

In April 2018, a personal email was sent to fellow LMCDO Paul Guiver from Ex-RNCD Tony Sexton which sparked interest to rekindle a project that had been shelved for 9 years. It read "if you were asked to produce a similar bronze memorial to that of the MkV Monument that you delivered for the US military, but for the UK, would you?" 3 minutes later Tony's phone rang and the project was born.

The Military Diver Memorial® (MDM®) project is an ambitious undertaking to design, fund, procure, donate and install a 10ft tall memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) in 2021.

The 10ft bronze, granite-mounted memorial, will depict a diver wearing the Siebe Gorman, Admiralty Pattern 6-Bolt, Standard diving dress and will commemorate the work undertaken by all military divers, past, present and future who have served their country.



For the past 11 months Paul & Tony have been quite busy! Work has included, over 200 project meetings, forming a new company, building and maintaining two websites along with the publicity, social media, administration and governance that a project of this size requires.

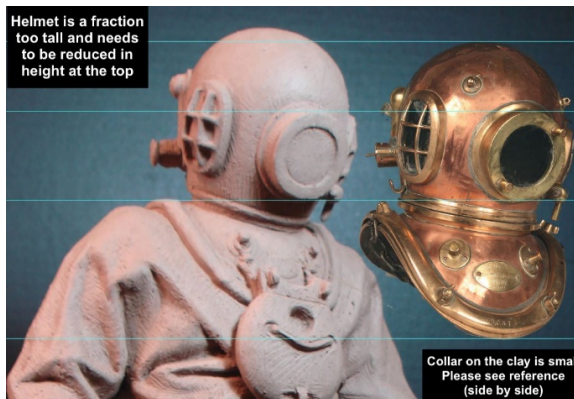
In the beginning, much time was also invested in research, seeking some of the best sculptors & foundries in the field for the work, conducting a full tender process, and after fierce competition the awarding of contracts. There have also been several meetings and an application including a formal presentation to the NMA planning committee; finally resulting in the project approval, memorial design and site agreement.



Rather than the traditional route of asking for donations, the project is being funded in its entirety by the sale of 300 limited edition bronze statuettes. This is the same approach taken for the highly successful MkV Monument ('Jake') in the USA, which was unveiled in 2012; now apparently the most visited bronze statue in Florida!

The sculptor finally chosen and commissioned to produce the MDM® is the same extremely talented artist, Greg Polutanovich, who sculpted 'Jake'.

It was agreed very early on that the memorial would have to be as historically accurate as possible. There were many conversations, video conferences and photographs shared with the sculptor discussing cordage, diving suit wrinkle patterns and the many other distinguishing marks of a standard diver (it seemed like we spent a week just discussing boots!). The old adage 'if a job is worth doing, it's worth doing well' was quoted on a number of occasions and rightly so.



One of the early emails discussing adjustments required to the clay maquette. From the clay a silicon mould is produced, into this mould is poured molten wax.



Paul with one of the first wax models. The arms have been removed and sprues or gates have been added to form channels for the bronze to flow.

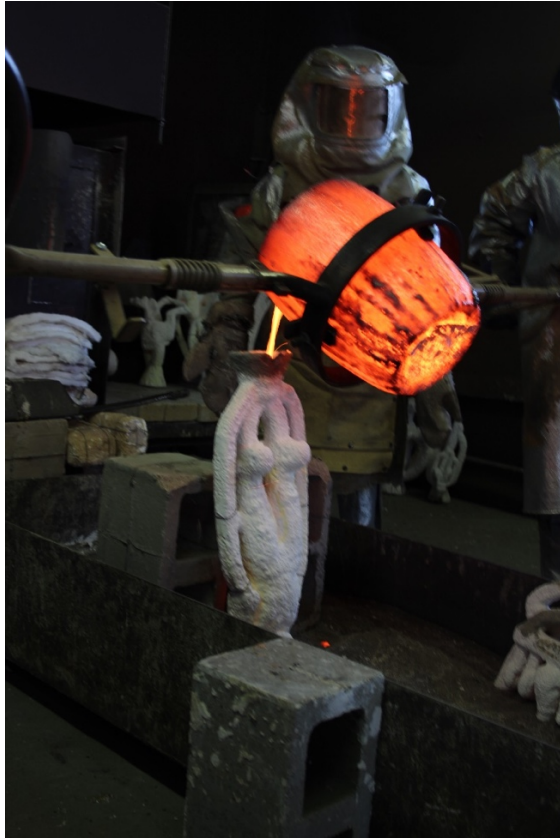


Layers of silica slurry and sand being applied to form the mould. The wax is still inside at this stage.



After many layers, the completed moulds are placed in a furnace which allows the wax to melt and run out hence the term 'lost wax process'.





With the bronze poured into the moulds a brief handshake to signify that the project has come a long way in seven months!

Once the bronze has cooled the silica mould can be removed, or as they say in the trade; 'knocked off'.



You can see the sprues we saw in the wax stage now reproduced in bronze; these will be cut off and reused. Bronze is expensive!

This is the first time we got to see the detail that had been so painstakingly carved into the clay starting to emerge (in metal) from the mould; another proud moment.



Another two of the (eleven in total) moulds have had their bronze poured and the 'jigsaw' pieces are starting to be formed. Can you spot the Siebe short sword and the front and back weights?



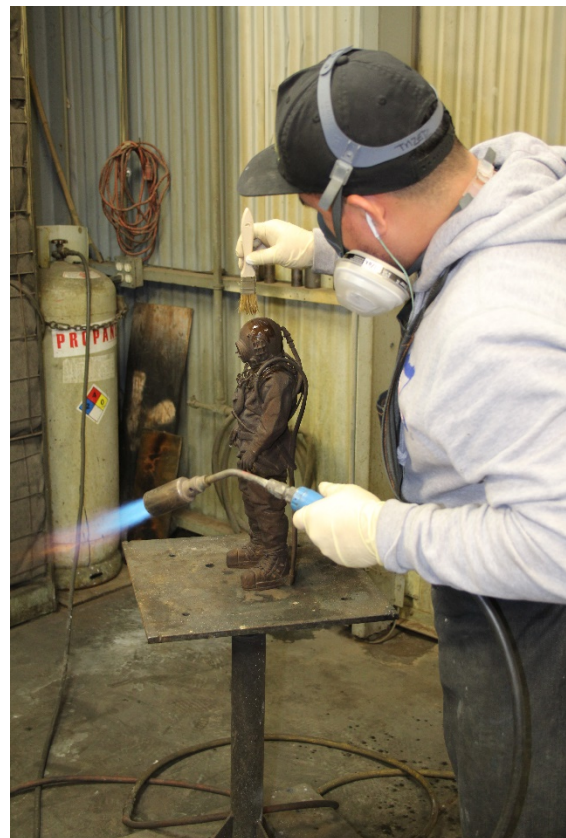


After shotblasting, one of the highly skilled artisans starts the many hours of work, assembling the pieces and then a chase and clean of the statuette (above).

Still a couple of hours work to finish this off prior to patination but it's starting to look like a diver (right).



Ready for Patination



Patination being applied, bringing out the deep rich colours of the bronze.

The limited edition statuettes weigh just over 20kg (44 lbs) and stand 54cms (21+ inches) tall, including their granite base and are an exact replica of the MDM®.





Each one of the 300 Limited edition statuettes has to go through this same process. There are no short cuts and little has changed in over 2000 years of casting bronze statues. It is the most time consuming, labour intensive production method, but the end results are simply staggering.



The first batch of 50 statuettes purchased (including some 35 before the clay maquette was even sculpted!) are now nearing completion and delivery has started. Another large order has just been placed and will soon go into production. Each piece is taking approximately 6 weeks to produce, and the foundry is working flat out to meet our demands! More information about the process can be found on the parent company website Monument Projects Ltd ([www.monumentprojects.com](http://www.monumentprojects.com)).



The completed 10ft memorial itself will be gifted to the Royal Navy Clearance Divers Association and the newly formed British Army Divers Association, in recognition of their efforts to foster comradeship and esprit de corps amongst their members and of the wider diving community, along with the required funding for a lifetime insurance and maintenance programme.

The Military Diver Memorial is being built and installed for a different purpose to that of the Project Vernon monument. It is felt however, that they will both compliment each other and, rather than 'competing', they will actually provide an opportunity for additional recognition and awareness of Military Diving to a much wider audience.

The National Memorial Arboretum is the UK's year-round centre of Remembrance; a spiritually uplifting place which honours the fallen, recognises service and sacrifice, and fosters pride in our country. It is part of The Royal British Legion family of charities where visitors from all walks of life including Service personnel, veterans, students of all ages, groups and individuals have free access year round.







The brand new £8.1 Million Aspects conference centre has just opened and will be the venue for the MDM celebration banquet following the high-profile unveiling. Included in the purchase of a statuette is an exclusive invitation for two and each generous benefactor will also have their name embossed on a bronze plaque; mounted on the base of the memorial.

The NMA is sited in the heart of the Nation, with 30,000 maturing trees and over 330 memorials. It truly is a beautiful and lasting focal point to honour those who have served their country, died in conflict or have a special reason for being remembered.

For more details about The Military Diver Memorial project please visit:  
[www.militarydivermemorial.com](http://www.militarydivermemorial.com) or email [info@militarydivermemorial.com](mailto:info@militarydivermemorial.com)