

LCT 7074 - LAST SURVIVOR OF D-DAY LANDINGS



LCT 7074 is the only surviving Landing Craft Tank that took part in the D-Day landings. She was given her orders to sail to Normandy from HMS Woolverstone.

A flotilla of 7000 ships and amphibious craft brought the Allied armies to the beaches of France on 6th June 1944. Of these, over 800 were LCTs.

Landing Craft Tank were designed to bring tanks and their personnel onto beaches. They had flat bottoms and a shallow draught. A front-loading ramp allowed the vehicles to drive off. High sided double hull kept vehicles hidden from sight and protected from the weather. Aft were the engines, wheelhouse and living accommodation. LCT 7074 was a modified Mark III design.

LCT 7074 was ordered in late 1943 and built by R & W Hawthorn, Leslie and Co Ltd, in Hebburn yard, just outside Newcastle-on-Tyne. Her yard number was 677. She was equipped with the American Sterling Admiral petrol engine. Her body was rivetted rather than welded. She was launched on 4th April 1944. She had a crew of 10 ratings who often slept aboard in cramped conditions on the mess deck. Two officers had their own cabin in the corner of the armoured wheelhouse. There was a small galley, shower and toilet. Small wardroom for the officers. She was armed with two 20mm Oerliken anti-aircraft guns. There was no radio and no radar. Crew reported terrible condensation that meant they had to sleep under waterproof clothing.

LCT 7074 was commanded by Sub-Lieutenant John Baggot RNVR. He was 20 and a trainee solicitor. His deputy was Sub-Lieutenant Philip Stephens. They were stuck on Tyneside for the first month due to problems with the engine.

On 9th May, LCT 7074 finally left for Great Yarmouth to join the 17th LCT Flotilla. On Monday 22nd May, the flotilla sailed around the coast to the river Orwell and anchored. 10 days later, Friday 2nd June, she sailed to Felixstowe to embark her cargo of tanks, belonging to the 7th Armoured Brigade, the famed Desert Rats. On Monday 5th, they set sail for Normandy. She carried seven Stuart light tanks, two unarmed "Observation Post" tanks, and one Cromwell tank.

The 17th Flotilla was one of five flotillas that made up Assault Group L2. This was part of the naval Force L providing follow up support on Sword, Juno and Gold beaches. They intended to land their troops on the evening of 6th of June but tide and weather delayed until dawn on 7th. - D+1.

60 embarked soldiers, along with their tanks, slept on the tank deck. There were only two toilets and wash basins. The tank's engines were regularly started to ensure they were in working order. The air was thick with fumes. Poor weather meant the sea was rough with a heavy swell. Soldiers clung to the gun turrets and the sides. Many were violently seasick. Little sleep was had.

"Seldom could there have been an invasion force so eager to leap ashore" Lieutenant John Liverman.

LCT 7074 unloaded her tanks and crews into 6 feet of water at 9:30 on the morning of 7th June on their designated beach, Jig Green, Gold beach. Only one Stuart tank failed to make the shore sinking into deep water.

EXPEDITIONARY FORCE
SHUTTLE SERVICE—MAJOR LANDING CRAFT—continued.

12 L.C.T. Flotilla				17 L.C.T. Flotilla				
"V" L.C.T. Squadron { Forward—Dover. Main—H.M.S. Woolverstone. (Administered by H.M.S. Woolverstone)				"V" L.C.T. Squadron { Forward—Dover. Main—H.M.S. Woolverstone. (Administered by H.M.S. Woolverstone)				
State	Unit	Equipment	20 L.C.T. (3)	State	Unit	Equipment	22 L.C.T. (3)	
A	"	341	Dover.	A	L.C.T. (3)	7035	Dover.	
A	"	345	Harwich.	A	"	7038	Harwich.	
A	"	399	Dover.	A	"	7040	Southampton.	
A	"	429		A	"	7043	Dover.	
A	"	430		A	"	7045		
A	"	432		A	"	7046		
A	"	433		A	"	7048		
A	"	444		A	"	7049		
A	"	453		A	"	7051		
C	"	454		Harwich.	A	"		7055
C	"	463		Southampton.	A	"		7061
A	"	474		Harwich.	C	"		7062
A	"	475	Dover.	A	"	7066		
C	"	7012	Harwich.	A	"	7071	Southampton.	
				A	"	7074	Dover.	
				A	"	7076		
				A	"	7079	Shoreham.	
				A	"	7080	Dover.	
				A	"	7081		
				A	"	7083		
				C	"	7084	Southampton.	



Stuart tank from LCT 7074 on beach beyond repair.

Task achieved, 7074 had to wait until the tide returned to get off the beach – "drying out". This provided an opportunity to do some running repairs. Some of the crew went inland and were treated to champagne in a restaurant at Asnelles-sur-Mer.

LCT 7074 was expected to return to England with 200 prisoners of war. However, with only a crew of 12 this was considered unwise and they were transferred to a larger craft, an LST, Landing Ship Tank. She returned on 8th June, having lost her convoy and having more engine troubles. From this point, on until March 1945, LCT 7074 made numerous crossings of the channel with troops and supplies, only suffering a major engine fire on 15th June.

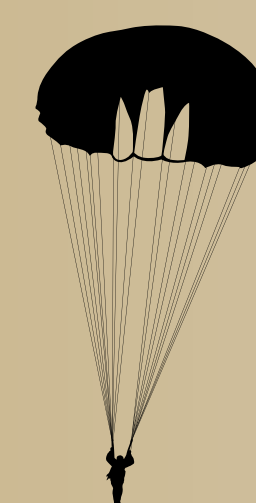
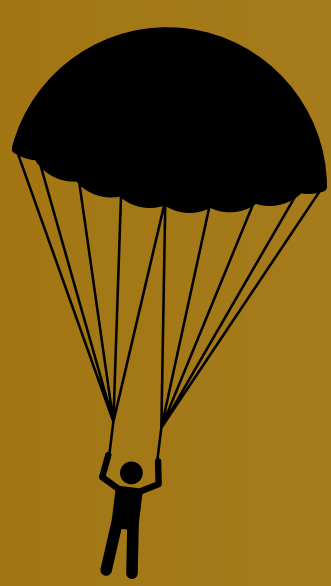
One of her last tasks was to carry a pair of mobile cranes to Antwerp on 3rd March, 1945. She was then moved to Liverpool for modifications. After the war, she was bought in 1947 by the Master Mariners' Club as a permanent Clubhouse. She was converted in 1948 and renamed "Landfall". The engines were removed and the deck divided into rooms.

Two decades later, in 1968, she became a nightclub. At the end of the 1990s, she was bought by the Independent Warship Preservation Trust. They set about returning her to her original state. In 2006, the WPT closed and LCT 7074 was abandoned. She she sank in 2010.



Towards the end of 2013, LCT 7074 was designated part of the National Historic Fleet and rescued. In October 2014, she was refloated and taken to Portsmouth where she has been completely restored and saved for the Nation.





FATALITIES AT HMS WOOLVERSTONE

Despite being a stone frigate, there were four deaths notified at HMS Woolverstone during its period under the Admiralty.



Petty Officer Stoker Thomas Joyce, RN aged 37. - 22nd July 1944

C/KX76508

Son of Patrick and Mary Ann Joyce and husband of Jane Barclay Joyce of Rainham, Kent.

“SWEET IS THE MEMORY THAT NEVER FADES OF ONE WE LOVED BUT COULD NOT SAVE”

He is buried at Shotley Royal Navy Cemetery.



Motor Mechanic Jack Lindill, RN aged 18 – 8th May 1944.

HM LCT1068
C/MX 503375

Son of Clarence and Hilda Lindill, of Bramley in Leeds.

“YOU ARE FOR EVER IN OUR THOUGHTS. R.I.P.”

Jack is buried at Shotley Royal Navy Cemetery.



Leading Seaman Reginald Parker, RN aged 21 – 25th December 1944.

HM LCT444
C/JX 315242

Son of Wilfred Thomas and Emily Parker of Cannock, Staffs.

“IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR DEAR SON REGGIE. GOD BE WITH YOU TILL WE MEET AGAIN.”

Reginald is buried at Shotley Royal Navy Cemetery.



RM Joseph Leahy, aged 20 – 11th January 1945

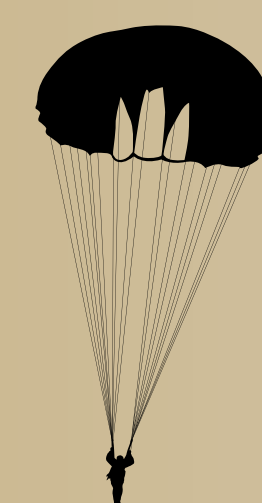
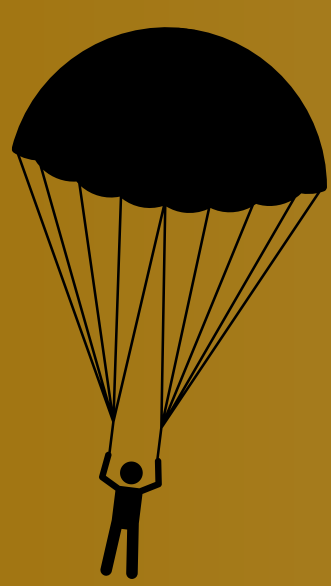
PO/X 120521

Son of Michael and Mary Leahy of 40 Pym Street, South Bank.

ON WHOSE SOUL SWEET JESUS HAVE MERCY. R.I.P.

Joseph is buried in Eston Cemetery, Middlesbrough, Yorkshire.





EMBARKATION HARD CAT HOUSE, WOOLVERSTONE SITE N.K. TODAY

Grid ref: TM 19461 39061

The hard remains at the site and is used as a berthing area by a sailing club. It covers an area of approximately 992m² (or 1,084 yards²). The mooring 'dolphins' up stream have not survived. Vic Scott records that as timber was in short supply after the war, they were dismantled, the timber was cut out, transported up to the saw mill in the estate yard at the top of Tank Road and then cut into planks for use in Woolverstone ship yard, which was leased from Oxford University after the war by Austin Farrar.

If you take a walk from the junction of the B1456 down to the foreshore there are many features visible today:



1. Splay entrance to Cat House Lane or "Tank Road" 21.5m (23 yds) wide, to make it easier for large lorries and military vehicles to turn off the Main Road

2. Tank Road is 1119 m (1,084 yds) total in length to the river. Re-enforced access road, with 7 passing places.

3. The road itself is 3.7m (4 yds) wide, made in sections 4.5 m (5 yds) deep. It is between 45 cm (18in) and 20 cm (8 in) thick.

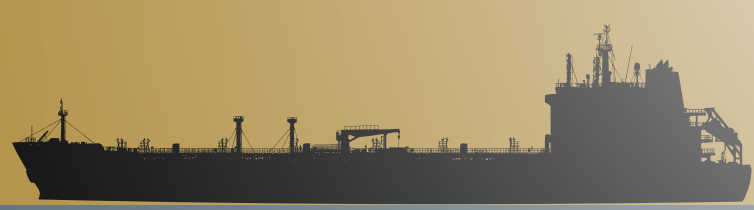
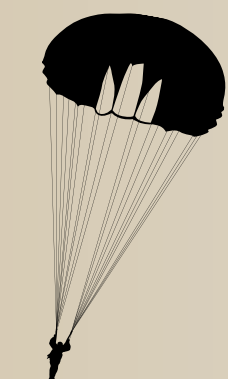
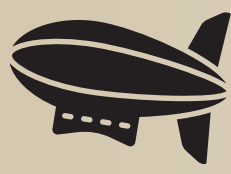
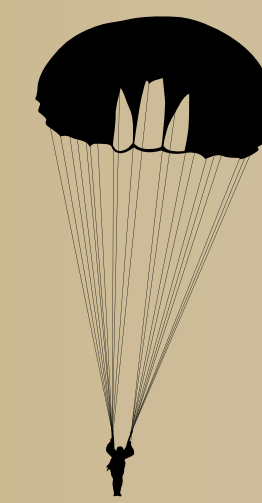
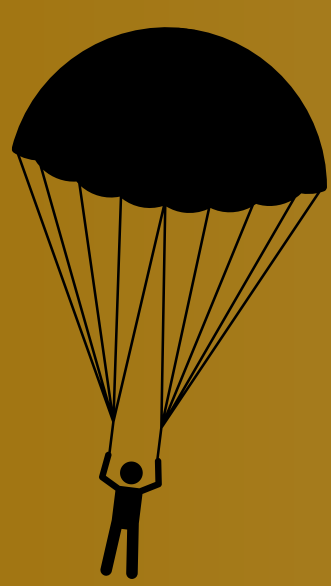


4. Re-enforced concrete turning circle for offloading supplies



5. Re-enforced concrete apron, with retaining wall.





EMBARKATION HARD CAT HOUSE, WOOLVERSTONE SITE N.K. TODAY

6. Concrete block retaining wall, built of three layers of separate blocks. Each section 30 cm (1ft) high and approx. 6m (6.6 yds) long.



7. Channel, now concreted over, for diesel pipe to dolphins.



8. The retaining wall constructed of three sections with slight angles to each other. It is broken in to three sections by steps. First set of steps to the Berners Boathouse, now demolished. Second steps towards a concreted area behind the retaining wall that housed a Nissen hut. Third steps to a concreted area above the retaining wall that also housed a Nissen hut.



9. The apron measures 64m (70yds) in total width. It varies in depth between 13.8 m (15 yds) and 16.5 m (18 yds). Total area of apron is 960 m² (1050 yd²).

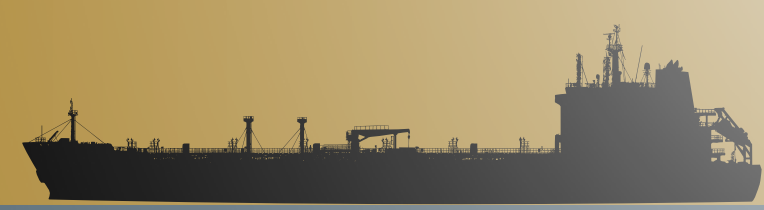
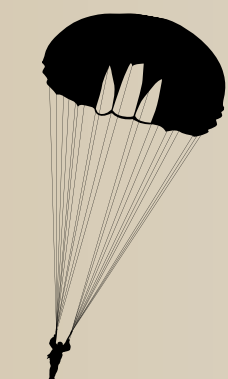
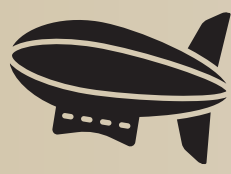
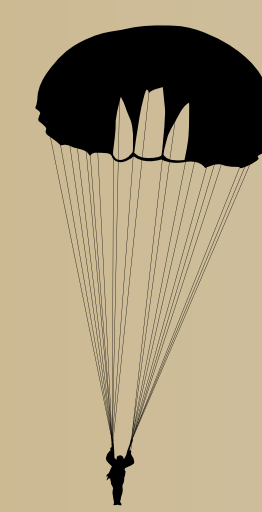
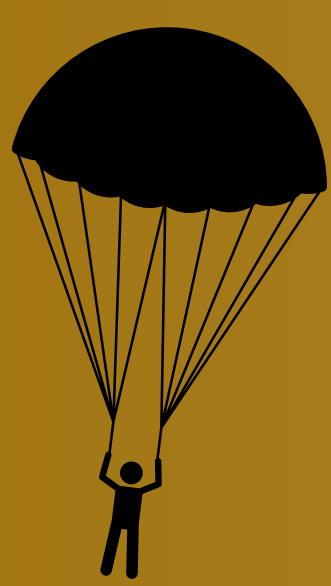


Some remains of the metal hooks to secure this can still be seen.

10. The river edge of the apron has a lip of 12.7 cm (5 in) deep, and 61 cm (24 in) wide to which the flexible matting was fixed.

11. Flexible matting – chocolate blocks - in the intertidal zone. Much of the matting has disappeared as it no longer reaches to low tide. The matting was mostly laid in 15 block sections, 3 x 5. 62 cm (24 in) x 102 cm (40in). The mats are 12.7 cm (5 in) thick. Each block is of a similar design of moulded concrete.





EMBARKATION HARD CAT HOUSE, WOOLVERSTONE SITE N.K. TODAY



12. The jetty we see today is not the original. This pencil sketch by Leonard Squirrell in 1949 shows the heavily structured wooden dolphins. However, the stumps showing above the mud are likely the remains of the original dolphins.

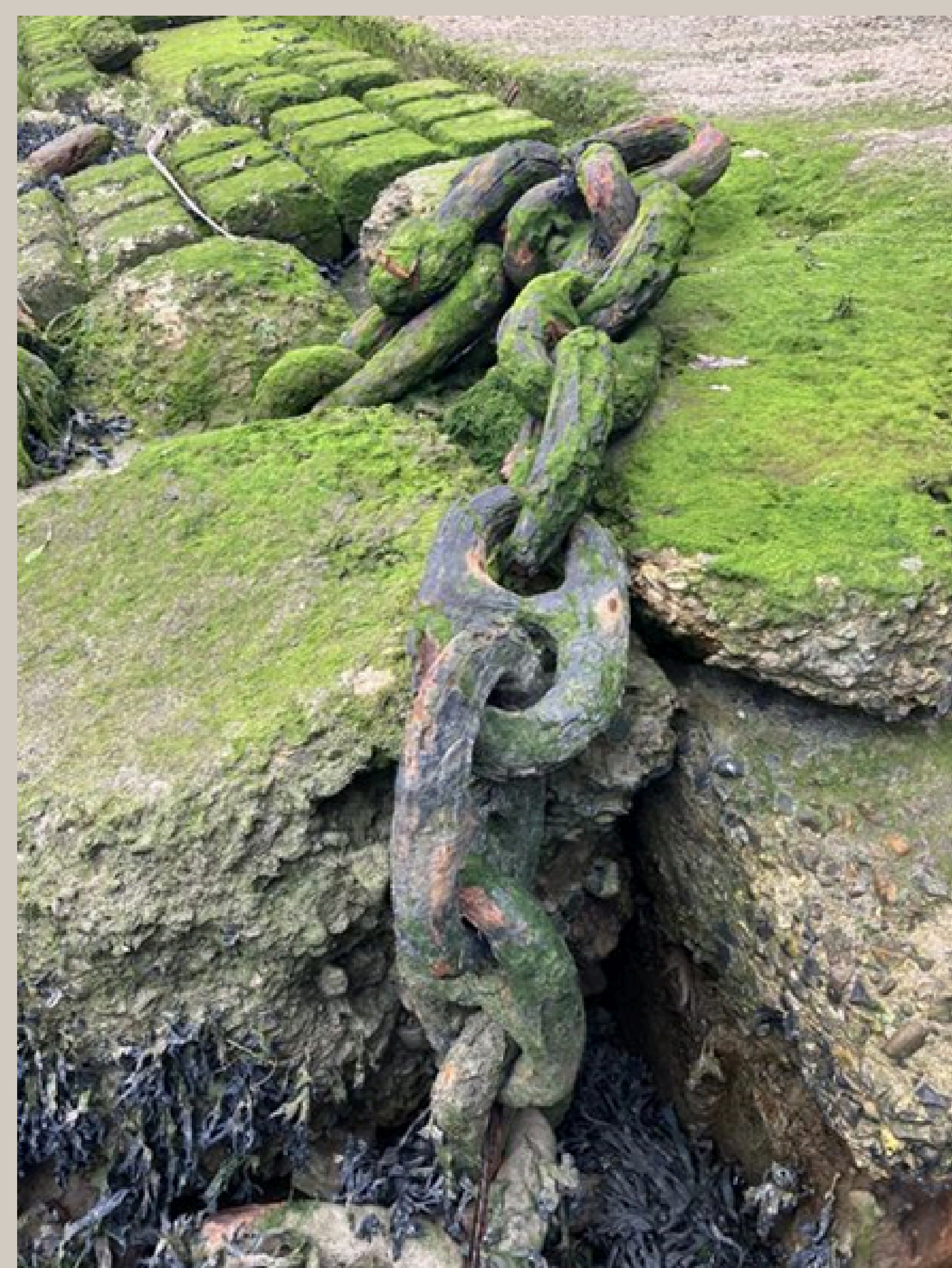
13. A small square Nissen hut was constructed at the top of the cliff. It measures 5.1 m (5 ½ yds) by 5.1m (5 ½ yards). It is still there beneath the trappings of a rural hut. This originally had a thatched roof.

The hut was created around the Nissen hut so that it did not have to be demolished at the end of the war when Austin Farrar leased this area. The curved corrugated roof of the original Nissen hut can be seen in places.



14. The two diesel oil storage tanks can no longer be seen, although brick rubble near the two sites remains an indication of their presence. One feature that can be seen is the 15.2 cm (6 in) pipe to take the oil down to the embarkation hard.

There may be more evidence to be found



15. There are various attachment points to be seen within the apron and further back up the access road.

