Our name & the History of Tormentoror

Tormentor in the Days of Sail

- **Type:** Gunvessel
- **Launched:** Purch, 1794
- **Disposal:** Fate unknown
- **Notes:** 1794 West Indies

The Second HMS Tormentor Destroyer, R Class

- **Launched:** Alexander Stephen & Sons Glasgow, Yard No 479, 22/5/1917
- **Engines:** 2 shaft Brown-Curtis turbines, 3 Yarrow boilers, 27,000shp giving 36 knots.
- **Crew:** 82
- **Armament:** Three 4 - inch Guns, One 2 pounder Pom Pom, Four 21 - inch Torpedo Tubes
- **Speed:** 36 Knots

World War One

R Class destroyers of the Royal navy built during World War One, The Admiralty gave permission for this class to be built in July 1915. Built with 2 - shaft Geared Turbines made by Brown Curtis. This was an improvement on the M class, with an improved Bridge Structure and mounting the 4-inch gun on a "Bandstand" in the aft position. The new engines gave improved performance, on her trial HMS Romola maintained 36 Knots for 4 hours in light conditions, and on her acceptance trials reached 32.5 knots. This class used 15% less fuel at 18 knots and 28% less at 28 Knots than the M class, which increased their range by 40%.

World War Two

The Beginning
In 1939 the Admiralty searched for suitable sites for naval training camps which were near to existing defence establishments but well hidden from aerial reconnaissance. By the end of 1940 a "Combined Operations" base had been formed at Warsash (H.M.S. Tormentor) under the **Command of an Australian, Commander Cook R.A.N.**
Here the Navy undertook training in the handling of the new special landing craft. The boats from Tormentor were used to evacuate the commandos who had been engaged in the destruction of radar and wireless installations at Bruneval, France, in 1942.

A decision to extend the scope of Combined Ops. training on the Hamble river involved the acquisition of land at Hoe Moor. After extensive construction work H.M.S. Cricket was commissioned on the 15th. of July, 1943 as a Royal Naval shore establishment, initially in charge of a Commander Piper, R.N. The camp comprised some 120 individual buildings, including a large NAAFI with cinema, a small hospital and an extensive complex of nissen accommodation huts surrounding central ablution facilities. An armament depot and a sewage works suitable for a small town were also constructed, all served by a network of roads.

At the bottom of the hill, a brisk five minute trot from the camp, Hoe Moor Creek was dredged and widened to give access to about a dozen docking bays which were excavated from the river bank. Three large country houses, Brixedone, Durncombe and Freehills, were requisitioned to provide Officers' and WRENS quarters (separately, of course!)

The role of HMS Tormentor (Warsash)

Closely connected with Cricket and using its repair facilities, was HMS Tormentor, which occupied the old Coast Guard House and RAF station at Warsash. This aptly named unit was originally set up by the Navy for the purpose of training small boat raiding parties to do more than 'torment' the enemy in the years before a major landing could be considered. In this they were very successful.

However, by the time D-Day approached Tormentor had become the base for three flotillas of LCIs, a vessel which could be likened to the cavalry of the small landing craft forces.

They had no bow doors and were very seaworthy boats, about 108 ft. in length and with a top speed of 14 1/2 knots. (One of these LCIs was, in fact, constructed at the Solent Shipyard in Sarisbury Green and survived to the end of hostilities.)

48 Marine Commando had been specially created to form part of No. 4 Special Service Brigade. At the end of April, 1944 they moved from Gravesend to set up camp at the C3 marshalling area, south-west of Botley and during this period they participated in various training exercises along the South Coast. Immediately prior to D-Day they were encamped on Southampton Common ready for transportation to Warsash, where they embarked on the LSIs of 202 Flotilla at the jetty alongside Tormentor. These landing craft proceeded independently to France and off-loaded their assault forces at St.Aubin on Juno Beach.

Whilst still in the boats the commandos sustained heavy casualties because the vessels were of wooden construction and suffered severely from the effects of enemy fire. In addition, several broached-to at the water's edge and the laden troops were badly exposed as they attempted to get down the embarkation ramps. Lt. J. L. Moulton, their commanding officer, was wounded by mortar fragments but managed to get his
men to the assembly area, where he discovered that only 50% of his force were still operational. Casualties might have been even heavier had not Moody’s Yard, at Bursledon, installed steel plate decking on a number of the LCIs which were used in this attack.

The House of Commons witnesses a defining moment in history. Just before midday on June 6th. The Commons met for the first time after the Whitsun recess. When the MPs had taken their seats they were told that question time would be shortened to allow for a special interval before normal business commenced. Mr. Churchill then entered from behind the Speaker’s chair to a warm ovation and addressed a packed and excited House. He first reported that Rome had been liberated and asked the Members to recognise the success of the 8th. Army in Italy. After a dramatic pause the Prime Minister then announced that "... during the night and the early hours of this morning the first of a series of landings in force upon the European continent has taken place. In this case the liberating assault fell upon the coast of France.

An immense armada of upwards of 4000 ships, together with several thousand smaller craft crossed the Channel. Massed airborne landings have been successfully effected behind enemy lines and landings on the beaches are proceeding at various points at the present time. The fire of the shore batteries has been largely quelled. The obstacles that were constructed in the sea have not proved so difficult as was apprehended. ......So far the commanders report that everything is going according to plan." At 6.15 in the evening he was able to report, to loud cheers, that"... this operation is proceeding in a thoroughly satisfactory manner."

HMS Cricket and its sister base, Tormentor, had played and were still to play, a most effective part in this great undertaking. In due course the surviving vessels and personnel would make their way home - but the war was far from over and the work of the landing craft units was far from done.

Commander F.N. Cook RAN DSC

HMAS Assault (Port Stephens)

HMAS PING WO was attached to HMAS Assault during 1942/1943 where she assisted with the training of 'Combined Operation' troops.

Early in 1942 an approach was made by the Australian Commonwealth Government to the U.K. Government, seeking advice and assistance in the setting up of a Combined Operations Training Centre, along the lines of such as were then operating in England. Though the British authorities were not then, or at any later date, able to afford Australia aid in the form of officers experienced in training for Amphibious Warfare.
On the naval side, Admiralty made available Commander F.N. Cook, R.A.N., who was at that time in command of the R.N. school, H.M.S. "Tormentor", with, as his Lieutenant Commander George, R.N.V.R. and Lieutenant Richardson, R.A.N.V.R. This group of officers arrived in Australia in June, 1942, accompanied by Lieutenant Colonel Walker (Royal Marines), Lieutenant Colonel Hope (Royal Artillery) and Wing Commander Murdoch (R.A.A.F.).

Immediately on arrival in Australia (3.6.42), Commander Cook attended a conference (5.6.42), at General MacArthur's Headquarters in Melbourne, convened for the discussion of Combined Operational Training in Australia. The meeting was presided over by Brigadier Chamberlain (U.S. Army) and was attended by the Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff and Lieutenant Hope, R.A., and service representatives. The conference was informed that Combined Operations in Australia were to be controlled by American G.H.Q.

An Amphibious Training Centre was commissioned as HMAS Assault at Port Stephens on 1 September 1942. The Amphibious Training Centre was commanded by Commander F. N. Cook, RAN, an officer who had won the DSC for his service in Combined Operations while serving with the Royal Navy. At the time he was recalled to Australia he was in command of HMS Tormentor, a Royal Navy Combined Operations School. The school trained beach parties and boat crews. Graduates were posted to the Australian landing ships HMAS Kanimbla, Manoora and Westralia, each of which had a beach party as part of its complement.

**Training Ships on the River Hamble**

**1908 TS Mercury**

Was founded by Charles AR Hoare and was run by Captain CB Fry and his wife. Capt Fry was a famous England cricketer. Mercury was based aboard Illove a former sailing ship built in 1867.

**1914**

Sir Winston Churchill, then the First Lord – was largely responsible for obtaining the replacement ship on permanent loan from the Royal Navy (ex HMS President and ex HMS Gannet. She superseded the original Mercury, the former sailing ship (a small barque) Illove, built in 1867. HMS Gannet was towed to Portsmouth by the battleship HMS Queen and then by tug to the Hamble.

**2007 TS Tormentor**

On the 3rd May 2007 the Unit held an open night to get the youth of the local community involved. The night was a success and the unit started with 20 New Entry Cadets and the first official Parade Night for training commenced at the Unit on Tuesday the 8th May 2007.

**Warsash Sea Cadets**

T.S. Tormentor SCC

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