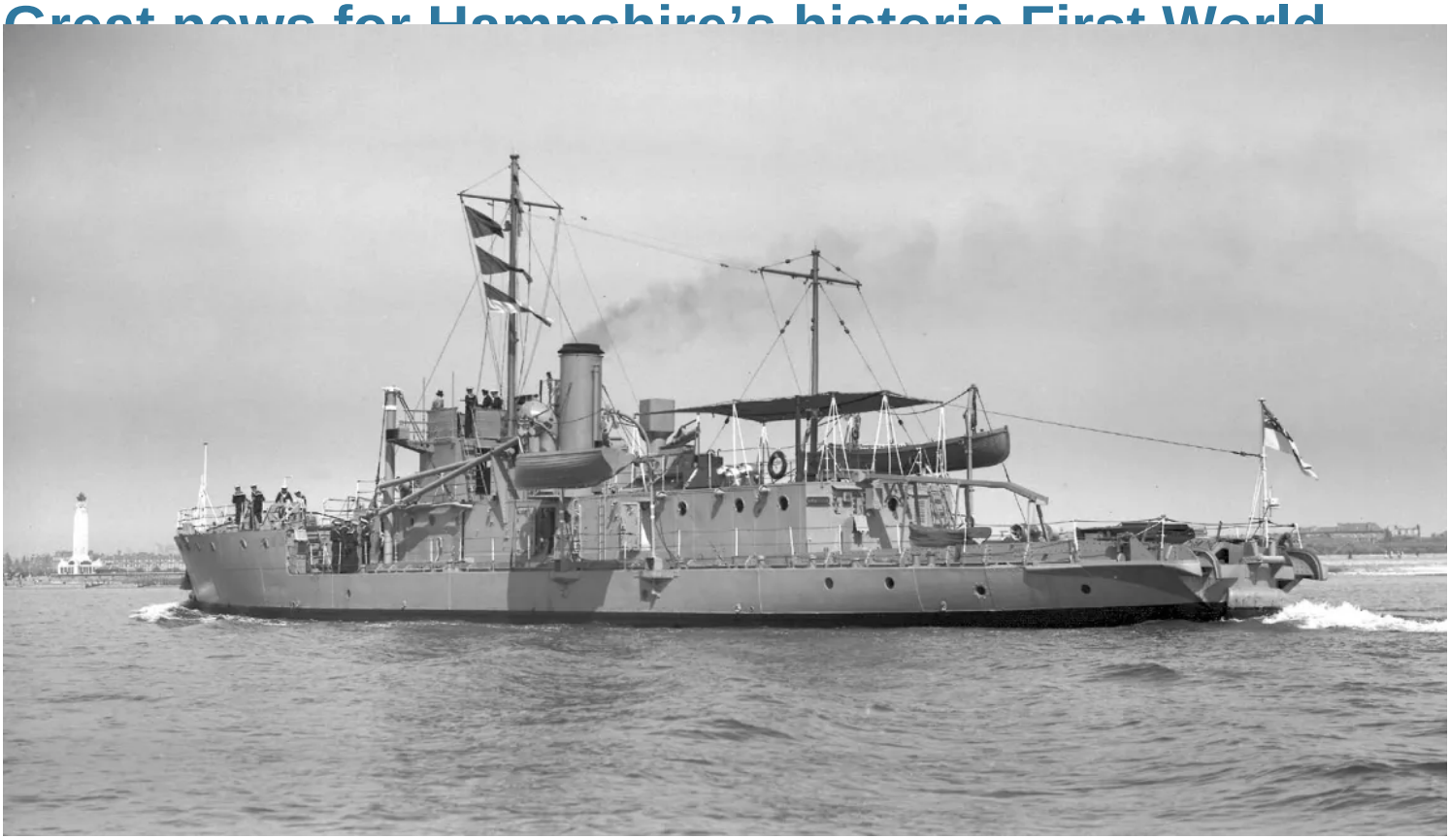
Great news for Hampshire's historic First World



Archive image of HMS M33

HMS M33 was rapidly built in 1915 as a coastal bombardment vessel. She served in the Dardanelles Campaign between 1915 and 1918, including providing support for the Gallipoli Campaign during 1915. In 1919 she was refitted and returned to action in the Russian Civil War, where she covered the withdrawal of Allied and White Russian troops from North Russia during the Dvina River Campaign. Following her return from Russia, she spent the rest of her active life in Portsmouth Harbour.

Currently berthed in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard alongside the HLF-funded new Mary Rose Museum and Nelson's flagship HMS Victory, this support means that Hampshire County Council and the National Museum of the Royal Navy (NMRN) can develop detailed plans which will see HMS M33 brought back to life in time to be a part of the Centenary commemorations of the Gallipoli Campaign in 2015.

HMS M33 was acquired by Hampshire County Council's Museums Service in 1990 in order to preserve her heritage for future generations across the county, and the nation. Earlier this year, the Council joined forces with the National Museum of the Royal Navy to bid for Heritage Lottery Fund support towards the extensive work required to preserve this important historical artefact.

Hampshire County Council Executive Member for Culture, Recreation and the Countryside, Councillor Keith Chapman, said: “We are absolutely delighted by this fantastic news. We have long-known this warship is of national and international significance. Without Hampshire County Council’s Museums Service initial intervention to acquire the ship and now this support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the M33 could have been lost forever.”

Professor Dominic Tweddle of the NMRN said: “This is a great example of a successful partnership coming together to save a precious part of our national naval heritage. We’re absolutely thrilled. We’ve long seen M33 as both culturally and historically important, and this symbolises the start of a new era for her.”

Carole Souter, Chief Executive HLF, said: “HMS M33 provides a fascinating insight into the role the Navy played in the First World War. This project will enable visitors to go aboard the historic warship for the first time and explore the stories of those who fought on board. HLF is committed to helping people across the UK to learn about and tell the stories of the First World War. This project is just one of 119 projects we have already funded to mark this significant moment in world history.”

Minister for Tourism, Hugh Robertson said: “This is great news. The M33 has a distinguished history and provides a tangible and compelling link to the First World War for people today. Thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund, Hampshire County Council and the National Museum of the Royal Navy can start work to bring this warship back to life in time to be a part of the Centenary commemorations for the Gallipoli Campaign in 2015.”

A final bid will be submitted to HLF early next year, which if successful will allow the physical restoration to begin. Currently owned by Hampshire County Council, the aim is to transfer ownership of HMS M33 to the NMRN by 2015.

Notes to editors

To support the preservation work needed to bring the M33 back to life, Hampshire County Council has set aside £250,000 associated with the sale of one of the former Treadgolds buildings in Portsmouth, a property that is surplus to its needs. Separately, a total of £1.79million is being sought from the Heritage Lottery Fund, and it is also being proposed that the National Museum of the Royal Navy’s fundraising team target wider funding to source the remaining £200,000, which would be underwritten by the County Council.

For more information about the M33 visit M33 webpage.

Further information

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