



### **The Hartlepool Ghost Ships**

In 2004 Able UK won an £11m contract to break and recycle 13 US vessels at its Hartlepool yard. It had not however gained the necessary planning permission for the dismantling facilities before the first ships left the US.

The *Caloosahatchee*, *Canopus*, *Compass Island* and *Canisteo* were the first four old supply ships from the defunct US naval fleet, to arrive at Hartlepool in 2005. Nicknamed the ghost ships, they are said to contain a cocktail of industrial pollutants, and environmental groups on both sides of the Atlantic, have claimed the vessels should have been dismantled in their home country.

English Nature objected to a planning application by Able UK for the creation of a specialist dry dock to enable dismantling, as it believed the development would harm internationally protected wildlife sites.

Others pointed out that Hartlepool has its own a nuclear power station, and is surrounded by one of the biggest chemical complexes in Europe, and that both these industries have to deal with some of the most dangerous toxic and nuclear elements known to man...

Since arriving in the UK, the ships remained untouched moored in Hartlepool, as Able<sup>1</sup> continued its fight to gain planning permission which was eventually granted in 2008.

The *Cumbrian Blue(s) Ghost Ship* plate commemorates the arrival of *Canisteco* in 2004, and the subsequent controversy about its presence in Hartlepool. It is based upon an old tableware pattern which has been variously in production since the mid-nineteenth century.



*American Marine*, earthenware plate made by Francis Morley & Co., 1845 - 1858.



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<sup>1</sup> [www.ableuk.com/ableshiprecycling](http://www.ableuk.com/ableshiprecycling)