

TON Talk

Newsletter of the TON Class Association

Edition 174



June 2015

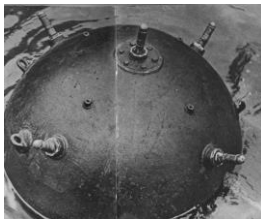


Future MCM

Founder: Jack Worth MBE

TON Class Association

Patron HRH The Prince of Wales



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TCA Membership
£10 per annum
£100 Life
www.tca2000.co.uk

Waterloo 200th Anniversary 18th June 1815 – Let's hear it for the Pongos and especially for General Blucher's Prussians, who saved the day.

Tom Cribb Pub Ray Brooks advises that Michael Hardy, landlord of the Tom Cribb, who kindly provided hospitality for TCA after the Cenotaph Parade on Remembrance Sunday, has moved on. We would like to thank him for looking after us so well for several years. Ray has confirmed that the new landlord and his Area Manager favour continuing the tradition, so we will be OK for 8th November.

BZ to our Webmaster Bob Dean has created a website for Marshland Maritime Museum. It will take some time before all the internet browsers pick up the new domain name, but meanwhile you can access the new website by typing "www.marshlandmaritimemuseum.com" in the bar at the top of your browser page. It would greatly assist to promote the website up the list of results in the search table if all TCA members would visit the new website a couple of times for a month or two. Remember the dot com. See also *inside rear cover*.

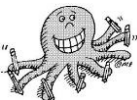
Malta Visit Thanks are due to TCA member Warren Zahra, Mary Grace Lynch and all the team at Alpine Travel for the superb arrangements that made our visit to Malta an outstanding success and to Elaine Zerafa of RNA Malta for the kind hospitality of our shipmates. (*see pages 13-19*).

Malta on the Front Line, again Discussions with friends on the islands brought home that, yet again, Malta is in the front line of assaults on Christian values. The Great Siege of 1565 was perhaps the most marked episode, but for several months the Malta Maritime Squadron has been among those engaged in dealing with the tide of refugees produced by political and religious unrest in communities further south and east. Most may be "economic migrants" but some are fleeing persecution and attacks on Christian groups and their churches.

hopalaki@gmail.com Humble apologies to Trevor Watson for mis-spelling his change of e-mail address - more than once.

The Best Ambassador is a Man o' War

- Oliver Cromwell, on trade rivalry with the Dutch.



Deadline for the August edition is 20th July

Chairman's Corner

The TCA visit to Malta was a complete success, the weather was brilliant and the planned events all went off with almost clockwork precision. For details see pages 13-19. I must give a very big thank you to Warren Zahra , Mary Grace and other team members of Alpine travel who so kindly arranged our visit, and so generously sponsored the plaque in memory of the late Commander Oliver Wright RN. Also our thanks are due to Elaine Zerafa and the RNA Malta GC for the kind invitation to join them and to parade our Standard at the Service of Remembrance, commemorating the 70th Anniversary of VE Day, at the War Memorial in Marina Gardens, Pieta on Saturday 9th May. A well deserved 'Bravo Zulu' to Peter Down Hon. Sec and Bill Pollington for their diligence with the planning and constant liaison with Alpine Travel and Malta organisations, this very much ensured the visit was an enjoyable and total success.

On behalf of our President and all members of the TCA I wrote to Clarence House to offer our "Loyal and Hearty Congratulations" to our Patron His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales following the birth of his granddaughter HRH Princess Charlotte of Cambridge, and received a reply including "*Your thoughts in writing were much appreciated, and this letter comes with your Patron's renewed thanks and good wishes*"

With reference to all the exaggerated publicity about our Patron HRH the Prince of Wales and his so called "**Black Spider Memos**", it seems that the publication of his letters to government ministers has had the pleasing effect of very much enhancing his standing with the citizens of the United Kingdom and shows that he is very well informed on a wide variety of issues, and he should be very much commended for bringing to the attention of ministers concerns of those who are often not heard and quite often ignored. One example being to remind the Ministry of Defence of it's duty to provide up to date and efficient equipment to our Armed Forces on combat duty in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Finally, another **Bravo Zulu to TCA member Bernard Jones** for completing his 25th London Marathon, not bad for an ex-matelot in his mid 70' s.

John Soanes

TCA Who's Who

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Rear Admiral R John Lippiett CB. CBE. DL

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Coming Events

June	Sat 20	White Rose Brewery Run – Blokes only – Banyan Rig 13.00 Muster in Longboat Bar, York. 14.00 Slip and Proceed Details from Buster Brown e-mail: a-brown35@sky.com
September	Sun 7	White Rose Branch All Services Remembrance Parade , Eden Camp. Contact Buster Brown e-mail: a-brown35@sky.com
	Sun 13	HMS WILDFIRE III Parade and Commemorative Service , Queenborough, Kent. 13.30 Parade Muster at Holy Trinity Church High St 14.00 Commemorative Service in Queenborough Park Details from Chris Green. Tel: 01303 254520, e-mail: green943@btinternet.com
October	Fri 9 –12	AGM and Reunion - Prince of Wales Hotel, Southport
December	Sat 5	White Rose Branch - Pre-Christmas meeting
	Sat 5	Kent Area - Pre-Christmas lunch at the King Charles Hotel, Gillingham. Contact Chris Green Tel: 01 303 254520 e-mail: green943@btinternet.com.
	Wed 9	Hampshire Area - Christmas Lunch Royal Maritime Club, Queen Street, Portsmouth Contact Laurie Johnson 02392365729 Email: lawrencejohnson1055@outlook.com

FUTURE MCM

TCA member Commander Martin Mackey gave us some insight in TON Talk 158 (October 2012) into the future direction that Mine Counter Measures techniques were heading and in TON Talk 167 (April 2014) TCA Member Commander Tim Curd described how civilian equipment and practices were dealing with unexploded underwater ordnance. This article stems from information publicly available on the internet and points the way to further automation in the war against that most potent and cost effective weapon, the sea mine.

For more details visit www.navaldrone.com and the websites of the navies mentioned.

Traditional minesweeping consumed resources of ships, men and materiel on a grand scale; a squadron of six or more sweepers, employing between two and five hundred sailors, could take several days to clear a minefield of (say) 40 mines; even longer if the trigger mechanisms were fitted with counters and adverse weather resulted in the usual crop of breakages and replacements of gear. This would not have been an unusual scenario at any time from 1916 up to the introduction of effective minehunting in the mid 1960's.

The balance began to swing when reliable high definition sonar such as the Plessy 193 became available. Technology began to overtake seamanship in combatting naval mines, although the need for precise navigation became even more acute, leading to exploitation of SATNAV and active rudders. Factors such as water temperature and salinity were imported from the world of SONAR and, as CCTV went underwater, visibility could become significant; murky waters ensured continued use of divers for the really tricky jobs ...

Minehunting significantly reduces the risk to the crews of mine counter measures vessels, by enabling them to stay outside suspected dangerous waters and to investigate, classify, then dispose of, the threat of "Mine-Like Objects", ideally from a safe distance. Current research aims to improve the economics of this concept by replacing the vessel that ventures into the minefield by an "intelligent remotely operated underwater vehicle" (ROV).

Historical and marine researchers, the oil and gas industry, salvage engineers, hydrographers and treasure seekers began to take TV and mechanical grabs underwater in the mid-1960's, so it was not surprising that this technology was soon also applied in the world of mine countermeasures.



Typical of the first generation of naval ROVs was the French PAP [Poisson Auto-Propulsé - self-propelled fish] which was used by several NATO navies, including the RN and USN, (*pictured left, being launched by a Dutch minehunter*), and the German PINGUIN.

Second generation ROVs have even more capability, combining a greater variety of sensor systems including video, sonar and magnetic anomaly detectors, with warheads that may be shaped charge or armour-piercing.

The German SEAFOX (*pictured right*) used by the RN and ten other navies, COBRA and the Norwegian MINESNIPER are typical of this type of system; all remotely controlled from a mother ship via an umbilical, through which TV pictures, GPS positioning and environmental information may be sent to the ship's Operations Room, which responds by sending manoeuvring instructions to the ROV.



Miniaturisation of electronic components allows newer ROVs to carry a greater payload with greater capabilities and the accuracy of placing the explosive charge allows that, too, to be reduced (remember the bulk of the Mine Disposal Weapon employed by TON minehunters), all of which results in a decrease in the physical size of the ROV.

These are typically now under two metres in length and weigh less than 40 kg. Range, speed and depth are also increasing. An ROV such as the French K-STER (below), also used by the Singapore Navy, can operate to greater than 3000 metres range, 200 metres depth, at six knots for several hours and is effective even in a tidal stream.



The next logical step is to remove the umbilical cable and to build into the ROV sufficient computer power that it can follow a pre-programmed mission profile, take video, sonar or magnetic readings as required, transmit this data to its mother ship and finally use GPS to find its own way home, having monitored how much battery power it has remaining.

REMUS, (Remote Environmental Monitoring System), is one such Autonomous Undersea Vehicle (AUV). It was first developed in the late 1990s for the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute by Hydroid, a subsidiary of Kongsberg Maritime. It is reported to be in use by the U.S. Japanese & Polish navies for shallow water mine countermeasures and hydrographic reconnaissance . REMUS has been taken to the Gulf by the Royal Navy Maritime Autonomous Systems Trials Team (RN MASTT - *photo courtesy of RN website*).



Improved capabilities in seabed mapping have civilian applications in environmental and archaeological surveys but the next step in military operations for an intelligent autonomous underwater vehicle is Intelligence, Surveillance & Reconnaissance.

From the same stable as K-Ster, the A9-M, is a small AUV with long endurance for stealthy special operations. Launched from the sea by a small boat or canoe, it is able to reach its target undetected and undertake reconnaissance of a harbour, beach, off-shore installation or even a ship's hull, by Side Scan Sonar and high definition video.

An ideal way to probe harbour defences and to record what has been discovered !

Research in Europe has tended to concentrate on operations in relatively shallow seas, perhaps because our MCM doctrine has been heavily influenced by the ground mine and our wide continental shelf. By contrast the USN is experimenting with using robotic devices to counter buoyant mines, especially the deep laid variety (remember EDATS).

The Lockheed Martin system (*photo below*) operates just below the surface and deploys its own side scan sonar in a tethered pod (*white device in the photo*). This 6-ton, 23-foot long monster is launched from the stern of a Littoral Combat Ship and driven through the suspected minefield by an operator on board the ship. Initial reports say it is proving cumbersome on trials. Its role is to identify mine like objects, so presumably other techniques are used to dispose of them.



Experiments are being conducted in Austria into the behaviour of “swarms” of unmanned underwater vehicles; half a dozen or more very small craft, each less than a metre long, and each equipped for a specific role, such as magnetic, video or sonar detection and able to communicate with each other via data links, so that they can act in concert to conduct a survey of say a hull, oil rig, harbour bottom or lock gate and then, maybe, place an explosive charge; think Exercise Awkward, with tadpoles ! The mission would be programmed into the collective data base of the swarm aboard a mother craft which itself might be a stealth vessel some miles offshore, or a commando unit closer to the scene.



Also being trialled by the USN is an Unmanned Surface Influence Sweep System; a remotely-controlled small boat designed to methodically sweep a patch of ocean by towing a cable capable of triggering acoustic and magnetic mines – a robotic version of the Mickey Mouse Motor Minesweepers of the 1940's ?

And in attack mode, is the Surface Unmanned Vehicle (SUV) PROTECTOR, (*photo below at a Navy Day off the Merlion at the entrance to the Singapore River – the food stalls are still there, rebuilt to be more hygienic, but the junks have gone*).

This unmanned RHIB carries an automated remotely-controlled 12.7 mm machine gun, plus a variety of sensors including TV camera, infrared scanners, a loud hailer and a data link to send all the information gathered back to mother. Potentially it could also be armed with a multiple RPG launcher. Travelling at over 30 knots, a toy it ain't !



Protector has already been deployed on anti-piracy operations in the Arabian Sea by the Singapore Navy where it demonstrated its considerable capability interdicting suspect vessels. Imagine yourself as Head Serang of a pirate skiff of malicious intent when out of the dawn screams a 30-knot ocean-going dalek ordering you to heave to and taking pictures of you as you ditch the AK 47s, grappling irons and boarding ladders !!! That's what actually happened and the bad guys rapidly learned to sheer off when they spotted this aggressive RHIB in the water.

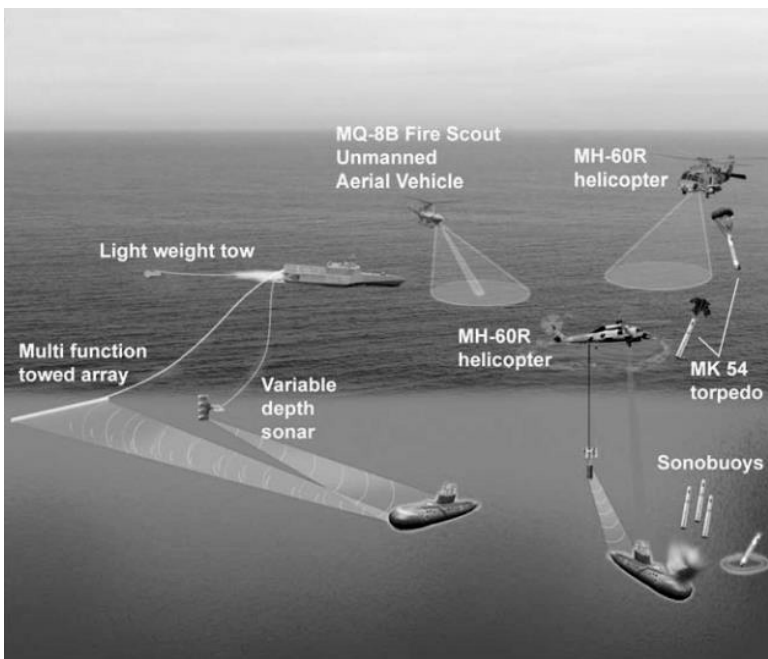
The potential for sending half a dozen of these craft, commanded from a stealthy helicopter or submarine, into an enemy harbour brings to mind thoughts of Taranto or the original concept of the torpedo boat ...

Most navies in NATO and those of Russia, China, India, Israel, Ecuador, Malaysia and Singapore are reportedly actively implementing unmanned naval vehicles, aka Marine Autonomous Systems, for a variety of intelligence-gathering and strike tasks.

In 2012 the MoD announced that unmanned systems will feature prominently in the RN's new Type 26 frigate. "... Along with a UAV-compatible flight deck, the ship will have a flexible mission bay including a ramp to allow deployment of rigid-hulled inflatable boats, unmanned surface vehicles, or towed-array sonar. Unmanned naval systems extend the ship's sensor range, provide persistent intelligence coverage, and reduce crew risks for certain missions such as mine-clearance ..."

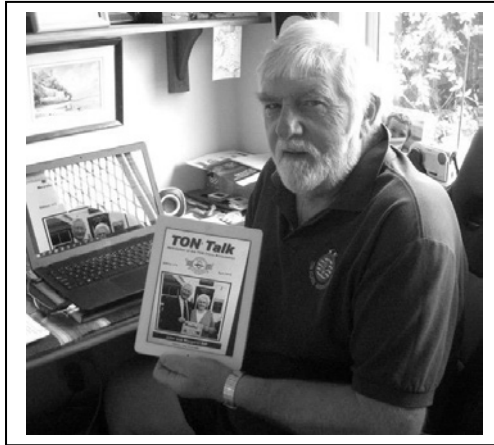
It is possible that the days of the dedicated mine countermeasures vessel may be coming to a close. It will probably not happen for some years, but a future generation of MCM specialists may find themselves aboard a steel or composite hulled, multi-functional, stealth mother ship with an ISO container load of intelligent unmanned underwater vehicles and instrumentation which link into an Action Information System shared between other ships and aircraft in a task force and gridded-in to a Maritime HQ ashore.

Let's hope that Future Jack and Jenny may still occasionally be able to taste the salt sea spray and enjoy a good run ashore.



From the same stable of maritime robotics comes this "Illustration of Concept" of how the USN might soon engage in Anti-Submarine Warfare. The Littoral Combat Ship illustrated has been criticised by some US commentators as having insufficient range on its weapons fit, as compared with recent frigates. Others have praised its versatility in amphibious and disaster relief exercises. Perhaps extending the range of its punch with the next generation of air and surface unmanned vehicles may be the answer/intention.

News from Oz



Teenage boy asks his granny, "Have you seen my pills, they were labelled LSD ?"
Granny replies "Never mind your pills, have you seen the dragons in the kitchen ?"

Successful start of Thailand's space shot

https://www.youtube.com/embed/pD_yQZ4iNjY?rel=0

Not only did it work, but it appears to be re-usable !

The owner of a golf course on the Gold Coast got into a muddle about paying an invoice, so he decided to ask his secretary to help.

He called her into his office and said, "You graduated from the University of Queensland with a degree in mathematics, so if I was to give you \$20,000 minus 14%, how much would you take off?"

*The secretary thought a moment, and then replied;
"Everything but my earrings."*

Spike Hughes

Shore-side RAS at Akrotiri

Flight Lieutenant Brian Field RAF

A dit from the Shot Locker. This article was originally published as a letter in the June 2009 edition of "Ships Monthly", where it was spotted by John Soanes, who followed up by contacting Flt Lt Field and the Editor of the magazine, both of whom have kindly given permission for TCA to reprint it.

In the mid-1960's I was a young Flight Lieutenant in the RAF Supply Branch in charge of the aviation fuel department at RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus. During this period there was a considerable increase in the amount of aviation and other fuels issued due to increased activity arising from the Six Day War between Israel and Egypt/Syria/Jordan on 5-10th June 1967.

One day I was asked if we could fuel some Royal Navy TON Class minesweepers , normally based at Malta, but now operating round Cyprus, as it would help their operations considerably if the vessels could be supplied from Akotiri..

As the photographs of SHAVINGTON show, we devised a makeshift refuelling facility by positioning a truck of diesel fuel on the jetty and floating a connecting pipe out to the ship which was moored at the mole at southern end of Akrotiri peninsula. Using the fuel truck as a pump, it took several days to transfer a total of about 70 tons of diesel to the four minesweepers in turn.

Might this have been a "First" for the RAF to carry out a land-based RAS for the RN ?



*Possibly a "First" but shore-side supply is not unique to the RAF.
In May 1961 HOUGHTON and DARTINGTON refuelled from a Shell road tanker on the jetty
in Jeselton (now Kota Kinabalu), Sarawak - (I was there) ... Editor*

Visit to HMS GRIMSBY

By John Robbie

After navigating the security system at Clyde Naval Base, Chis Fentiman, myself and our wives we were met by Sub Lt Thomas Reid and escorted to GRIMSBY berthed at Faslane.

Faslane can be a wet and windy place so after a very welcome coffee we were shown around the Ops Room with the Nautis terminals. This was very impressive, considering that we were mine sweeping old hands, not mine hunting; especially the classification of the “nasty” object on the seabed in the Gare Loch - It looked like an old steel plate. . To be able to get an estimated measurement of an object on the seabed beggar’s belief by the old hands.

Also, seeing the new Chart System – on a Visual Display Unit – with no messy pencilled lines on a wet chart. Gone are the days of the Chart Table being on an open and very exposed bridge.

With no wire sweeps or loop around, instead the Seafox Remote Controlled Mine Disposal System is now used and is stored in a hanger. I suppose that is why the TON Class Squadrons changed their names from MSS (Mine Sweeping Squadron) to MCM (Mine Counter – Measure Squadrons)

Lunch in the Wardroom was excellent along with the company and comments on the past, present and future ideas of Mine Clearance.

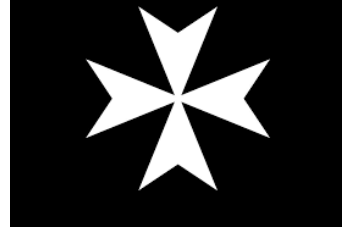
On behalf of the TON Class Association, we would like to thank GRIMSBY’s C.O, .Lt Cdr Will King, officers (especially Sub Lt Thomas Reid) and crew (especially the Chef) for a most memorable visit to the ship and for updating of our understanding of modern Mine Counter Measures techniques.

Photo: Chris Fentiman



TCA Visit to Malta 5 -12th May 2015

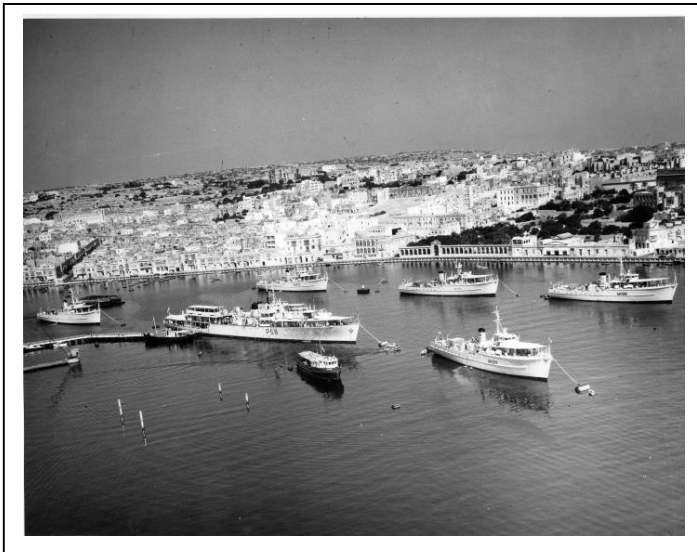
Our party comprised John and Ann Soanes, Peter and Doreen Down, Sam Cook, Mike and Marcia Cox, Edward Freathy, Gordon and Ann Phillips, Peter and Sallie Palmer, Lee McGill and Peter Jackson, John and Sheila Robbie, Steve and Sheila Ruck, Bill and Wendy Pollington and Lyn Miller and Cis Denyer (friends of Bill and Wendy).



We arrived on an auspicious date: 5th May, when the Feast of St Publius/San Publiju is celebrated in Floriana. He was the “chief of the island” who received St Paul when he was shipwrecked on Malta [see Acts of the Apostles 28 v7-10] and became Malta’s first Bishop.

Our formal programme included inauguration of the memorial to Cdr Oliver Wright in Sliema, a tour of Grand Harbour aboard a patrol craft of the Maritime Squadron of Malta Armed Forces and participation in the VE Day Commemoration by RNA Malta at the Memorial in Pieta, during which we met the President of Malta, Her Excellency Marie Louise Coleiro Preca and the British High Commissioner Mr Robert Luke. We also enjoyed some RnR in Gozo, and some visited the RN Cemetery, Kalkara, and the In Guardia re-enactors of the Great Siege in Fort st Elmo - *See details in following pages.*

Our hotel, the luxurious Fortina, and a giant shopping mall, have been developed on site of the former Fort Tigne – the colonnades on the right of the 1958 picture below of WooHa and CMS moored in Sliema Creek.



Armed Forces of Malta



The Armed Forces of Malta [AFM] are a brigade sized formation (3000 + personnel) comprising three regiments; Infantry, Artillery and Support, plus a Maritime Squadron and an Air Wing.

The formation is committed to the defence of the islands and to border security, although small teams also serve, usually in staff roles, in UN operations in Israel, Georgia, Uganda and anti-piracy operations off Somalia.

Maltese people have served in military roles from as far back as the founding Phoenicians. During the Great Siege of 1565 Maltese swimmers and boatmen kept Fort St Elmo re-supplied for as long as possible, then constructed booms and palisades in the water to defend the Three Cities. We all remember with affection the Maltese sailors who served alongside us in the RN through times of conflict up to 1979.

AFM derives its uniform and traditions from the Malta Artillery Regiment, which distinguished itself in an anti-aircraft role in the defence of the islands in World War 2. Thus the Maritime Squadron has artillery ranks and what we would call a Leading Seaman is a Bombardier (Corporal).

The Maritime Troop of the Malta Land Force was established in November 1970 and two *Swift* class patrol boats were transferred from the United States Coast Guard in January 1971. In July 1971 the force was renamed 1st (Maritime) Battery of the Malta Land Force and was based in Senglea. In the 1970s, the number of patrol boats increased as West Germany and Libya gave Malta some of their former customs launches and in 1973 a vessel built at the Malta Drydocks for the Customs Department was taken over by the Maritime Battery.

In 1977, the Battery moved to its present base at Hay Wharf, Xatt it-Tiben, Floriana . In 1978, Britain gave Malta two search and rescue launches, and on 1 April 1980 the battery was renamed Maritime Squadron of the Armed Forces of Malta – *Skwadra Marittima tal-Forzi Armati ta' Malta*.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Yugoslavia, the United States and Italy gave more vessels to Malta and in 1992 Malta purchased former East German *Kondor* class minesweepers and *Bremse* class patrol boats. These vessels were decommissioned between 2004 and 2012, as new vessels replaced them.

The squadron currently comprises:

- P61, 53 metre Italian-built OPV,
- P51 & P52 Protector class former US Coast Guard cutters,
- P21, 22, 23, 24 Austal Class 21 metre Inshore Patrol Boats (*see page 16*)
- P05 & P06 9 metre US Defender class Inshore Patrol Craft
- P02, 03, 04 11 metre inshore RHIBs
- P01, 45-knot Italian-built Interceptor
- two Melitia 11.5 metre 34 knot Italian Supervittoria SAR cutters.

The Irish Naval Service *Emer* class OPV *Aoife* is to be transferred to Malta In August 2015 as a short term measure, pending Malta's purchase of a new OPV.

The Maritime Squadron cooperates closely with the Air Wing of twin-engined Islander and AirKing aircraft, equipped with optical and Infra-red sensors, for maritime surveillance and with Alouette and Agusta helicopters for SAR and intercept duties.

It is regrettable, given the close links between the RN and Malta that have endured since 1800, that Britain has not supported Malta's Maritime Force more strongly but, as TON Talk has pointed out before, small, fast, heavily-armed patrol craft, [*aka Coast Guard Cutters or Seaward Defence Boats, ideally crewed by the RNR*], are conspicuously absent from the RN's assets to protect our interests in the North Sea and coastal waters.



Maltese Protector-class patrol craft and Alouette helicopter on anti-piracy exercises, 2011

On Saturday 9th May, before we attended the RNA VE-Day Commemoration, we enjoyed a one hour cruise round Grand Harbour aboard the Inshore Patrol Boat P 21, (picture of her sister ship below), thanks to her C.O, [termed Ship's Master] Staff Sergeant [CPO] Joe Grich.

We saw the sights at a gentle five knots, then the Master took us out to sea for a few minutes in a force 4, gusting 5, to demonstrate the impressive acceleration of his craft and her capability for tight turns. The slipstream and spray destroyed the ladies' careful coiffures, all ready for the service at Pieta, but it was a thrilling experience ...



Displacement (tonnes)	40 (full load)
Dimensions (metres)	21.2 x 5.9 x 1.8
Speed (knots)	26
Complement	8
Engines	2 x MAN D2842 LE 410; V12 diesel engines 2, 087 hp (809 kW @ 2,100 rpm) 5-bladed screws
Guns	1 x 12.7mm Machine Gun + 2 x 7.62mm GP MGs
Radar	Navigation I-Band

Built by Australian AUSTAL shipyard, the four inshore Patrol Boats [P 21, 22, 23, 24] were commissioned in March 2010. They are built of aluminium, have a planing hull and are equipped with a stern ramp to launch and recover a 3.5 metre RHIB.

Typically they operate up to 200 miles from the coast of Malta in a patrol area, shaped like a trapezium, across the Gulf of Sirte off Libya.



John Soanes presents a TCA Shield to P21's Master, Staff Sergeant Joe Grich.

The TCA group raised over £200 for the AFM Charity as a "Thank You".



Acceleration to 26 knots and a very clean Engine Room
Seamen and Clankies both happy



TCA and RNA at the Inauguration of Oliver Wright's plaque,
with Fr Mario Camilleri and Mr Anthony Chircop, Mayor of Sliema





TCA at RNA Memorial, Pieta



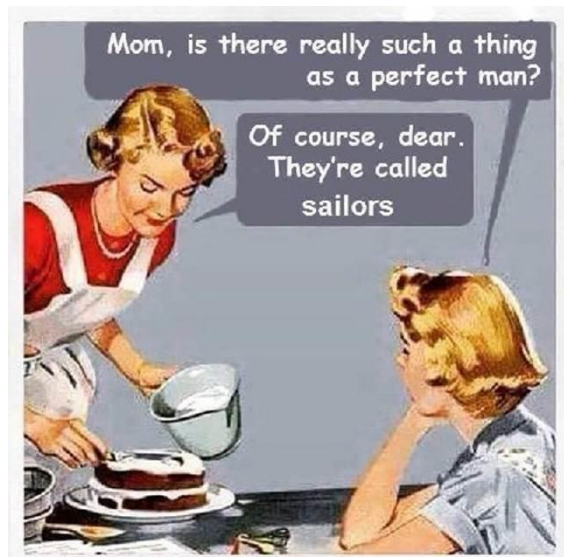
In Guardia – Muskets, Pikes and Halberds prepare to receive cavalry



The German Federal Ministry of Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth celebrates the opening of a new pub for Seniors.

Forsprung durch Technik

Thanks to TCA member Kapitän zur Zee Hans Andresen



PUNCHESTON on Active Service in the Gulf 1970/71

by Ch.WEA Bob Maddison, Weston super Mare

Bob has kindly documented his personal memories of serving in HMS WALKERTON in the Med 1967/68 and in HMS PUNCHESTON in the Gulf 1970/71, together with some unique photographs. He would welcome recollections from shipmates of that era.



In 1970 HMS PUNCHESTON (M1174) was one of six sweepers of the 9th MCMS based in Bahrain. Two of her fresh water tanks had been converted to extra fuel tanks so she could spend longer on patrol. This meant we were always running out of water. A second 40/60 Bofor gun had been fitted abaft the funnel (replacing the twin 20mm Oerlikon) during Confrontation in the early 1960's to increase fire power.

The Gulf

The whole political situation in the Middle East was different then. Bahrain was a British protectorate and a British base. We had a long-standing relationship with, and commitment to support Oman and the Trucial Oman States, now known as the United Arab Emirates, and the Shah of Iran was our friend.

There was a civil war going on in Oman which has since been described as more important than the Vietnam War as far as world peace is concerned. I won't go into too much detail, because all the information is now available on the internet or in books. Basically Yemen, an ex-British colony, after gaining independence had been torn by civil war. The communists, backed by China and Russia, had won and they saw the next step as total control of the Gulf and all its oil. This could be achieved by taking advantage of the discontent with the old Sultan's rule in Oman to the north. Oman, like Iran, is in the perfect strategic position to control access to the Gulf through the Straits of Hormuz.

The British government vowed to help the new Sultan, who had overthrown his father, was a friend and Eton educated. This meant a commitment of some army personnel, Special Forces and assistance from the Navy and RAF as required.

We spent some time training the Sultan's Armed Forces [SAF] who had mostly British or Pakistani officers. They had a few small Vosper-built gun boats and some dhows, so we offered them assistance whenever we could. They only had two aircraft; Strikemasters, a version of the Jet Provost, flown and maintained by ex-RAF personnel. We also worked with the famous Trucial Oman Scouts who were mostly British. They wore dark green battle dress and red Arab headdress, as opposed to the SAF who wore grey headdress.

I spent a day on one of the Omani gunboats. The Omanis are a wonderful people; warm and friendly - you just cannot help liking them.

Patrol

We would patrol for days off the Batina coast, stopping and searching dhows, looking for rebels and weapons. We usually had an interpreter with us; a not very likeable person who often appeared to make things worse with the dhows we stopped.

Because PUNCHESTON had less fresh water capacity than the other sweepers, we often got low and had to have water rationing. On one occasion we got so low we had to get water delivered to us by army bowser. The problem was the nearest jetty was in a known rebel active area. With the help of the S.A.S. and S.A.F. who set up a bridgehead and armed protection for the bowzers, the water was ferried out to the ship in jerry cans: a very dodgy operation that seemed to take forever.

We would get occasional mail drops from an RAF Shackleton. They would fly low and drop a canister on a parachute and then we would send away the Gemini to retrieve it.

Covert Operations

We carried out several covert operations. We would take SBS marines to locations off the coast. They would assemble their collapsible canoes and paddle off into the darkness. A day or two later we would return to the same spot under cover of night and out of the darkness we would hear the swish, swish of paddles and the marines would appear in their canoes. I had the utmost admiration for those guys; they are the best in the world at what they do.

SAS Landing

Someone on high had the bright idea of an all-out effort to clear all the rebels out of what I now think was the Masandam peninsula. The plan was that SAF forces would be landed on one side of the peninsula, driving the rebels across, and when they tried to escape by boat from the other side, we would be waiting for them. We were tasked with landing a group of SAS who would go ashore first and prepare for the landing.

The First Lieutenant asked for volunteers to put the SAS ashore by our Gemini, so I and my pal Jim Spence volunteered.

We were dressed in black diving suits with Rosalex and boot polish on our faces and armed with SMGs having two magazines taped together for quick change. Loaded with six SAS troopers we set off.

It was a pitch dark night but the going was easy, as the sea was millpond calm. We could see the shore line because of the white surf gently breaking on the beach and one of the SAS was directing us left or right. About two miles out we were told to cut the engine and the SAS guys paddled toward the beach. We landed without any problem and the SAS unloaded their equipment.

As Jim and I were about to leave, one of the SAS said we were to paddle out and not start the engine until we were well clear, finishing with the words I will never forget, "If I hear that engine start I'll come looking for you". I think Jim and I paddled for about five miles!

However, it then got scary. On this pitch dark night we could not find the ship! We seemed to be driving around for ages, lost. I was actually thinking how my parents would learn that I was missing somewhere in the Persian Gulf. We decided to stop the engine and have a think and listen. Fortunately in the silence we could hear PUNCHESTON's generators. What a blessed sound! As we headed toward the noise someone on the bridge shone a search light on us - they had been frantically looking for us.

The next morning the Sultan's forces landed, first taking a cement factory that had been held by the rebels and then the main force flew in by a flight of helicopters. Sultan Qaboos came on board for a meeting about the operation. While on board his body guard stood sentry on the gangway. I asked the interpreter about him and he explained he used to be a rebel, but had switched sides because he could not run up and down the mountains any longer !

Under Fire

We spent more time acting as patrol boats than minesweeping but we did exercise the sweep when the opportunity arose. One fine sunny day (as were most days in the Gulf) we had streamed the oropesa sweeps for exercise off the Omani coast. We had finished by about lunchtime so the sweep gear was recovered and I was left on the sweep deck to stow the gear and the Midshipman was left on the bridge, when I heard three distant, but loud, muffled thumps.

I looked up and saw three neat columns of smoke on a coastal hilltop and then three large splashes in the water about twenty yards off our starboard quarter. I picked up the sweepdeck microphone and called the bridge "Did you see the splashes in the water?". Nothing happened for a while and then there was another round fired, and another splash, then the ship suddenly veered to port and I was called to the bridge.

We could not return fire from that range with our Bofors, and perhaps we were not allowed to engage, so the CO called in a strike from the Sultan's Air Force. I pointed out the position of the guns on a headland to the Captain and he relayed it to the pilot by radio phone. The lead aircraft fired some rockets for reference - it was right on target. I then heard the lead pilot say to his wing man "Plant your cookies there". They fired more rockets and dropped bombs on the position. During the action some rebels opened up from other positions and the two aircraft engaged them, as well.

When we returned to Bahrain the Captain invited the pilots on board to thank them for covering us. They were both ex-RAF pilots working for the Sultan and very well paid. They told us that they always worked together and that they had an agreement that if one was shot down, the other would bomb the wreckage to ensure his colleague was dead because they knew if they fell into rebel hands they would be tortured. This fact has since been verified in other publications about the conflict in Oman.



Ελληνικό χωριό

It is a slow day in a little Greek Village. The rain is beating down and the streets are deserted. Times are tough. Everyone is in debt, and everybody lives on credit.

A rich German tourist driving through the village, stops at the local hotel and lays a €100 note on the desk, telling the hotel owner he wants to inspect the rooms upstairs in order to pick one to spend the night.

The owner gives him some keys and, as soon as the visitor has gone upstairs, the hotelier grabs the €100 note and runs next door to pay his debt to the butcher.

The butcher takes the €100 note and runs down the street to repay his debt to the pig farmer.

The pig farmer takes the €100 note and heads off to pay his bill for feed and fuel at the Farmers' Cooperative.

The guy at the Farmers' Co-op takes the €100 note and runs to pay his drinks bill at the taverna.

The publican slips the money along to the local prostitute drinking at the bar, who has also been facing hard times and has had to offer him "services" on credit.

The prostitute runs next door to the hotel to settle her bill for room hire.

The hotel proprietor then places the €100 note back on the counter so the rich traveller will not suspect anything.

At that moment the traveller comes down the stairs, picks up the €100 note, states that the rooms are not satisfactory, pockets the money and leaves town.

No one had produced anything and No one had earned anything.

However, the whole village is now out of debt and looking to the future with optimism.

And that, my friends, is how the bailout package works !

Mick Cosgrove LRO (G), Mansfield

Membership Update

These sections have been excluded from this copy
in order to comply with TCA policy
on privacy of members' personal information.



Crossed the Bar

These sections have been excluded from this copy
in order to comply with TCA policy
on privacy of members' personal information.

May They Rest in Peace

Kent Area News



Kent members descended on Folkestone on 25th April for the annual Springtime Get-together and Lunch. The venue was the same as last year, Keppels Bar and Bistro located within the Grand Hotel which has views across the Channel to France. Edward VII was a frequent visitor to the hotel (also Alice Keppel!).

The anticipated arrival of Peter and Sallie Palmer from 'across the pond' did not take place due to flight delays. We were pleased to welcome back Roy (Bungy) Edwards and his wife Rose.

Following lunch some of the members visited the nearby Battle of Britain Memorial at Capel-Le-Ferne, which now has new visitor centre (recently opened by HM The Queen). Other members adjointed to The Metropole.

During the course of lunch a joint toast was made to our late Chaplain John and his wife Margaret.

The HMS WILDFIRE III Parade and Commemorative Service at Queenborough will take place on Sunday 13th September. It would be pleasing to see some additional members from Kent in attendance to help support this event.



Why Parents Drink ...

The boss wondered why one of his most valued employees was absent but had not phoned in sick.

Needing to resolve an urgent problem, he phoned the employee's home and was greeted with a child's whisper. '**Hello ?**'

'Is your daddy home?' he asked. '**Yes,**' whispered the small voice.

'May I talk with him?' The child whispered, '**No**.'

Surprised and wanting to talk to an adult, the boss asked, 'Is Mummy there?' '**Yes**'

'May I talk to her?' Again the small voice whispered, '**No**'

Hoping there was somebody with whom he could leave a message, the boss asked, 'Is anybody else there?' '**Yes**', whispered the child, '**a Policeman**'.

Wondering what the police might be doing at his employee's home, the boss asked, 'May I speak with the policeman?' '**No, he's busy,**' whispered the child.

'Busy doing what?'

'**Talking to Daddy and Mummy and the Fireman**', came the whispered answer.

Growing more worried as he heard a loud noise in the background through the earpiece on the phone, the boss asked, 'What is that noise?' '**A helicopter**' answered the whispering voice.

'What is going on there?' demanded the boss, now truly apprehensive.

Again, whispering, the child answered, '**The search team just landed in a helicopter**'

Alarmed, concerned and a little frustrated the boss asked, 'What are they searching for?'

Still whispering, the young voice replied with a giggle... '**Me**'

Found by Spike Hughes, watching the sunrise in Oz – with a Cool Tube to hand ?

Sailing in the Windward Islands

By Mike Williams, Alaska

When I was a young man, I was an avid sailor who proudly flew the RNSA burgee and a diminutive Blue Ensign on my sloop as I sailed around the Solent. As with all good things, this came to an end. My days at sea were over and the oil company I joined posted me to Alaska.

Sailing in Alaska is a sport for those who cannot be completely right in the head. The views are breathtaking, but even in midsummer it can feel as if someone is pouring buckets of ice water over you. That was not for me. Having spent about twelve years on ships, the call of the sea is still strong, so this February we decided to go sailing for a week somewhere where it is warm.

I contacted fellow Brit Julian Legg who in the winter offers fully crewed charters in the Grenadines on his 78ft Southern Ocean ketch "Oasis". For the rest of the year Julian commands mega yachts and if you have seen the film "Mama Mia" you can just see Julian in his whites on the bridge of the "Haida G" as Meryl Streep sings "Money Money".

Originally three couples were going on the trip. Unfortunately one couple had to drop out through pressure of work. This gave the four of us plenty of room to do whatever we so wished. This was in fact, not much.

We joined "Oasis" in St Vincent and sailed south. The weather is so predictable. Being the guy who does the weather reports on the local radio station must be a very boring job. "Today the high will be 84 degrees, with 15 mph winds from the ENE. Tonight the temperature will drop to 73 degrees. No worries mon!"

That night we anchored off Bequia and ate a great meal cooked by our local "Vinney" islander Dessy, helped by the third member of the crew, a delightful young lady from Italy.

Following that excellent meal and a few G&T's my wife and I decided to sleep on deck. She then proceeded to put my knowledge of the heavens to the test as she asked me to identify nearly every star. Or at least that is how it felt.

We fell asleep to the gentle rocking of the boat and the aroma of nutmeg and other spices grown on the islands. Then at about two o'clock we were rudely awakened by a very heavy short shower of warm rain and we beat a retreat down to our cabin.

We had originally planned to sail over to Mustique, a beautiful private island, but we received a message that a couple of Royals had just arrived and security was a bit chaotic so we headed for Tobago Cays



Watch on Deck



Watch Below

The Cays are heaven on earth. When Julian asked us where we wished to go the next day we all said "We will stay here".

Gradually we sailed south. Life on board was punctuated with walks on small islands and beach barbeques. We visited a couple of towns to do the required souvenir shopping and found everyone most hospitable and always ready for a chat; they all seemed to have relatives who came to the UK in the 1950s.



Beach where Johnny Depp buried the rum



It is impossible to go anywhere in the Grenadines without being reminded of sugar, the economic driver of 18th century Britain. There are islands with incongruous high chimneys sticking out above the forest; on St Vincent I saw a large yard filled with cast iron boiling pots and crushing mills, but we were also reminded of the slave trade.

Stadt Amsterdam & bum boats. She followed us through the cays.

On Union Island there is a memorial to fifty three slaves who died in 1777, apparently due to their harsh living conditions and cruel slave masters. In contrast on the same island there is a pretty little church with memorials to the English settlers, many living into their eighties. Slavery was banned in British possessions in 1807, and a well-executed British combined operation in 1809 captured the French islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe and the slaves held there were freed. Unfortunately at the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars we gave the islands back to the French and they reinstated slavery, until the Royal Navy persuaded them a few years later to cease the practice.

The sailing between the islands was first class. And so it went on, day after glorious day, until at last we arrived in Grenada. Here we all went ashore to celebrate Dessy's birthday at the local yacht club.

A fitting ending to a great trip and a great crew.

Smile Please

As the coffin was being lowered into the ground at the funeral of a Traffic Warden, a voice from inside screams:

“I'm not dead, I'm not dead, Let me out ! Let me out !”

The Vicar smiles, leans forward and mutters;

“Too late, I've already done the paperwork !”

Thanks to Derbyshire Submariners

Last night my wife sent me a text, saying she was in casualty.

When I got home I watched all 50 minutes of it but never saw her.

She still hasn't come home and now I'm starving ...

Thanks to John Baber

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SUMMER SPECIAL

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No waiting time for orders of this item.

Royal Mail has put up postal charges from 1st April but we have not increased our prices.



All prices include P&P

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Post Bag

**From: Sub Lt A.G.T Walker RNR
Pissouri, Cyprus**

Further to the excellent article in TON Talk edition 172 by Pancho Brett relating to the State Funeral of Sir Winston Churchill, may I mention the marching contingent provided by London Division RNR.

The contingent comprised six officers, six Chief and Petty Officers and twenty four junior rates, all under the command of Lt. Cmdr. Jan Causley VRD RNR. The whole contingent, including me, served in Ton Class ships.

My abiding memories of the day are:

The extreme cold at the rehearsal ;
urine from the cavalry - horses that
is - froze on the road.

During the service in St Paul's our contingent was halted just below the windows behind the High Altar and we were able to hear the wonderful music - especially the choir.

At the conclusion of our part in the procession our bus stopped in the centre of Tower Bridge and we were just in time to see the launch Havengore carrying the casket up river.

It was a most memorable day for all who took part.

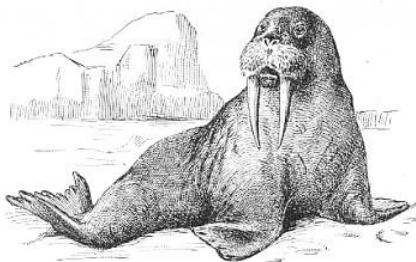
**From: Richard Essery
HMS WISTON 1970/71**

As an AB I served in HMS LEANDER and have a faded copy of the Matchmaker Squadron Certificate that was Issued to all personnel on the four participating ships: HMS Leander, HNLMS Overijssel, HMCS Columbia and USS Hammerberg, covering the period January – July 1965.

Can anyone who knows of this deployment assist me by letting me have a good photocopy of the certificate OR a list of the ports we visited and the dates ?

Contact rjessery@aol.com or write to 15 Chesterfield Gardens, Crooms Hill. Greenwich. SE10 8HL.

Tel: 0208 858 8349 Mob:
07772005685.



OPV Invitation

In recognition of the 22 TONs that undertook Fishery Protection duties, (SOBERTON spent her entire career of 32 years in the Fish Squadron) TON Talk is sent to the three Offshore Patrol Vessels currently engaged in home waters; HM Ships SEVERN, MERSEY and TYNE. The fourth, HMS CLYDE, is permanently deployed to the Falklands Islands on similar duties, plus coast watching.

We do not often hear from the OPVs, even though they patrol waters that were once familiar to many of us, but TON Talk is hoping to remedy that by inviting the OPVs to provide us with the occasional dit to complement what we can glean from the RN website (Acknowledgement for photo).

The Fishery Protection Squadron is the oldest squadron in the Royal Navy, dating back to the days of the Cinque Ports in the twelfth century, when the King's Ships had to intervene in disputes over fishing grounds with the French and Scots. In 1891 a full time Fishery Protection Cruiser was appointed to patrol the fisheries. Today the fishing limits of England, Wales and Northern Ireland, cover an area of over 80,000 square miles of sea and stretch up to 200 miles from the coastline.



River Class OPVs are 79.8 metres long, speed 20 knots, complement 45, range 5,500 miles. Weapons fit is a single remotely-operated 30mm cannon, plus two machine guns. They carry two RHIB sea boats and are able to receive helicopter transfers. A new design of OPV has recently been announced

Originally, the OPVs, were not owned by the RN, but were leased by BAE who retained the responsibility for any major maintenance and upkeep. However in 2012 the Ministry of Defence bought the ships outright and they are now owned by the Royal Navy. Rather like the MCMVs, the OPVs operate a crew rotation system which means that a member of the ship's company would normally spend four weeks aboard and two weeks ashore catching up on leave and courses, allowing each ship to be on patrol for typically over 270 days per year – and that's a lot of sea time !

We look forward to hearing from them.



Thanks to TCA, our new website is now up and running at
www.marshlandmaritimemuseum.com

Take a virtual tour of over 3000 exhibits of RN life, including uniforms, models, posters, ship badges, books, photographs, memorabilia and the **last examples of TON sweep gear on display in Britain.**

Better still, come and visit us and see them for yourself.

Entrance is free.

Just phone/e-mail Mike and Jo Smith (preferably giving more than 48 hours' notice) so we can put the kettle on to welcome you.



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Naval Mounted Horse

A Victorian tribute to the versatility of Jack, who can set his hand to any task, and a reflection of the high public esteem in which the Navy was held in that era. Note the imposing might of the battleship and the impressive SIX-funnelled cruiser.

There is a wealth of amusing detail in the picture. The pot of paint trailing from the ensign staff is labelled "Crab Fat", so the term has some history and, as ever, Jack has his personal eating irons close at hand and is firmly attached to his tot.

Among your Editor's childhood memories is a print of this iconic image in his Granny's parlour. She was a sailor's daughter and also married a sailor, but the picture was lost when her home was bombed in the blitz.

A copy can be admired in the rear lounge [former Breakfast Room] of the Royal Maritime Club, Portsmouth.

Summer Quiz – Did the RN ever have any six-funnelled ships ?