

The CITADEL - HMS St Vincent

The Citadel was completed in 1942 at the behest of Sir Winston Churchill who recognised the need, in the light of the WWII bombing campaign by the Luftwaffe, to provide safe haven for the Admiralty Board and Admiralty Radio which previously was housed within the Cupola atop Old Admiralty Building and latterly in a converted underground coal bunker. Built to withstand the force of a direct hit by any contemporary bomb, the Citadel is constructed of re-enforced concrete and, in vulnerable areas, has walls and ceilings measuring some 9ft thick.

The work began in 1941 and took 15 months to complete at a cost of ¾ million pounds which is equivalent to some 75 million pounds today. Designed during a period of national conflict to meet a specific need, the structure has never purported to architecturally enhance the London skyline. However, the giant ivy now adorning the external elevations outwards appearance of the building. The Citadel boasts a grade II listed building status and a roof lawn, placed during the last war as Camouflage Which to this day is lovingly fed, watered and trimmed by the staff of St Vincent

Between 1941 and 1992 the ever expanding communications complex within the Citadel was known as Commcen Whitehall; in April 1992 it became HMS St Vincent subsuming some of the administrative roles previously undertaken by other Naval establishments within the London area.

The Times Fri 29 April 88

Sight to forget

SIR – Mr Henry Wills, who lives in Bosky Wiltshire, calls for the preservation of any existing wartime buildings and structures.

I live in London, which still possesses the ugliest extant example of wartime architecture; and right in the heart of our beautiful city surrounded by the wonders of Indigo Jones, Wren and Nash.

You cannot miss it; even HM th Queen sees it from the balcony of her homes, as do her most senior ministers, the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, from their residences. The Queen Mother sees it from Clarence House, and the First Sea Lord gets an eyeful of it from his state apartments.

There is squats, a monstrous breeze-block carbuncle, on the very edge of Horse Guards, originally built to protect the subterranean wartime offices of Churchill. You cannot miss this gigantic memorial to Hitler, only 200 yards from our own national war memorial, the Cenotaph. Only the true lovers in St James Park fail to notice it.

Let us make 1989 the year when we demolish this grotesque eyesore. Build a pleasant piazza in its place with lots of marble, fountains, flowers and a statue of Winston Churchill, who saved our island race these many years ago.

***JOHN MEIN
Latimer House,
Church Street
W4***

Daily Telegraph Sat 23 Dec 1989

Wartime Myth

SIR – H.M. Scott's statement (Dec 20) that the concrete bunker at the west end of the Admiralty was Churchill's headquarters is another example of the myths that have grown up around some of London's wartime buildings. Churchill's underground headquarters, now open to the public, is at the bottom of King Charles Street steps.

The Admiralty building, sometimes called the Citadel, was built in 1941 as the Navy's communications centre. There has always been a problem in disguising its bare walls and the present Russian vine that covers it is the latest of many experiments. In order to camouflage it from German bombers, the roof was covered with grass, and this has to be cut. Access is possible only from the second floor of the Admiralty.

This means that, twice a year, a lawn mower is pulled along the corridors, through an office and out of the window. In the evening, the process is reversed and I well remember the trail of grass across my office floor.

Col N.T.P. MURPHY

Gosforth, Cumbria

The Times Thur 27 May 1988

London's "carbuncle" is still in service

Some regard it as a hideous eyesore, a monstrous carbuncle on the face of St James Park. Others view it as a bold architectural composition, and a more fitting memorial to the Second World War than any statue of Churchill.

What should be done with the Admiralty Citadel, sitting foursquare amid the greenery of The Mall, has been the subject of debate since at least 1947, when Commons backbenchers began to agitate for its demolition. The debate resurfaced recently in the correspondence column in The Times.

But yesterday the argument was firmly settled by the Ministry of Defence, with a disclosure that will dismay the Citadel's enemies: it is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. The ministry said the building was still admirably suited to its functions; radio transmitters do not demand a view of the park outside.

Built in 1941 by the anonymous architects of the Ministry of Works, the Citadel was designed as bomb-proof accommodation for Admiralty personnel; so many tourists still confuse it with Churchill's Cabinet war rooms that a sign now hangs on its door directing them to the real bunker behind the Foreign Office in Whitehall.

English Heritage, which classes the Citadel as a Grade 2 listed building, is rather fond of it. It describes it as "a massive Cubist fortress" of both historic importance and architectural merit.

"It's a strong, utilitarian structure which reflects its real purpose. It does have a design to it, and a powerful one

too; you could compare it with Battersea power station", the organization said yesterday.

Those who have wanted to knock it down, have always been inhibited by the sheer difficulty of demolishing it; as long ago as 1955, it would cost £500,000 without explosives, which would have shattered too many windows in too many historic buildings nearby.

One puzzle remains. The Citadel's last-ditch defences are two machinegun emplacements, but they face obstinately to the West. It is as though Churchill was expecting not the Germans, but the Irish!

ALAN HAMILTON

CONTROLLER'S CUP - 1994

Those communications centres and stations which provide facilities for the Defence Communications Network, for the Royal Navy, Army and the Royal Air Force respectively, are eligible to be considered for the annual award by the Controller Defence Communications Network (CDCN) of the Controller's Cup for operational excellence in telecommunications.

Following a full and careful review of all aspects of the service provided to the Defence Communications Network by eligible Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force communications centres during 1994, Command W R Root (CDCN) decided that the Controller's Cup for 1994 should be awarded to Communication Centre Whitehall.



"SITTING DUCKS, PUT OUT TO GRASS"

FEATHERS flew when AB's Barry George and Barrie Bremner went to mow the lawn on the roof of the Communications Centre in Whitehall and discovered 13 ducks nesting in the grass.

RSPCA Inspectors Roy Vidler and Peter Scott were called to the rescue and returned the ducks to the lake in St James Park.

NAVY NEWS - July 1994



"RE-ESTABLISHING OLD TIES"

On the 14th February 1995, Councillor Joan Holland, Mayor of Stone, visited HMS St Vincent in Whitehall. This was the first visit by the Mayor of Stone since the establishment was commissioned in 1992 and coincided with the 198th anniversary of The Battle of Cape St Vincent.

Stone in Staffordshire is the birth and burial place of John Jervis Earl of St Vincent.

Councillor Holland is pictured with Commanding Officer Lieutenant Commander Robin West who presented her with a certificate to mark the occasion.



"RED NOSE DAY 1995"

Lieutenant Nicky Walton on the Thames with her Red Nose team from St Vincent, collecting money for a good cause during 'Comic Relief 95'.



THE NATION GIVES THANKS

Members of HMS St Vincent (Leading Wren Karen Skinner) giving a helping hand during the 1995 VE Day Celebrations.

MAY 1995



"SIGNING ON"

Royal Navy receives fire power to counter Defence cuts and maintain the Defence of the Realm.

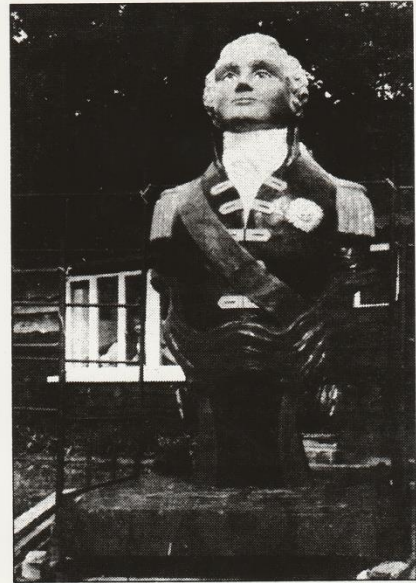
The mortars from a former ship of the line bearing the honoured name of John Jervis Earl St Vincent, of Meaford Stone, Admiral of the Fleet, in Nelson's days, were placed on permanent loan for display at the present day HMS St Vincent.

The mortars together with a standard were handed over to Commanding Officer HMS St Vincent Robin West at a short ceremony at the Town Council offices in Stone, Staffordshire on Tuesday 26th September 1995 by Town Mayor Councillor Harry Brunt.





SIGNING ON: Commanding Officer Robin West (front left) and other members of HMS St Vincent sign the mortar transfer forms, with Stone Town Mayor Harry Brunt.



MODEL MARINER: The figurehead navy representatives want displaying in Stone.

STONE'S reputation as a canal town is known countrywide, but now moves are being made to recognise its links with the history of the Royal Navy.

Last week, members of HMS St Vincent visited the town to take possession of the mortars from a former ship of the line bearing the honoured name of John Jervis Earl St Vincent. The Earl was born at Meaford Hall in 1735 and enjoyed an illustrious career in the navy.

When HMS St Vincent was taken out of commission in 1969, the mortars and a standard were given to Stone Town Council for display in their chamber — marking his link with the town.

In 1992, HMS St Vincent was recommissioned as a service station.

Town boosts links with Royal Navy

Commanding officer Robin West thought it appropriate that they borrow the artifacts back for display in their museum.

Lieutenant Commander West said of the presentation: "It was a tremendous occasion and really worthwhile. We want to keep the relationship with Stone as good as we can now we

have developed it."

Now thoughts are being given to celebrating the bicentenary the Earl's most famous battle at Cape St Vincent in 1797.

John Youde, who used to serve in the navy and takes a great interest in its history, spoke of his desire to bring together the Jervis family of

today, and the people of Stone. They want a replica model of the masthead from the Earl's ship to be displayed in the town.

John said: "My vision for the town of Stone is to see the figurehead permanently placed in the town, with the title, 'The Canal Town of Stone and Birthplace of the Earl of St Vincent.'"



TAKE AIM: Mayor Harry Brunt loads the mortar

“BUN HANGING CEREMONY”

Every year on Good Friday, at ‘The Widows Son’ Public House in the East End of London is a traditional event which is attended by the sailors of HMS St Vincent.

The ceremony dates back to the mid 19th Century, when one of Her Majesty’s sailors went to sea on Good Friday, and made a request to his mother, that upon return he would like to have a hot cross bun.

The bun was hung in the public house by his mother to await his return, sadly the ship never returned and was reported lost at sea.

Every year on the anniversary of his return the mother would hang another bun in its place. This tradition is continued today by the Royal Navy, to honour the memory of the sailor that never returned.



“SPORTS DAY 95”

Members of HMS St Vincent taking an active part in the annual sports day and barbecue at Shooters Hill, Greenwich.

May 1995



COMMENDED FOR BRAVERY

Radio Operator (T) 1st Class Brian Morris received his Queens Commendation for bravery from Colonel W R de “Lash RM, for his selfless act of courage as a member of HS STARLING’S boarding party while on active duty in Hong Kong.



OPENING CEREMONY OF THE ST VINCENT MUSEUM

An opening ceremony of the the HMS St VINCENT Museum was conducted, on 25th September 1996, by Councillor Roy Osborne, Mayor of the town of Stone. It was also attended by past Mayors; Mr Harry Brunt, Mrs Joan Holland and the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Commander RJ West Royal Navy.



CHRISTMAS ON BOARD HMS BELFAST

The Commanding Officer, Executive Officer and members of HMS St VINCENT's Ship's Company, attended Christmas celebrations onboard HMS BELFAST on 25 December 1996. The ceremony received national television coverage and was hosted by Miss Anthea Turner.

The First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Jock Slater was also in attendance, exchanging Christmas greetings with the Ship's Company and assisting in establishing links between Naval personnel deployed around the world and their relatives at home.



ROYAL VISIT

HMS St VINCENT was visited by Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal KG, SCVO, on Thursday 20th February 1997. The visit consisted of an informal tour of the Establishment and a medal ceremony during which Her Royal Highness kindly agreed to present Long Service & Good Conduct Medals to:

Chief Weapons Engineering Mechanic T S Daly

Leading Marine Engineering Mechanic G R Houston

Leading Writer G B Cowie.

(Note original document signed by Princess Anne)





BUN HANGING CEREMONY - APRIL 1997

The Commanding Officer, Executive Officer and ship's company of HMS St VINCENT are seen here attending the 'Bun Hanging' ceremony at 'The Widows Son' Public House in the East End of London. This traditional event is conducted each year on a Good Friday.



STONE IN BLOOM

On 19 May 1997, Leading Wren Lisa Nevitt, a native of our affiliated town of Stone, the Commanding Officer and the Executive Officer were invited to launch the Stone in Bloom contest. Historically, the town has done very well in this competition and, indeed, were winners in 1996. The example of their hard work which depicts the St VINCENT crest will no doubt ensure further success.



NAMING OF EARL St VINCENT SQUARE

The town Council of Stone, named in recognition of their most famous son, Admiral Sir John Jervis, later the Earl St VINCENT, a square in his honour.

In October 1997, and during a parade by the ship's company of HMS COLLINGWOOD who were exercising their freedom, the Officer Commanding, Lieutenant Commander Carolyn Crumplin, and the First Lieutenant,

Commodore Peter Swan (DCIS(N)) made an informal visit to MARCOMMANCEN St VINCENT on 17 Novembr 1998. During the visit, he took time to present the 'Long Service and Good Conduct Medal' to the following:

Sub Lieutenant Peter Harriman Royal Navy

Chief Weapons Engineering Mechanic Simon Barnaby

Petty Officer Radio Supervisor Steve Legg





THE 'NOT FORGOTTEN ASSOCIATION' CHRISTMAS FUNCTION 3 DEC 1998

Pictured here are representatives from St VINCENT who provided assistance at this years 'Not Forgotten Association' Christmas function, held at St James Palace. St VINCENT staff not only provide help at this event but also the summer Garden Party held annually at Buckingham Palace.

