



The 28 ft Magnum Tornado driven by Vincenzo Balestrieri and Don Pruett racing in the 1968 C-T-C race prior to her sinking

Magnum Tornado—the boat that came up from the cold

THE ONCE mighty Class One World Champion power boat, Magnum Tornado driven by Vincenzo Balestrieri and Don Pruett, which sank in Lyme Bay with a burst ballast tank during the 1968 Daily Express Cowes - Torquay - Cowes race, is now ready to tackle the same race again only this time as a Class II 'gentleman's' racing cruiser (or so the owner tells me).

South coast power boat enthusiast Ian Toll bought the boat for a reputedly small yet undisclosed figure from the owner, while she lay under water in the notorious Lyme Bay.

Considerable, yet unsuccessful, efforts went into trying to raise the boat, including an approach for the use of a salvage vessel, but all he got was the offer of a Royal Navy hunter killer mine sweeper at a total cost of £3,000 per day!

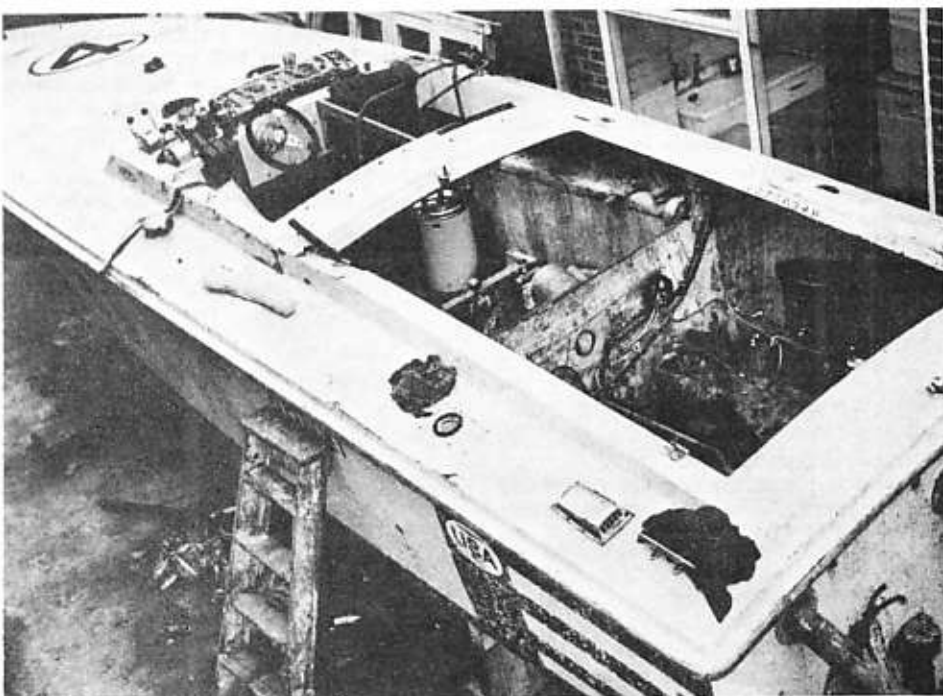
This being quite out of the question, Ian formed a small salvage team, engaged the services of a local diver, and set out from Brixham in appalling weather conditions in an effort to locate the craft.

Local coast guards had contributed information as to where the Magnum sank, but, with the help of Decca Lane Navigation, it was up to Ian and the diver to find the exact location of the vessel. Their endeavours were unsuccessful.

During the previous week the RN had suffered the unfortunate loss of a helicopter which crashed in the same hazardous stretch of water as Magnum, and while searching for it the RN salvage vessel HMS Reclaim located and raised the boat in storm force weather conditions. Just after breaking surface Tornado slipped out of her slings and sank back to a depth of 140 feet, but once again she was

stopped and lifted — this time successfully.

After several panic phone calls the same evening, Ian was eventually allowed to enter Portland dock yard with his salvage crew, Philip White, his brother-in-law, and Dennis Mansfield, of South Western Marine Factors, who was anxious to get his hands upon the first pair of Mercruiser 496 ci engines to be seen in this country.



The boat immediately after salvage from 140 ft of water after 13 weeks' submersion

Having worked 24 hours solid, Magnum Tornado was reduced to a pile of nuts, bolts and mechanical parts strewn around in various containers of preserving fluid awaiting transportation back to the Tolcraft Marine yard. There it was cleaned, examined and rebuilt together with the hull which was completely refitted to its original Class I glory.

Magnum Tornado was first relaunched in June 1969, having been worked upon continually by a team of four men at the Tolcraft yard from the time of her resurrection.

Her first race was to have been the Needles Trophy but a last minute hold-up for a vital part from the States caused an eleventh hour withdrawal.

So with sights firmly fixed on the Cowes - Torquay - Cowes race of that year, the boat was prepared, checked and rechecked.

Magnum was relaunched five days before the Cowes - Torquay - Cowes race for final tuning and preparation, and during one of her trial runs, with the last 500 revs still in hand, she reputedly attained a speed in excess of 68 mph.

The stage was set for Magnum Tornado's big come-back, but fate took yet another hand in the operation, and on a simple evening low-speed run prior to the race, as a thank you gesture to those people who had worked upon the boat, Ian drove her down Poole Harbour at around 25 knots and blew the starboard engine to pieces.

After nine months' solid work and preparation this was an absolute body blow to the Tolcraft racing team, who had devoted so much time to the project, let alone money. Last minute efforts by the Daily Express to borrow an engine from World Champion Don Aronow failed as these units were very rare and Aronow

needed to retain both of his to complete the world circuit.

Once again Magnum Tornado was returned to the Tolcraft yard where, out of sheer frustration and lack of further finance, she was sheeted down and left alone, after being suitably inhibited, for 18 months, while Ian tried to decide what her future should be.

One bright spring morning, whilst walking through the yard, Ian decided it was an absolute waste not to do something with the boat which had caused so much heartache but came to the conclusion that because power boat racing had become so expensive it would not be practical for him to refit Magnum with new racing engines and campaign her as a Class I contender.

So the boat was once again completely stripped down to the bare fibre - glass hull, and every original mechanical part sold - off, including the cockpit upholstery and deck fittings. The complete engine and the pile of broken parts were bought as spares for Miss Guernsey by Colin Bonns while the upholstery, engine controls, deck fittings etc, went to a man in Devon who was fitting out a Tremlett hull for offshore racing.

Having now 'cleared decks' for action, Ian's shipwrights made the first cuts into the original deck whilst Ian was designing a new cruiser superstructure to fit the hull for its future life as a Class II race cruiser.

Once again the midnight oil was being burnt in the Tolcraft yard, who were constructing a completely new deck and installing all new equipment, including a pair of Mercruiser 250 ci stern drive petrol engines, which had been re - tuned by Tolcraft to give a theoretical one brake horse power per cubic inch.

This was achieved by a change of compression ratio, camshaft valve train assembly, carburation exhaust and other modifications - not least of which were Cosworth polished heads.

The total transformation took considerably longer than was originally thought, as one problem after another was overcome. Eventually Magnum Tornado was relaunched yet again in June 1973 but was unable to reach her full potential owing to the difficulties in obtaining the correct propellers.

In the meantime, the Daily Express changed the eligibility of the cruiser rules and undaunted, Ian once again carried out drastic surgery to his newly completed craft in order to increase the cabin volume.

This included the removal of the fore - end of the new deck, reduction in the size of the fibre glass ballast tank and the removal and reinstallation of the entire cabin sole and keel section. The end result was a 'gentleman's power boat' to use Ian's phraseology, fitted out with wall to wall carpet, eight - track stereo, dinette, double berth with children's berth forward, separate wc, separate galley unit.

The cabin is trimmed in beige and tangerine upholstery with a gold deep pile carpet, pressurised water system, tinted



The extensively fitted - out interior

cabin windows and forehatch and sufficient head room to comply with the new race rules.

The new large cockpit is trimmed in tangerine and black and fitted with large sunbathing area on top of the gull - wing engine hatches.

Her full specification is enormous, having been built almost regardless of time and money by dedicated enthusiasts who wanted the best.

A very brief list of the fittings include variable engine speed safety regulators, two separate fuel systems with separate filters, electrical and mechanical fuel pumps, solid steel engine mounts, power

trim, trim tabs, water ballast tank, navigator and steering compass, not to forget the radio telephone and louvred aft deck for engine ventilation.

Ian feels that this craft is now one of the most comprehensively fitted race cruisers available, with an extremely good chance of success in the new cabin category of the Cowes - Torquay - Cowes race, as she would be one of the very few petrol powered craft competing.

She would be equally at home marina - hopping when fitted with the exhaust moderators to keep the noise at a respectable level.



The newly fitted - out Class II C Magnum Tornado