(^1\)

The roadway from then onwards has been repaired by the Local Authority. The contention of the Parish that it was a Parish Road from "time immemorial" seems to be without foundation. In 1620 the road in question was made from the Church to the then Dockyard, "ditching out, quicksetting and hedging of 137 rods of ground in length for the making of a way through the fields from the Church to His Majesty's new Dock at Chatham at 10d. the rod making 114s. 2d."\(^2\).

(It will be noted that the "Queen's Head" was still standing in 1833. The block of property of which it formed part, was demolished much later than the Hill House.)

With the expansion of the Dockyard to the northwards and the construction of still more docks, storehouses, workshops and offices on the wider area of riverside land which lay beyond the main gate, it is not surprising to find that by the middle of the eighteenth century the Pay Office has also moved into a more convenient position close to the "Commissioner's Dwelling" (i.e., the present Admiral Superintendent's residence), and that the Hill House containing the old Pay Office has apparently become redundant to Naval requirements. In the year 1750 it was the subject of a lease from the Admiralty to the Hon. William Montague. The description in the lease, which is dated 22nd May, 1750, is as follows:

"All that messuage or tenement commonly called or known by the name of Hill House situate standing and being in the parish of Chatham in the county of Kent near adjoining unto His said Majesty's Dockyard at Chatham aforesaid being the same messuage which for several years hath been appropriated and used for a Pay Office for His Majesty's said Yard together with the gardens, stables, outhouses, offices and all other erections and buildings to the said messuage belonging or in anywise appertaining and also all those two fields or close of pasture land belonging to His said Majesty containing together by estimation two acres be the same more or less situate lying and being on the north side of the said messuage and heretofore used and occupied together with the above mentioned messuage or tenement and all ways passages privileges lights waters watercourses casements trees hedges ditches mounds fences profits commons commodities advantages rights members and appurts. whatsoever to the said several demised premises belonging or in anywise belonging appertaining

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1. Admiralty Lands Records.
2. Pipe Office Account, No. 2258.
Undated engraving. Viewpoint is on the hill immediately opposite the Hill House. The caption reads "Prospect of His Majesty's Royal Navy Lying at the several Moorings at Chatham". Probable date c. 1715.
or heretofore used occupied or enjoyed as part parcel or member thereof. And particularly the free use of His Majesty's well for water situate and being in another close near the said messuage and to His said Majesty's Dockyard belonging.'

The rent payable was £25 per annum and the term was for 31 years. The lessee, the Hon. William Montague, was not entirely satisfactory as a tenant according to the following letter (nowadays called a "rocket" and usually omitting terms of affection), from the Navy Board to the Clerk of the Cheque at Chatham.

Navy Office,
15th May, 1756

"To the Clerk of the Cheque
of His Majesty's Yard
at Chatham.

Mr. Colly,

We received your letter of yesterday's date informing us that the rent of the Hill House has not been paid since Lady Day, 1753, desiring to know where to direct to Captain Montague to demand the same. In return thereto we acquaint you that we are very much surprised at your neglect in letting the said rent run so long in arrear without acquainting us therewith and which we direct you on no account to suffer for the future. We likewise acquaint you that you may apply to the Hon. Captain Montague for the said rent at his house in Church Row at Hampstead.

We are,
Your affectionate friends,
Chas. Sanders, Jno. Slade, W. Bateley,
Richd. Halt, G. Adams, Dan Devers."

Clerk Cheque at Chatham.

Whether the negligent Clerk of the Cheque ever succeeded in collecting his arrears from Captain Montague is not disclosed by the records and the following correspondence indicates that Captain Montague died soon after.

From Navy Board to Chatham Officers.

Navy House,
18th May, 1759

"Messrs. Cooper & Champagne who are the possessors of the lease of the Hill House at Chatham, late Captain Montague's having represented to us that a piece of ground, coach house and

1 Admiralty Lands Records.
stables which did belong thereto have since been found necessary for His Majesty’s service and the materials of the said buildings pulled down and taken away, and desiring some recompence may be made for the same we direct you to take the case into your consideration and send us your opinion what abatement it may be proper to make from the rent of the premises on account of the conveniency herein mentioned having been taken away sending us an account of the number of stalls that were in the said stables and whether there was more than conveniences for one coach.

We are your affectionate friends,

G. Cockburn, Jno Slade, Dan Devers.”

Chatham Officers.

"By the Principal Officers & commrs. of His Majts. Navy.

Whereas it has been represented to us that Mr. Champagne has had assigned over to him by the Representatives of the Hon. W. Montague deceased the lease of Hill House and is to commence rent from Christmas 1758 and whereas it has been agreed with the said Champagne to allow him an abatement of the said rent of four pounds a year on account of the stables and outhouses belonging to the house having been taken down the same having been in the way of the works of the Ordnance. These are therefore to direct and require you to receive from him the rent in arrear for the said house from the time aforementioned and as the same shall grow due in future for the terms of Mr. Montague’s lease subject to the foregoing abatement for which this shall be your warrant. Dated at the Navy Office 24th November, 1760.

G. Cockburn, Jno. Slade, W. Bateley,
D. Dent, Wm. Brett.”

To the Clerk of the Cheque of His Majesty’s Yard at Chatham.

A passing reference to Hill House in the following letter of 1762 from the Office of Ordnance, Chatham indicates that it was then newly opened as an Inn.¹

Office of Ordnance,
Chatham.
17th June, 1762.

“Right Honourable and Honourable Gentlemen,

I humbly beg your Honours’ permission to lay before you an inconvenience I at present labour under which I foresee will daily increase; and pray that your Honours would be pleased to grant the request I have to make in order to remove the complaint.

¹ Upnor Castle Records.
The well that furnishes your Storekeeper’s house with water, supplys likewise two other houses, Mr. Justice Fletcher’s and a house called the Hill House formerly the property of the Navy, and used as the Pay Office, long uninhabited, but lately opened as an Inn, and the consumption of water there is so great that the well cannot produce a sufficient quantity for the ordinary services of the three houses it is intended to supply, especially as there is now very extensive stabling at this time erecting for the standing of a great number of horses which must all be supplied with water from the said well, and as it is only at particular times of the tide that water can be drawn and then very often not sufficient for one family, the Innkeeper takes that opportunity to draw the well dry, and by his continued demand the well is so disturbed that the little water that I am at present furnished with is so very foul that it requires several days to settle before it can be used and the soldiers or such chance persons as he picks up to draw his water, being often unacquainted with the method of working that something or other in and about the well is continually out of order, occasioned by the carelessness of the people employed.

The indulgence, therefore, I have to ask is that your Honours would be pleased to order a well to be dug solely for the use of the Storekeeper’s House and Gun Wharf, or that the Hill House may be supplied by some other channel, in that case one well would be very sufficient both for Mr. Fletcher and

Right Honourable and Honourable Gentlemen,
Your most obedient, faithful, humble Servant,
J. Parr.”

To the Right Honourable and Honourable The Principal Officers.

The Gun Wharf as can be seen from the plan was adjacent to the Hill House and the Storekeeper’s House is probably the large detached house which still stands on the Gun Wharf—now Messrs. Palfrey’s property—and is scheduled as of architectural and historic interest.

A subsequent letter from the Officer of Ordnance dated 27th October, 1762, indicates that the “Honourable Board” were pleased to order a well to be dug solely for the use of the Gun Wharf. Also that the former Hill House field was now occupied by Marine Barracks.

Office of Ordnance,
Chatham,
27th October, 1762.

“Honourable Sir,
In obedience to your Honour’s command I humbly beg leave to acquaint you that from the information I have had from Mr. Younger, Overseer of the Works, humbly report that the Hill
House, formerly the Navy Pay Office, now an Inn, was supplied with water from a well in the Navy Field which was filled up, on which spot now stands the Officers' Barracks, and from the said well pipes were likewise laid for conveying water to the Gun Wharf and also to the Parsonage House, now occupied by Thomas Fletcher, Esq. and as the said houses were deprived of water by the filling up the original well, the pipes were taken up at the expense of the Office and laid to an adjacent well called Mumford's well, which formerly supplied the several tenements purchased by the Office to be pulled down, in order to complete the works carrying on and which well now supplies the above three houses, the inconvenience of the Gun Wharf being connected with the said houses I represented to the Honourable Board in my letter of the 17th June last who were pleased to order a well to be dug solely for the use of the Gun Wharf.

I have the Honour to be, Honourable Sir,  
Your most obedient, devoted, humble servant,  
John Parr.”

[There is, incidentally, a memorial tablet to John Parr, Storekeeper at Upnor Castle, 1757-70, the writer of the above letters, in the north transept of Rochester Cathedral near to that to the Caesar family, one time owners of the manor of Westcourt, Gillingham, and who were involved in lengthy negotiations with the Admiralty about the money due to them for land forming part of the Dockyard1.]

The final acquisition of the freehold of Hill House by the Admiralty did not take place until 1777 when they apparently decided to purchase the property in order to demolish it and make room for the proposed new Royal Marine Barracks. By conveyance dated 2nd January, 1777, Hill House was purchased from James Gordon for the sum of £420. Its use as an Inn dated from about 1758 prior to which, like the Royal Marine Barracks on the same site 200 years later, it appears to have been a redundant eyesore, having outlived its usefulness both as residence and headquarters for senior naval officers, and as the Navy Pay Office.

The schedule to the final conveyance gives the following description:

“All that the said messuage or tenement, yards, gardens, two fields or closes of pasture, ground and all and singular other the premises in and by the said recited Indenture of Lease granted and demised and in and by the said recited will and Administration and the several before recited Indenture of Assignment assigned unto and become vested in the said James Gordon in manner aforesaid.

1 A.C., LXXIII, 9-90.
Kings MS. 43. British Museum (copyright). Folio 10 (Recto) showing plans and elevations of the Hill House and other buildings referred to on first page of Inventory of 1698. The Hill House is shown at the top left as No. 1 and the Pay Room is lettered "a".
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The first page of the inventory of Chatham Dockyard dated 1698 and reproduced from Kings MS. 43 (British Museum). See page 101. (An error will be noted in the left-hand column of addition).
with their and every of their appurtenances. Together with the
said recited Indenture of Lease and assignments thereof respect-
ively and all the full and whole estate right title interest property
term and terms of years yet to come and unexpired possession
claim and demand whatsoever legal and equitable of him the said
James Gordon of in and to the same premises and every part and
parcel thereof:"

The following Navy Board letter² to the Secretary of the Admiralty
refers to the final transaction:

29th April, 1777

"The Hill House Field having been approved of by the Rt.
Honble. the Lords Commissrs. of the Admiralty as a proper place
to build Marine Barracks upon, and as we have purchased the
remaining part of the Lease and shall be in possession thereof at
Midsummer next we have formed the inclosed Plan, Profile and
Estimate which we are of opinion will fully answer their Lord-
ships intention.

The shaded part will contain two hundred men, the drawn
lines on each side thereof will serve at present for the Officers of
that no. of men and the pricked lines shew the Buildings which
may hereafter be erected for an increase to 600 Men and Officers
in proportion.

And as £4,000 is voted in the Extra Estimate in the present
year for this purpose we propose if their Lordships should approve
of the Plan to advertise for proper Persons to contract for the said
buildings, and we presume a regular Surveyor should be appointed
to Superintend the same.

We are etc.

W.G.M. W.P.

Philip Stephens Esqr.

There is no trace of the plan which evidently accompanied this letter.

The exact date of demolition is uncertain but was probably about
the year 1805.³ The Hill House had an honourable career during an
epoch of great importance to the Admiralty and to the country. It
was the local "Admiralty House" from 1567 until about 1720, a
period during which Chatham grew to supreme importance amongst
naval dockyards and before the rise of Portsmouth and Devonport.
It would be unfortunate if the site of this famous old house should pass
completely into oblivion and there is perhaps something to be said for
a permanent memorial being erected to mark the spot where it once
stood.

¹ Admiralty Lands Records.
² Navy Board Letters. Adm. 106/2204, P.R.O.
³ Admiral Crase in his Notes on the History of Chatham Dockyard gives the
date as 1805.