



Naval Charity

Dinner & Auction

on the Lower Gun Deck,
HMS VICTORY

5:30pm – 10:30pm,
11 September 2014

By Kind permission of Vice Admiral
David Steel CBE, Second Sea Lord

Project Vernon is a campaign to raise funds for the design, construction and dedication of a monument to commemorate the many Service and civilian personnel who worked in the former Naval establishment of HMS VERNON,

in Portsmouth, Hampshire. It will provide a focus for the thousands of people involved in the defence of the United Kingdom from the threat posed by sea mines in both World Wars and in subsequent conflicts.

The 14 ton, stone and bronze structure is a striking and dynamic design by renowned sculptor Les Johnson FRBS. It depicts a Royal Navy Clearance Diver placing an explosive countermining charge on a moored (floating) mine which has its mooring cable caught on a seabed wreck.

Project
Vernon



Project Vernon Charity Dinner



VVIP Guest of Honour

To be announced

Guest Speaker:

Sir John Scarlett KCMG OBE, former
Head of MI6

Master of Ceremonies:

Admiral Sir Jonathon Band GCB DL,
former First Sea Lord

An exclusive charity event aboard the Royal Navy's oldest warship commemorating the Royal Navy's Diving, Mine Warfare and Bomb Disposal operations from the Great War to the present day, raising money for Naval Charities and to fund an enduring monument to the Royal Navy's Minewarfare and Clearance Diving Branch.

A traditional Naval dining experience amongst the guns of the Lower Gun Deck

Order of Events

- **1730:** Guests arrive through Victory Gate, HM Naval Base Portsmouth
- Royal Navy Diving and Bomb Disposal Display and Demonstration in Arena beside HMS Victory
- Group Guided Tours of HMS Victory
- Champagne Reception on the Quarterdeck
- Official Photograph
- Call to dinner – ‘Mess Beatings’ by HM Royal Marines Corps of Drums
- Dinner ‘Introduction and Welcome’ by Admiral Sir Jonathon Band GCB DL ADC
- Traditional Naval Mess Dinner followed by Port/Coffee/Loyal Toast interspersed with tales of



- Mine Warfare and Clearance Divers on operations both ashore and afloat
- After Dinner Speech – Sir John Scarlett KCMG OBE
- Naval Songs – Hearts of Oak / Drunken Sailor / Rule Britannia to raise the tempo for the main event
- Naval Charity Auction by Mr Simon Morgan
- Carriages **2230**

Charity Auction

The Charity Auction will be run by the hugely entertaining Mr Simon Morgan previously of Bonhams.

Not surprisingly our most sought after prizes revolve around meeting the Royal Navy and their amazing people, getting wet and blowing stuff up!

The top prize is an incredible day with Royal Navy Mine Clearance Divers on the Solent in their fast boats with the opportunity to get wet, have fun and blow stuff up – what’s not to like?!

Also available is a more sedate but very special dinner on-board one of

Her Majesty’s frontline frigates, HMS LANCASTER. Personally hosted by the Captain, you and your guests will have a private tour of the ship, see this incredibly advanced ship close up, meet the sailors and then have a private dinner in the palatial Captain’s Cabin.

And yet another amazing opportunity to blow stuff up! This time with Bomb Disposal Operators at Kineton in Warwickshire, the home of Defence Bomb Disposal. Understand what makes these people want to defuse bombs and then have a go yourself (almost!). A great day out that is impossible to replicate.

And finally, a VIP day at the Royal Naval Air Station Yeovilton including lunch, viewing the Royal Navy Historic Flight at first hand and much, much more. A must for aviation enthusiasts.

We will also hold a very special silent auction, details of which will be announced nearer the time, including a round of golf at Wentworth, a box at the O2 arena, a day of driven game shooting with the Royal Navy Gun Club and many other great prizes.

History of HMS VERNON

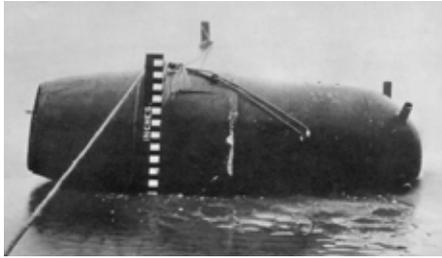


Classes marching to instruction behind the Bluejacket band; on the left can be seen 'Dido' block. Late twenties or early thirties.

On 23 April 1895, the 3 hulks (Vernon, Ariadne and Actaeon) were moved to Portchester Creek in Portsmouth Harbour these were used to train Royal Navy personnel in torpedo training. During the First World War, work at HMS Vernon concentrated on torpedo trials and training and the research

and development of anti-submarine devices and training in their use as well as mines and ships' electrics.

On 1 October 1923, HMS Vernon (or 'The Vernon' as it came to be known) was established ashore at Portsmouth on the site of the old Gunwharf (now the development known as Gunwharf Quays) and Mining,



The first German magnetic mine before being rendered safe. Shoeburyness, 23rd November 1939.



Loading the mine into a lorry after rendering safe. Left to right - AB Vearncombe, Lieutenant Commander Lewis, CPO Baldwin and Lieutenant Commander Ouvry with back to camera.

Whitehead [Torpedo] and Electrical departments were formed. During the Second World War, HMS Vernon became responsible for mine disposal



The first bomb in 'Vernon', between Nos.1 and 4 Buildings. 24th August 1940.

and mine countermeasures. Her officers and scientific staff achieved several coups involving the capture of mines and the development of countermeasures. One of the earliest of these was the rendering safe and recovery of the first German magnetic mine (Type GA) at Shoeburyness on 23 November 1939. In June 1940, the first attempt to render safe a ground mine by divers was made in Poole Harbour, Dorset. A diving unit from HMS Excellent, supported by divers

trained in Rendering Mines Safe (RMS) techniques from HMS Vernon, successfully removed the fuze from a Type GC mine underwater although the mine exploded as it was towed inshore. On discovering the skill of HMS Vernon's mine technicians, the Germans placed booby traps in some mines. One was fitted with a small explosive charge that detonated when the mine was stripped in the mining shed at HMS Vernon on 6 August 1940.



HMS Vernon 1974



Gunwharf Quays 2014

Training in Diving, Demolitions for both the RN and Army, as well as Mine Warfare and Seamanship, continued on the site of HMS VERNON even after it ceased to be an independent command in 1986. In November 1995, Mine Warfare training was moved to the School of Maritime Operations (SMOPS) and subsequently to the Mine Warfare Operational

Training Centre at the Maritime Warfare School. Diving training, together with the Superintendent of Diving, the Fleet Diving Headquarters, the Fleet Clearance Diving Team and the Portsmouth Area Clearance Diving Team, moved into new facilities on Horsea Island and the old VERNON establishment closed its gates for the last time on 1 April 1996.

History of Mine Warfare



The Greeks are credited with developing the first sea mine c.668 BC. They set fire to barrels of 'Greek Fire' and floated them on the tidal stream towards enemy ships. During the War of 1812 the Americans laid what was possibly the first defensive minefield in order to keep British ships out of New York harbour.

Minefields were laid by the Allies and the Germans in both World Wars particularly at each end of the English Channel, the North Sea, the approaches to the Baltic and across

the Greenland-Iceland-UK gap. During WW I, the British laid 116,000 mines and the Americans laid 56,000 mines in the North Sea and English Channel alone accounting for 150 enemy vessels including 35 U-boats. In December 1914 in the British operation to open the Dardanelles 21 former North Sea trawlers were converted into minesweepers and manned by civilian fishermen.

In World War 1, German Forces laid 25,000 mines in British waters. These are assessed to have sunk 46 major

RN warships, 259 merchant ships and 63 fishing vessels and damaged a further 84 merchant vessels. A total of 586 Allied merchant ships representing 1,000,000 tons is thought to have been lost to enemy mines.

In World War 2, German Forces laid over 120,000 mines and 30,000 minesweeping obstructors in north-western Europe alone, plus many more in the Mediterranean. These are estimated to have sunk 281 British warships and 296 merchant

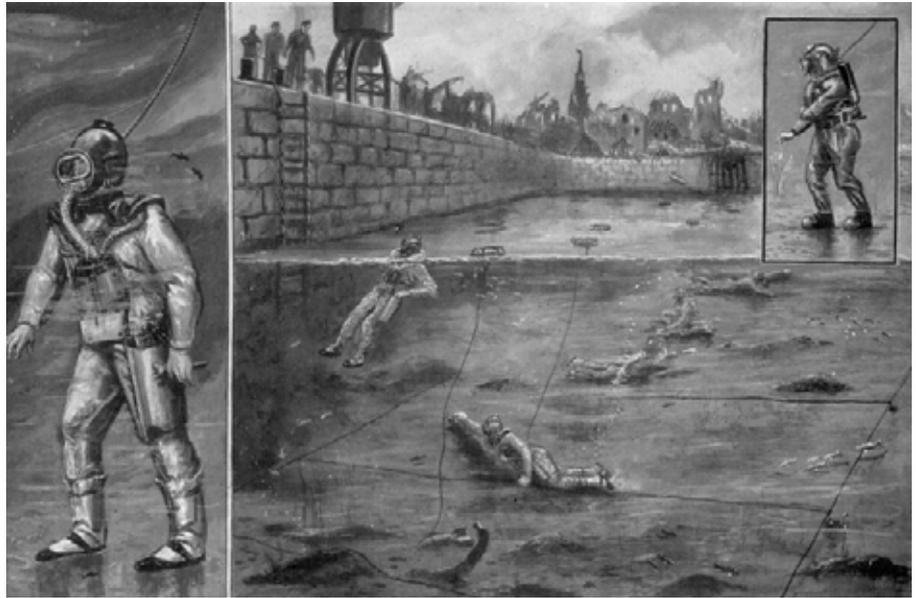
vessels (521 Allied merchant ships altogether). At the outbreak of the War, the Royal Navy only had 40 minesweepers; by D-Day, there were over 1200 RN minesweepers, including many converted fishing vessels from the UK fishing Fleet and 50,000 personnel were involved in Mine Countermeasure operations. D-Day itself required the Allies to carry out the largest ever mine sweeping operation to penetrate the large German minefield in the Channel. This had to be completed before the Invasion Force could cross through 'swept' lanes to their targets in Normandy.

More recently sea mines have been used with significant consequences during the Korean War, the Vietnam War and in the Falklands War. During the various recent Gulf conflicts, three US warships were severely damaged by sea mine strikes.



History of Diving

Clearance Diving gets its name from the operations carried out during and after the Second World War to clear the ports and harbours of the Mediterranean and Northern Europe of unexploded ordnance. This work was undertaken by RN Rendering Mines Safe (RMS) and Bomb Disposal Units and later by Port Clearance Parties or 'P' Parties, who went into action soon after D-Day to clear the vast quantities of unexploded ordnance and general debris left after the Allied invasion. In 1939 Royal Engineer Bomb parties, the Admiralty and Air Ministry had set up their own separate and distinct Bomb Disposal organisations, each with an exclusive responsibility to its parent Service. In August 1940, the UK Joint Service Bomb Disposal Charter was raised to outline and establish



Siebe, Gorman & Co's "P-party" apparatus used for locating mines, booby traps etc. (inset, top): Diver in MRS who rendered them safe.

inter-Service responsibilities for UK Explosive Ordnance Disposal. The task of Bomb Disposal in the RN fell to the Clearance Diving Branch and to the Royal Engineers in the Army.

The CD Branch has been kept active throughout its existence and several

notable high tempo operational periods have been completed. In 1974/5, the Fleet Clearance Diving Team worked to clear the Suez Canal of ordnance following the Arab-Israeli 6 Day War. This included 209 tons of bombs of various sizes, 800 anti-tank and anti-personnel mines,



6,000 rounds of ammunition and 70 missiles. In 1977, Divers worked with their US counterparts to clear ex-US and Japanese WW II ordnance from the waters of Tarawa and Tuvalu in the Gilbert and Ellis Islands. Diving teams worked in particularly arduous conditions conducting bomb and mine disposal during operations in the Falklands in 1982 and in the Red Sea during 1984. In 1987, they cleared Iranian mines in the Gulf of Oman and in the Persian Gulf. In 1991, they were back in the Persian Gulf,



this time clearing hundreds of Iraqi mines laid off Kuwait. CDs embarked in RN mine hunters were involved in the clearance of allied bombs jettisoned in the Adriatic during the Bosnian and Kosovo conflicts in 2000. More recently Divers have also carried out bomb disposal on the land, de-activating hundreds of Taliban Improvised Explosive Devices in Afghanistan. In this role they were working together with their counterparts in the Royal Engineers, who share the responsibility of

providing the UK with its military diving capability. Almost every day in the UK, Naval Divers and their Army colleagues will be tasked to support the Civil Authorities by attending to items of unexploded ordnance tasks mainly for historical ordnance but also for terrorist and criminal incidents. In fact the recent storms in the UK saw hundreds of hitherto 'hidden' pieces of ordnance washed up onto the UK's beaches and shores meaning that this task is likely to be an enduring one.



HMS VICTORY

On 7th May 1765 HMS Victory was floated out of the Old Single Dock in Chatham's Royal Dockyard. In the years to come, over an unusually long service, she would gain renown leading fleets in the American War of Independence, the French Revolutionary War and the Napoleonic War. In 1805 she achieved lasting fame as the flagship of Vice-Admiral Nelson in Britain's greatest naval victory, the defeat of the French and Spanish at the Battle of Trafalgar.

For Victory, however, active service did not end with the loss of Nelson. In 1808 she was recommissioned to lead the fleet in the Baltic, but four years later she was no longer needed in this role, and she was relegated to harbour service - serving as a residence, flagship and tender providing accommodation.

In 1922 she was saved for the nation and placed permanently into dry dock where she remains today, visited by 25 million visitors as a museum of the sailing navy and the oldest commissioned warship in the world.

In a fraction of a second they are projected into eternity and will never possess a final resting home.

They have graves without bodies, they are an exceptional breed of people....

It is an utmost proudness of myself to have met these men, those lords that I salute, praise and admire.

**Winston Churchill on Clearance Divers
September 1944**

