“Neptune Wrecks”
Solving D Day Mysteries

Southsea Sub-Aqua Club
BSAC 0009

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Neptune Wrecks

• Setting the Scene - The Invasion of Normandy.
• Survey of the Tanks & Bulldozers wrecks.
• The results of historical research.
• The search for the Landing Craft Tank.
• The future for the wreck sites.
• Experiences in running the project.
D-Day Preparations
(Landing Craft at Southampton)
Operation ‘NEPTUNE’ Invasion Fleet

6,939 vessels were drawn from 8 different navies

- 1,213 warships
- 4,126 transport vessels (landing ships/landing craft)
- 736 ancillary craft
- 864 merchant vessels
Troops & Supplies

By 11\textsuperscript{th} June (D + 5)
326,547 troops, 54,186 vehicles, 
104,428 tons of supplies

By 4\textsuperscript{th} July One Million men had been landed.
Neptune Wrecks Projects

- T&B Project Plan - Mar 08
- T&B Main Survey - Jul 08
- T&B Report - Oct 08
- ‘Neptune’ Wrecks Project Plan - Mar 09
- ‘Neptune’ main survey - Aug 09
- Neptune Wrecks Project report May 10
Tanks & Bulldozers Wreck Site

- 1974 Recorded by UKHO.
- Featured in ‘Dive Sussex’
- 2 Tanks, 2 Bulldozers + Field Gun.
- Depth 20m.
- Tanks slipped from a Mulberry ‘Whale’ bridge?
Tanks & Bulldozers
Chart Position

4 Miles South West of Selsey Bill
Pre-Survey Dive
Some Answers – More Questions!

• Wrecks close together
• 2 British Tanks - Not Shermans!
• 2 Bulldozers
• Parts of a vehicle
• No sign of Gun?
• Large Anchor – tucked under a tank!
TANKS AND BULLDOZERS - INITIAL SITE PLAN

(TOGOTOSCALE)

FIELD GUN?

PC3

PC2

PC1

TC

ANCHOR

TANK B (TB)

ON ITS LH SIDE

TANK A (TA)

UPSIDE DOWN

BROKEN TRACKS

JEEP A?

(JA)

JA3

JA2

TANK A (TA)

BULLDOZER B

(BB)

BROKEN PLOUGH

ON LH SIDE

BULLDOZER A

(BA)

ON LH SIDE

CENTAUR TANK

L 6.35m

3 2.91m

H 2.44m/2.83m

DOZER D7 D8

L3J
Main Survey – July 08
What We Discovered

• 2 Centaur CS IV Tanks
• 2 Armoured D7 Caterpillar Bulldozers
• 50+ rounds 95mm HE Ammunition
• Remains of vehicle (engine, axels, wheels)
• Small round ammunition
• Large ‘Kedge’ Anchor
• 2 Propellers (37” dia)
• 2m long – gun barrel?
Centaur ‘CS’ IV Tank

- 80 given to Royal Marines for ‘OVERLORD’
- 95mm Howitzer Gun
- 1 BESA machine gun
- 28 tons
- 27 mph
- 5 crew
Pegasus Bridge
Tank ‘A’
Armoured D7 Bulldozer

US Caterpillar D7 - modified to add armour
Approx 23 tons
Armoured D7 in action on D Day
Dozer ‘A’
Ammunition
4 x 4 car – Willys Jeep?

- Engine block
- Gear box
- Battery
- Axels
- Wheels & Tyres
Field Gun?

- No Gun carriage found
- Gun Barrel? – possibly a 20mm Anti-Aircraft gun like those on an LCT (A)
Diving Into History

Image courtesy of The Tank Museum
WW2 War Diaries

• 2\textsuperscript{nd} Royal Marines Armoured Support Group with Centaur Tanks loaded at Gosport

• Part of the Canadian “J” Force headed for Juno Beach. Witnessed by Prime Minister.”
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LCT(A) 2273 Fully Loaded
(...and about to sink!)
“Engine broke down craft leaking on stbd side. An attempt to tow was made by HM Tug Jaunty. This failed & craft capsized, but floated for some time until HMT Jaunty sank her by gunfire.

Survivors came back as organised party in HMT Jaunty to HMS Vernon.

No injured or killed.
Able Seaman Charles Hunt RN
Where is LCT(A)2428?

We took to the water in 2009 to find the wreck...
LCT(A) Specification

- Length 112 ft 4”.
- Beam (Max) 32ft 8”.
- 3 x 225HP engines.
- 3 x 37” Propellers.
- 2 Oerlikon 20mm Anti-Aircraft guns.
- 50 tons extra armour around bridge area.
- Ramps for tanks.
‘Patch’
Landing Craft

• UKHO data sheet & Dive Sussex guide.

• 3 miles East of Tanks & Bulldozers site.

• Wind & tide from the West on morning of 6 June 1944.
What we Found

- 3 engines
- 2 bulkheads 32’ wide
- 37” 4 blade propeller
- 2 rudders
- 2 gun turrets – 1 barrel
- Winches
- Armour plate
- 95mm HE tanks ammunition
- A BOMB?!!!
37" diameter 4 x blade propeller
3 Engines
Anti-Aircraft Gun
BOMB!
The Bomb

- Probably WW2 500lb British Aerial Bomb.
- 4’ long.
- 12” across base.
- Un-fused
- Not thought to be LCT cargo.
Southern Diving Unit 2
Royal Navy Diving & Bomb Disposal Team

Image courtesy of SDU2 Royal Navy Diving and Bomb Disposal Team
Suspended by 500kg Lifting Bag
Landing Barges and “Dumb Lighters”
WW2 Landing Barges

An LBR fitted with a stern ramp and conning position aft and armed with an MG. forward.

LBV(L) 44 was one of the larger (200t. d.w.), powered barges fitted with a stern ramp and a MG. mounting forward.

Above: An LBO showing tank fitted in the hold.

Below: LBK.1 providing food for landing craft crews.
Landing Barge Oil or Water

Spare propeller dated 1943
Steel ‘Beetle’
Valentine
Duplex Drive
Tank
Landing Craft Tank
The Future?

- SSAC have ‘Adopted’ both wreck sites.
- Will they be raised? Unlikely due to cost of conservation + presence of ammunition.
- English Heritage project to designate/protect wrecks.
Look – Don’t Touch!
Outreach

Very positive reaction from the general public, special interest groups, veterans, historians, archaeologists etc.


Revealed: The Astonishing D Day Tanks at the bottom of the English Channel:

Scuba divers searching for hidden treasures got more than they bargained for when they stumbled across two massive Army tanks on the ocean floor.
Personal Experience

• Enjoyable, Challenging, Rewarding, Fun, Fascinating, Addictive, Surprising, Educational
• Developed Project & Dive management skills
• Entertaining! - Dealing with media/press
• Outreach – People interested in our project - willing to help

Club Benefits

• SSAC divers – Diving with a purpose brought Club members together
• Divers proud of their achievements
Thank you to our Supporters

THE BRITISH SUB-AQUA JUBILEE TRUST

Nautical Archaeology Society

THE TANK MUSEUM
www.tankmuseum.org

ROYAL NAVY

D-DAY MUSEUM
OVERLORD EMBROIDERY

the ROYAL MARINES MUSEUM