Another *Invincible* season yields wonders – and an HLF grant

MAST and the National Museum of the Royal Navy were awarded a £360,000 Heritage Lottery Fund grant which will fund a three-year project of events across the region including cutting edge digital resources and major exhibitions which aim to take these stories from the seabed and the dive boat to the land. The grant also enables a third season of excavation in 2019.

Built in 1744 and captured in 1747, *Invincible* became the blueprint for the Royal Navy 74 gun ships of the line until the end of the Age of Sail and the beginning of the Age of Steam, marked in the United Kingdom by the launch of HMS *Warrior* in 1860.

*Continued overleaf.*
Nine divers and numerous volunteers including a serving member of the Royal Navy worked on the site last May and June. We continued our work in the bow area, within the boatswain’s, gunner’s and carpenter’s stores on the orlop deck and then below in the hold, the filling room, light room and general stores. We also continued down the wreck towards amidships where we unexpectedly discovered six swivel guns, from a known complement of 12. We have raised five which are now in conservation.

Some of the most pristine finds are from a small shelf in the orlop deck indicating it was in storage as a spare. The hour glass below was used to measure the speed the ship was travelling.

These finds had been protected under the sands until now. Significantly the excavation this year also uncovered much of the ship’s gunnery equipment. This includes quoins from all three types of cannon known to have been used, the 32, 24 and 9-pounders. Dan Pascoe, site licensee, said: “For someone who is researching the workings of the guns at sea in Royal Navy, the Invincible is a treasure trove of gun-related material from the 18th century.

“What is evident is the huge level of organisation level and professionalism of the Royal Navy. The finds show how well organised it was. All survive in good condition because of the intact nature of ship. We have been excavating non-stop for over a month and progressed immeasurably. We are progressively moving aft towards stern where previous excavations have not reached.”

Invincible had become a testbed for new technologies and the 24-pounder gun was a new gun being trialled. None have been found in the archaeological record and do not appear in any lists after 1757. The guns were jettisoned to lighten the ship’s load when she struck the sandbank. One is high on our wishlist for 2019.

Other finds include regimental buttons, a button of the 2nd Regiment of Foot, the senior-most English line regiment in the British Army and a 33rd of Foot regiment. It is possible that some of the crew would have been simply catching a lift and getting off at Gibraltar, others might have been senior NCOs receiving promotions at their destination in Louisbourg, Canada and changing regiments there.
MAST is a signatory to the Armed Forces Covenant which it has committed to honour and to support the Armed Forces community of the United Kingdom. The Project is loosely modelled on Operation Nightingale, launched in 2011 with the aim of helping veterans returning from Afghanistan.

The initiative set out to employ the social and technical aspects of terrestrial archaeology to aid in the recovery process of serving and ex-Service personnel involved in the conflict. It established that there is a close correlation between the skills of a modern serviceman and those of the professional archaeologist. These include survey, geophysics, seamanship, engineering, diving, seeking or mapping ordnance (or heritage) sites (both on the surface and underwater), close and patient scrutiny of the ground, looking for improvised explosive devices (or artefacts).

This year four members of the Armed Services were among the dive team. Damian Lewis, a veteran, formerly of the Royal Engineers, returned for a second year. He was joined by Dominic Courtney, a former RN Clearance Diver. Giles Richardson, a member of the Royal Navy Reserve, was also a core member of the team. He has now joined MAST as a full time maritime archaeologist. They were joined by a serving member of the Royal Navy, AB Ben Wood, pictured above.

Volunteers, some from groups who have helped on the site for many years, also visited during our two months at sea.

Divers Damian Wilson and Dominic Courtney

Visitors from The Times newspaper, our partners the NMRN and from the volunteering group Step Together joined us for a day on MV Avon, pictured above.

Away from the boat, MAST and Bournemouth University are welcoming all, with priority to Service and ex Service personnel, to join them to record, clean and conserve the finds at its Centre in Poole. Many will be working alongside HLF volunteers (see page 4). No prior experience is necessary.
A generous grant from the HLF received this summer will fund a three-year project of events across the region including cutting edge digital resources and major exhibitions which aim to take these stories from the seabed and the dive boat to the land.

The project starts with the creation of a significant volunteer programme in Portsmouth and in Poole which will get people involved in essential work. Up to 34 volunteers will be recruited in a variety of roles including:

- Recording and assisting with finds
- Getting hands-on to conserve the 100s of artefacts already recovered which are undergoing conservation in Poole.
- Researching the artefacts and stories to feature in digital resources
- Assisting in preparation of major exhibitions at Chatham Historic Dockyard and The National Museum of the Royal Navy, Portsmouth Historic Dockyard
- Helping at events to inspire people with these stories

There will be plenty of volunteering opportunities. To register interest, please email volunteering@nrmn.org.uk.

Some of the finds – here two writing sets – we’ll be cleaning and conserving this year.

One volunteer doing photogrammetry of a quoin used to elevate cannon.

Volunteers on a conservation course at MAST’s Archaeological Centre
MAST, in partnership with Bournemouth University, has received an invitation to display their work at Bovington Tank Museum during Tankfest 2019.

(Below – workings of photogrammetry of one of the tanks in Poole Bay)

DD tanks were normal tanks made buoyant by the provision of a canvas skirt and propelled by a Duplex Drive a gear selection that allowed the tanks engine to selectively either power the tank tracks or propellers. They formed a key component of the plan for the D-Day landings and later WW2 landings in southern France on 15th August 1944, a 7 mile crossing of the Western Scheldt on 26th October 1944 during the Battle of the Scheldt, the Rhine crossing on 23rd March 1945 and in Italy the crossing of the Po River on 24th April 1945 and the River Adige on 28th April 1945.

To defeat Germany the western allies had to land an army on the coast of France and fight through France into Germany, meeting the Soviet Army invading from the East. The German plan to prevent these landings was to defeat them on the beach and had turned the Atlantic coast of France into a fortress with strong points situated at strategic locations.

The role of the DD Tanks was to provide armoured support for the first waves of infantry ashore. To achieve this, they were to ‘swim’ 2¼ miles to land just (c.5 minutes) ahead of the first wave of infantry, provide support to the initial landings and then support the infantry in capturing German strong points allowing the beachhead to be secured and the subsequent build-up of resources needed to ensure the invasions success.

Come and visit our MAST-BU stand between June 28-30 2019 to find out more.
MAST was delighted to welcome His Honour Peter Ralls QC. He was called to the Bar in 1972, is member of the Western and South Eastern Circuits; Chancery Bar Association, London Commercial and Common Law Bar Association and the Commercial Bar Association. Head of Chambers at 29 Bedford Row. Took Silk in 1997, subsequently moved to Essex Street and then Outer Temple Chambers (Head of Commercial Law Department).

He is listed in Chambers and Partners Directory as one of the leading silks in Commercial Law. Appointed to sit as a Recorder in 1997 and thereafter, in 2007 appointed as a full time Circuit Judge to hear Criminal and Civil Cases in Southampton, including a variety of cases brought by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency and authorised to sit as a High Court Judge in the Queen’s Bench Division in London. He is a keen yachtsman, former Commodore of The Royal London Yacht Club and Chairman of the Cowes Combined Clubs (responsible for running the annual Cowes Week Regatta), member of the Royal Yacht Squadron.

One of Judge Peter Ralls’s more recent cases was that of the prosecution of Vincent Woolsgrove for failure to declare a rare 17th century cannon from the warship HMS London in the Thames estuary.

Giles Richardson joins MAST as a Senior Archaeologist. He holds a Masters in Maritime Archaeology from Southampton University and is currently working on his PhD at Oxford University’s Centre for Maritime Archaeology. Giles is also an Invincible Project team diver. He is a Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Bath’s History of Technology Research Unit.

His research focuses on the archaeology of the Victorian Royal Navy. He continues to work on projects across Europe, notably the European Institute for Underwater Archaeology’s excavations at the sunken Ptolemaic city of Heracleion-Thonis in Egypt. He holds HSE Surface Supply (Offshore Top-Up) and Professional SCUBA qualifications, and is a BSAC Advanced Diver and Open Water Instructor.
MAST returned to Alderney this summer, in partnership with Bournemouth University and the Alderney Maritime Trust, to complete a full survey of the burial environment and conduct photogrammetry of the entire site.

A diver propulsion vehicle was used to uncover certain areas, buried by several metres of fine sand. A rare timber survival was found using this method (bottom left).

Divers also uncovered a concreted pile of muskets, a possible sword and an anchor.

The team (above) plan to return in the summer of 2019 to complete the photomosaic work and liaise with the Alderney Maritime Trust.