



BARTREAD

NEWSETTER **OF THE** *WVCG SA INC.*



FEATURING **THE** FORD GPA

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THE SS THISTLEGORM

Divers explore the rusting trains, trucks and motorbikes on the WWII British munitions ship sunk by a German bomber off the coast of Egypt.

By Emma Thomas

A piece of history frozen in time beneath the waves has been documented in amazing photographs. The SS Thistlegorm shipwreck, a British munitions ship sunk by a German bomber in 1941 off the coast of Egypt, lays undisturbed. Now turned into a world-class diving site, the wreckage provides a fascinating insight into the past.

SS Thistlegorm: The vessel's cargo included: Bedford trucks, Universal Carrier armoured vehicles, Norton 16H and BSA motorcycles, Bren guns, cases of ammunition, and 0.303 rifles as well as radio equipment, Wellington boots, aircraft parts, and two LMS Stanier Class 8F steam locomotives.

Twisted metal of the war ship's hull has lain in the same place for more than 60 years after ship was bombed by German planes in the Second World War. The merchant ship lies in the Straits of Gubal in the Northern Red Sea and time has stood still for the supply ship which still has its cargo on board. Built in Sunderland, the SS Thistlegorm completed three voyages to the USA, Argentina and the West Indies before its ill-fated mission to Suez.

SS THISTLEGORM

Built:	January 1941
Launched:	9th April 1940
Type:	Steamship, single screw
Gross	Tonnage: 4898 tonnes
Length:	415 feet/126m
Sale price:	£115,000
Crew:	41
Bombed:	6th October 1941
Casualties:	9 Killed
Depth-Deepest:	30m
Depth-Shallowest:	13m

VOYAGES:

- 1) USA to bring back steel rails and aircraft parts
- 2) Argentina, returning with grain
- 3) West Indies for sugar and rum
- 4) Final voyage to Suez



The vessel's cargo included: Bedford trucks, Universal Carrier armoured vehicles, Norton 16H and BSA motorcycles, Bren guns, cases of ammunition, and 0.303 rifles as well as radio equipment, Wellington boots, aircraft parts, and two LMS Stanier Class 8F steam locomotives.



In the driving seat: A diver sits on a truck at the wreck of the SS Thistlegorm sunk off Egypt's coast after being bombed by German planes during WW2



A truck in the shipwreck, a British munitions ship sunk by a German bomber in 1941 off the coast of Egypt. The supply ship has been left for 60 years

Rusting Norton 16H motorcycles in the wreck of the SS Thistlegorm as tropical fish swim through the twisted metal in the Red Sea off the coast of Egypt.



© Andrey Nekrasov / Barcroft Media



Incredible. Divers examine an anti-aircraft gun on the stern of the SS Thistlegorm shipwreck.

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Reclaimed by the sea. The hull of the vast munitions ship has been eroded by the sea but several items, like the ship's ladder, remain intact.

A diver swims past a railway wagon which was aboard the supply ship. It was heading for Suez in 1941 when it was bombed - killing nine crew.



Frozen in time. By plunging to depths of 30 metres, explorers can reach the shipwreck in the clear water. The tyres on these motorbikes are still intact.

Nine of its 41 crew died in the attack but some of the survivors spoke of their escape from the burning ship in 1941. Its cargo survived, and now divers can see historic vehicles like Norton 16H motorbikes packed in the hold and an anti-aircraft gun mounted on the stern among the angelfish and tropical wildlife that have made the wreck their home. Bedford trucks, Universal Carrier armoured vehicles, Norton 16H and BSA motorcycles, Bren guns, cases of ammunition, and 0.303 rifles as well as radio equipment, Wellington boots, aircraft parts, and two LMS Stanier Class 8F steam locomotives were also on board.



War machines. A tank, destined for Suez, lies rotting on the seabed after the ship was sunk before it could make its final destination.

The supply ship was carrying trains, trucks and motorbikes, which now lie rusting on the bed of the Red Sea. Nine of its 41 crew died in the attack by German bombers.



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PHOTOS OF COROWA 2014



CAN YOU HELP

A Club Member wishes to purchase the following items:

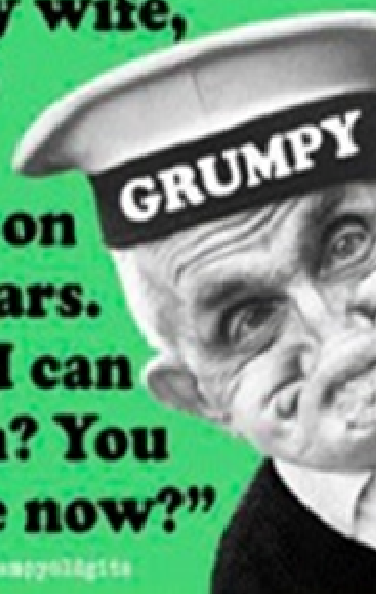
Two Grill Blackout Lights
Two Head light Hinge Mounts
One Combat Wheel Rim

If you have any of the above items for sale then please contact:

Kevin TIPLER
Mobile: 0403 267 294
Email: kevintipler@yahoo.com.au

After an argument
with my wife,
I like to
tighten
the lids on
all the jars.
Just so I can
say, "Oh? You
need me now?"

www.facebook.com/grumpyoldgits



GUESS WHO

Here is a photograph of a club member you may not have seen before. Worked it out yet.—Well you are correct. It is John Hornibrook enjoying a well deserved glass of lemonade after a hard day in the office.

Photo taken in 1968 and submitted by the Editor

OLD WEAPONS CACHE DISCOVERED AT SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION SITE

By: *Sharona Schwartz*

Construction workers preparing to build a new classroom at a school in northern Israel discovered a large underground weapons cache on Monday that included 50 decades-old guns and grenades described as having survived in pristine condition. The weapons found on Kibbutz Mesilot were among those hidden by fighters of the Haganah, the Jewish community's defense force when the area was under British rule before the 1948 War of Independence. Beit She'an Police Chief Superintendent Amos Shimoni told Ynet that the weapons were preserved so well in a large box that some appeared to be in practically new condition.



The decades-old weapons were discovered when construction workers began preparing the ground for a new classroom. During the years that preceded the 1948 war, kibbutz members hid guns and grenades near their homes to defend against attacks by Arab gunmen. Over the years, as the veterans have died one by one, none ever revealed where the weapons were stashed, Israel's Channel 10 reported. "It's simply amazing," local resident Mordechai Brown told Channel 10.



One neighbor said that there had been a rumor of a large storage box somewhere underground, but nobody could say where it was located. Ami Magen, also of Mesilot, said that neighbors knew there was a weapons storage box somewhere in the area, but nobody could pinpoint the exact location. "The people who hid the weapons are no longer alive, and they didn't tell anyone where the weapons were, even after the War of Independence and the establishment of the state," Magen told Channel 10, adding that the firearms had been wrapped in wax paper.



Similar 1940s weapons caches have been discovered in the past in Israel. Israel National News explained their background: "The caches were originally hidden by members of Jewish communities in pre-state days, who smuggled them into the country to defend themselves against Arabs, and later, to fight the Mandatory government's British troops." "The weapons were illegal, and were hidden away for use when fighting became imminent. In many areas, however, the weapons were never taken out of their hiding

places either because they weren't needed, or because they were forgotten," the news site added.

PHIL'S JEEP RESTORATION



Work has commenced on paint removal from differential using a wire wheel in preparation for new painting.

Below: Proudly displaying the new completed spring mount .



FEATURING THE FORD GPA

The **Ford GPA 'Seep'** (from **Seagoing Jeep**), was an amphibious version of the WWII Ford GPW Jeep. Unlike the jeep, the seep was not a successful design being too slow and heavy on land and lacking sufficient seagoing abilities in open water. Similar design features were used in the larger and more successful DUKW amphibious truck.



History and development

After having commissioned Willys, Ford and Bantam to build the first 4,500 jeeps (1500 each) in March 1941, the US Motor Transport Board set up a project under the direction of the National Defence Research Committee (NDRC) to be designated "QMC-4 1/4 Ton Truck Light Amphibian". As the war in Europe progressed bridges were frequently destroyed in front of the advancing Allies and the requirement for an amphibious version of the jeep arose. Roderick Stephens Jr. of Sparkman & Stephens Inc. yacht designers was asked to design a shape for a 2700 lb (1,200 kg) amphibious jeep, in the same vein as his design for the DUKW six-wheel-drive amphibious truck. Not surprisingly Stephens' hull design looked like a miniature version of that of the DUKW, and just like it, the 'Seep' was going to have a screw propeller, driven by a power take-off, operating in a dedicated tunnel faired into the rear end bodywork, as well as a proper rudder.

The construction of the vehicle was developed in competition by Marmon-Herrington and Ford Motor Company. Marmon-Herrington specialised in all-wheel drive vehicles. The Marmon-Herrington prototype's hull formed an integral unibody structure, created by cutting shapes out of steel plate and welding those together,

much like the hull or chassis of an armoured vehicle. The Ford entry however used a sturdy chassis and internal frame, to which more or less regular automobile type sheet-steel was welded. This construction made the GPA some 400 lb (180 kg) lighter than its competitor. Also The GPA's design was based on the Willys MB and Ford GPW standard Jeeps as much as possible. When designing and building the GPA, Ford utilized many of exactly the same parts that the Ford GPW did. The GPA had an interior similar to that of the MB/GPW jeeps, although the driver's compartment had almost twice as many control levers: 2WD/4WD, hi-range/lo-range, capstan winch (on the bows), propeller deployment and rudder control. After a direct comparison of the two company's prototypes, Ford received a contract for production starting in 1942.



Service

In contrast to the DUKW the GPA (G=Government, P=80" wheelbase, A=Amphibious) did not perform well in the field. At some 1,600 kg (3,520 lbs) the production craft had become much heavier than the original 1,200 kg (2,640 lbs) specified in the design brief, but its volume had not been increased accordingly. As a consequence a low freeboard in the water meant that the Seep couldn't handle more than a light chop, and certainly couldn't take much cargo. The Seep's intended objective: to ferry soldiers to and from ships off-shore, to trundle up the beach and continue inland, was therefore not met. It is reported that many of the Jeeps that were used in battle sank if there were any significant waves at all.



On land the vehicle was too heavy and its body too unwieldy to be popular with the soldiers. Adding insult to injury, the GPA would frequently get stuck in shallow waters, where the regular Willys MB's water fording abilities allowed it to drive straight through (Pohl, 1998). Production was already halted in March 1943 after production of only 12,778 vehicles, due to financial quibbles between Ford and the US government, as well as bad reception of the vehicle in theatre. Although some sources (Pohl; Carlin, 1989) state that less than half of that number were ever completed, serial numbers of surviving specimens suggest that the 12,7XX figure is actually correct. In spite of participating successfully in the Sicily landings of September 1943, and performing reasonably well in inland river crossings, most GPA's were routed to Russia under the Lend-Lease program. GPAs were also used in action North Africa, Normandy France, Holland and the South Pacific. They were also used by the British, Canadians and Free French/Fighting French.

The Russians were sufficiently pleased with the GPA's ability to cross rivers and inland waters to keep developing it after the war. Starting out with the chassis of the GAZ-67B, prototypes were created that largely copied the Seep's layout and design, eventually leading to the GAZ 46 MAV, based on the chassis and mechanicals of the GAZ 69 4×4 jeep, to go into production as of 1952. Both the GAZ 69 and the amphibious GAZ 46 were exported to many communist countries.

By 1944 GPAs were being sold as surplus and were purchased by farmers, ranchers, adventurers and others. By the 1970s collectors had discovered them and started restoring them back to their original specifications. They appear at various military vehicle shows and the Normandy "D-Day" anniversaries in June.





Half-Safe and other conversions

After World War II, several adventurers converted surplus GPAs into world-travelling machines. The most famous one was during the 1950s when Australian Ben Carlin (1912–1981) sailed and drove a modified Seep, that he called "Half-Safe" on a journey around the world. A young American couple converted one which they called "Tortuga" and travelled from Alaska to the Southern tip of South America. They later converted another one which they called "Tortuga II" which they used in the South Pacific. A World War II British paratrooper veteran named Lionel Force purchased a GPA from Levy's Surplus in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, and called it "The Amphib." Among the many changes he grafted on a roof from a Dodge station wagon and lengthened the hull at the stern. He used the top halves of the doors, but knowing that he might be tied up alongside a dock, he added a round roof hatch on the top. He planned to travel from Toronto to England via the USA, Mexico, Guatemala, Panama, South America including Brazil, Africa, the Middle East, Greece and up to England. He got as far as Panama but turned back when he learned that the freighter upon which he intended to ship "The Amphib" from Brazil to Africa had been taken out of service.



Manufacturer:	Ford
Production:	12,778 (1942–1943)
Assembly:	United States
Class:	Amphibious military utility vehicle
Layout:	front-engine RWD / 4×4
Platform:	Ford GP
Engine:	4-cyl. side valves, 134 cu.in (2,199 cc), 60 hp
Transmission:	3-speed+2-speed transfer case; low range engages FWD
PTO:	propellor drive
Wheelbase:	84 inch / 213 cm
Length:	182 inch / 462 cm
Width	64 inch / 163 cm
Height	69 inch / 175 cm; 5 inch reducible
Curb Weight:	1,110 kg; (GWV 1,610 kg)



ITEMS FOR SALE

For Sale 1942 Ford Jeep

This vehicle has had all new brakes.

The head has been removed and machined.

The vehicle has been converted to Right Drive.

The indicators has been placed into the Blackout lights also all lights have been checked and fixed.

The vehicle has also had the latest fuses added for ease of replacement and isolated switch has been added for more protection.

Tyres are near new and a Canvas covers has been made to cover the vehicle when hood and windscreen have been folded down.



The vehicle drives really well for its age. On club Rego non transferable.

Price: \$20,000 ONO - Contact: 0405 203 044

ITEMS FOR SALE

MEMBERS WISHING TO SELL ANY ITEMS ARE REQUESTED TO FORWARD ALL DETAILS OF ITEMS FOR SALE AND INCLUDE A PHOTOGRAPH, TO THE EDITOR. Tony VAN RHODA. email: gumbrae@acenet.net.au - or by Post to: A L Van Rhoda 8 Sullivan Road Strathalbyn SA 5255.

FOR SALE

Original Brass Fire Extinguisher.
Ready for restoration. \$60.00
Contact. Tony Van Rhoda.
Ph: 08 8536 2627—0409 833 879 .



FOR SALE

Brand New MB or GPW Jeep rear seat
canvas backrest. Priced to sell. \$85.00
Contact. Tony Van Rhoda
Ph: 08 8536 2627—0409 833 879.



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AN INVITATION TO THE WVCG

The Centenary of WW1 is upon us. Re-enact SA invites:

The Wartime Conservation Vehicle Group

To help us commemorate the first year, 1914, by helping us create a 'time line' of South Australia's earlier history that leads up to the First World War.

From this foundation, it is hoped you can attend again to the remaining years through to 1918 (2015, 2016, 2017 & 2018). We are hoping to have represented the 1880's through to 1945 with vehicles, artillery and historical displays with the special focus on WW1.

WHEN: 20th & 21st September 2014 (Set up 19 September).

This date was significant in that all AIF formations raised in South Australia to answer the call, joined forces and marched through the streets of Adelaide.

WHERE: Morphettville Racecourse. This was where the 10th Battalion was raised, trained and camped prior to embarkation.

If you can attend please advise what level of interest there may be for forward planning reasons. We request a current copy of your Public Liability Insurance (PLI) sent to the below email prior to the event to ensure participation. Note: as it is a WW1 focus, parades and ceremonies will only involve WW1 elements. WW2 and other camps will be represented for the weekend to promote your club and our collective military history.

Chris Thompson. RSA WW1 Centenary Sub Committee

Mobile: 0403 175 353

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