UK's surviving D-Day landing craft gets restoration



The D-Day Landings involved 7,000 ships which landed 160,000 soldiers National Museum of the Royal Navy

For the first time ever an original Landing Craft Tank (LCT) will be on display at the D-Day Museum in Portsmouth. This has been made possible thanks to an investment of nearly £5m from The National Lottery and has been planned to coincide with the 75th anniversary of the landings in two years' time.

The D-Day Museum is an affiliate of The National Museum of the Royal Navy which is managing the project. Due to reopen in 2018 following a complete refurbishment, the D-Day Museum offers a much more in-depth narrative on the events that took place in 'Operation Overlord' on 6 June 1944 and looks specifically at the Royal Navy and how its crews coped on that day.

Over 800 LCTs with the capacity to carry 10 tanks or equivalent armoured vehicles were involved in 'Operation Neptune', the navel element of 'Overlord'. The largest amphibious operation in history, it involved 7,000 ships and craft disgorging 160,000 soldiers on the beaches of Normandy. LCT 7074 is believed to be one of only 10 survivors from this extraordinary fleet.

Sir Peter Luff, Chair of HLF, said: "The importance of the Normandy landings is very well understood, but as the years pass it becomes harder for people to appreciate just how much technological innovation they demanded. Without the development of the Landing Craft Tank earlier in the Second World War, it is difficult to see how D-Day - a hugely

ambitious amphibious operation - could have succeeded.

“Now, once LCT 7074 has been restored to her original appearance, thanks to the National Lottery, the stories of those she carried on ‘Operation Neptune’ can be brought vividly to life.

“It’s fitting that National Lottery money is enabling the National Museum of the Royal Navy and Portsmouth City Council to work in partnership with surviving veterans to record and share their memories of this genuinely historic operation in time for the 75th anniversary in 2019.”

Nick Hewitt, Head of Exhibitions and Collections at The National Museum of the Royal Navy, said: “We are incredibly grateful to The National Lottery for its support in securing a sustainable future for this exceptional survivor, completing the conservation that began with salvage in 2014, and showcasing her outside and alongside the new D-Day Museum, our project partner.

“This puts 7074 in the city’s heart, engaging a potential 4.5 million annual users of Southsea Common with the story of the ship and her people; it puts her D-Day story – which uniquely links sea and land – in context for museum visitors and ensures she survives for future generations.”

LCT 7074 will be taken apart and re-assembled so it can be properly catalogued. Conservation work will be undertaken on its hull, superstructure and interior spaces which weigh in at 350 tons. The D-Day Museum’s two tanks will also go through a similar process and be displayed on the tank deck of the LCT. Helping expert conservators with this work will be 40 volunteer and two apprentices.

Cllr Linda Symes, Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport AT Portsmouth City Council, said: "This is great news for the D-Day museum, which is due to reopen following its transformation next year. Having this landing craft on display will help to bring the personal stories of D-Day to life in the new exhibition and we're grateful to the National Lottery for making this possible."

A range of activities, including community roadshows and pop-up museums, will help create interest in this new display and its significance to the Second World War. The transcript of the D-Day diary of Sub-Lieutenant John Baggott, a 20-year-old trainee who commanded the 7074 will also be in display along with narratives and photos of other D-Day veterans.

Notes to Editors

LCT 7074 was acquired in 2014 by the Nation Museum of the Royal Navy thanks to £916,149 from the National Heritage Memorial Fund.

Postwar, LCT 7074 was decommissioned in 1948 and latterly converted into a floating clubhouse and nightclub. She was a familiar sight on the Liverpool waterfront, renamed Landfall. In the late 1990s, LCT 7074 was acquired by the Warships Preservation Trust which began the slow process of converting her back into an LCT but went into liquidation in 2006. In her semi-submerged and visibly deteriorating state and at the urgent behest of National Historic Ships, the National Museum of the Royal Navy compiled the bid to save her for the nation.

On her arrival at Gold beach, near midnight on D-Day 6th June she would have had onboard one Cromwell Tank of 22 Armoured Brigade HQ with a five-man man crew; two Sherman Tanks with 12 crew and seven Stuart tanks of the 5th Royal Tank Regiment and 28 crew.

Further information

Katie Owen, HLF Press Office, on tel: 020 7591 6036/07973 613 820

Jacquie Shaw, National Museum of the Royal Navy and Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, on tel: 023 9272 8062/07775 837 912



Troops boarding ships ahead of the D-Day landings in 1944



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