

GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

76/55

MALTESE IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT

CONFIDENTIAL

SUBJECT:

Complaint regarding ill-treatment
of Naval Ratings by Malta
Police at Customs House on 28.9.55

FC0141/10754

Departmental
Reference Number

Former Papers

Subsequent Papers

47/54 - Act of Treachery
by P. S. C. against
Schweizer

4/55 - Case of Maria Martin

37/54 - Communist
incidents in
Valletta

17th October, 1955.

Malta No. A/82/22.

Your Excellency,

I have the honour to forward to you herewith a copy of a letter (No. 46/1/465 of 14th October 1955) from the Commanding Officer, H.M.S. DARING, containing an allegation by one of his ship's company of ill-treatment by the Maltese Police.

The allegations are supported only by medical evidence as to the injuries received by the complainant and their likely cause.

I would invite your attention particularly to injuries 2 and 3 which the Medical Officer considers to have been caused by a blunt instrument. These injuries were to the head and if as seems likely they were caused by a truncheon, then this is a highly improper use of this weapon.

I understand that the matters represented in my letter of 3rd October, concerning officers and men from H.M.S. OWEN, will be discussed at the next meeting of the Malta Defence Committee, and it may be convenient to discuss this later complaint at the same time.

Telegraphist Ash is being charged in the Civil Courts with tampering with the car and causing wilful damage (estimated at £2. 15. 0) to it, and with attacking and resisting the Police Constable while in the execution of his lawful duty.

I have the honour to be

Your Excellency's obedient servant,

W. G. Britain

REAR ADMIRAL.

His Excellency the Governor,
The Palace,
Valletta.

Enclosure:

Copy of the Commanding Officer, H.M.S. DARING's
No. 46/1/465 dated 14th October 1955.

*Police ref
6015/55. Vallette Dist
12/10/55.
Legal representation*

H.M.S. DARING,
At Malta.

14th October, 1955.

No. 46/1/465.

THE FLAG OFFICER, MALTA.

(Copy to :

The Flag Officer Second -in- Command,
Mediterranean.)

ASH, A.A.B., D/SBX 864778, TELEGRAPHIST.

The above named rating has stated a complaint to me concerning alleged ill treatment by the Maltese Police, on Saturday 8th October, 1955. A statement of the facts as represented to me by Ash is attached.

2. The substance of Ash's complaint, which I have no cause to doubt, is that having been informed by a Police Constable that he was under arrest, without any provocation or attempt at resisting arrest on his own behalf, he was unnecessarily and severely assaulted. The extent of the injuries received by Ash are shown in the enclosed report by my Medical Officer.

3. Ash states that he had been drinking ashore, but not to excess, and this statement is borne out by one of my senior ratings who saw him between midnight and 0100 on 8th October, 1955.

4. Ash realised that he had no right to sound the horn of the parked motor vehicle, but his action in doing so did not in any way whatsoever justify the manner in which he was assaulted by the Police.

5. Ash was eventually escorted from Police Headquarters by the Royal Naval Patrol, and returned onboard DARING. He has now been served with a summons by the Civil Authorities.

6. As required by Mediterranean Standing Order 775 I warned my Ship's Company on arrival at Malta to avoid all incidents with the Maltese Police and to respect their authority ashore.

7. Although at present there does not appear to be any indication of a concerted effort by my Ship's Company against the Maltese Police, I do feel that their reactions to a possible future case of this nature might be unfavourable.

OFFICE OF FLAG OFFICE.

15 OCT 1955 72.

MALTA

Sgd. D. H. R. BROMLEY

D.H.R. BROMLEY,
CAPTAIN.

ENCLOSURES:

1. Statement by Telegraphist ASH.
2. Report by Medical Officer.

STATEMENT OF COMPLAINT BY ASH, A.A.B., D/SSX 864778, TELEGRAPHIST.

After leaving the company of some friends in Valletta I set off in search of a dance hall. As far as I can remember it was in the early hours of the morning of Saturday 8th October, 1955. After walking for some considerable time I came across a fairly large building which I thought was a dance hall.

2. I rang the bell but received no reply, and was about to go away when I noticed a car parked outside the building. On the spur of the moment I sounded the car's horn in an attempt to attract attention from the building I thought was the dance hall.

3. Almost immediately I was accosted by a Police Constable who told me I was under arrest, and at the same time he beckoned to a car which was near by. The car approached us and two civilians got out. I was told to get into the car and was about to do so when I was struck from behind. As I turned to defend myself I was hit again and knocked into the car. After being hit again I lost consciousness and did not come to until I was in the Police Station.

4. When I could get to my feet I was taken in front of the Police Inspector and I immediately complained about the treatment I had received. I was told that I had resisted arrest. This was a lie. My face and hands were cleaned up before the Royal Naval Patrol arrived.

13th October, 1955.

Signed

A. ASH.

Enclosure No. 2 to DARING's letter No. 46/1/465 dated
14th October, 1955.

Sick Bay,
H.M.S. DARING.

ASH. Allen A. Tel. D/JX.864779

The above was examined by me on Saturday
8th October 1955, and is certified to have been suffering
from the following injuries:-

1. Concussion
2. Laceration and contusion on forehead.
3. ditto on back of head.
4. Severe bruising of left elbow.
5. Black eye.
6. Abrasions and contusions of both lower limbs.
7. Contusion of Upper lip.

It is my opinion that these injuries are
compatible with having been caused by repeated blows with a
blunt instrument, and that injuries 2; 3; and 4, are unlikely
to have been produced in any other way.

(signed) S. D. Pagden

S. D. Pagden, M.B., B.S.,
Surgeon Lieutenant R.N.

3rd October, 1955.

Your Excellency,

I have the honour to bring to your notice the enclosed copy of a letter from the Commanding Officer of H.M.S. OWEN, forwarding inter alia statements by four of his officers, alleging excessive use of force by members of the Malta Police against certain ratings of H.M.S. OWEN.

It is necessary for me first to narrate events subsequent to the actual incident reported. The Commanding Officer reported verbally to me on Wednesday, 28th September the evidence of his officers and on my instructions my Naval Provost Marshal informed the office of the Commissioner of Police that these officers were representing a complaint against the Police for their treatment of the ratings. Subsequently when the written statements of the officers were received, the Naval Provost Marshal took them to the Commissioner of Police. Before reading the statements the Commissioner of Police stated that it was intended to charge the officers with obstructing the Police in the execution of their duties.

The officers appeared in court on this charge on Friday 30th September, and judgement was given on Saturday 1st October against three of them (Lieutenant Commander Vaughan, Lieutenant Neil and Surgeon Lieutenant Skeggs, fined £3, £2 and £1 respectively) the fourth (Commissioned Boatswain Miller) being acquitted.

The compilation of evidence against the four ratings on charges of attacking and resisting the Police has been completed. One rating (McLaren) was acquitted, and the Court finding regarding the other three accused has been sent to the Attorney General.

The three officers have given notice of appeal, and as H.M.S. OWEN sails for the Persian Gulf today, the appeal cannot be held until the ship returns to Malta next May. The ratings are remaining in Malta until their case has been completed.

My observations on all the foregoing are as follows :-

(i) The case against the three ratings is still sub judice, but whatever the facts of the incident upon which they are charged may be, it seems clear to me from the statements of the officers that excessive violence was used by the Police in arresting them. In my experience, the Malta Police do not seek for trouble in dealing with Naval ratings, and I do not therefore suggest that the ratings were initially blameless. It is the Police handling of the affair that causes me the deepest possible concern.

/(ii) So far as

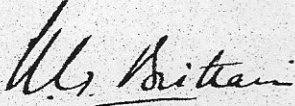
His Excellency the Governor,
The Palace,

*Seizure
of
? rating fines*

(ii) So far as the officers are concerned, I am left with the feeling that they would never have been charged had the Police not been made aware that they had made a complaint. The officers were not asked to give their names to the Police at the Police Station, and returned on board quite unaware that any charge was to be preferred against them.

I consider that the officers, having seen what they did, were in duty bound to go to the Police Station and to endeavour to assist their ratings. In the case of Surgeon Lieutenant Skeggs, he had a further duty, as a doctor, to render first aid.

(iii) I am informed that the Police prosecutor had available in court during the hearing of the case against the officers, their written statements which had been left with the Commissioner of Police. These statements were not of course produced in evidence but they must have been of material assistance to the Police in presenting their case.


REAR ADMIRAL.

Enclosures :

The Commanding Officer, H.M.S. OWEN's
No. 37/447 dated 28 September 1955, and enclosures.

H.M.S. OWEN,

at Malta.

No. 37/447

28th Sept. 1955.

COMPLAINT REGARDING ILL TREATMENT OF NAVAL RATINGS BY
MALTA POLICE AT CUSTOMS HOUSE ON 28th, SEPTEMBER, 1955.

Sir,

I have the honour to submit a complaint regarding the ill treatment of Naval Ratings from H.M.S. OWEN by Malta Police near the dghaisa landing at Customs House at approximately 0100A Wednesday 28th September, 1955.

2. Signed eye witness statements by four officers are enclosed, which relate the events subsequent to the initial incident.

3. Signed statements from the four ratings concerned are also enclosed. There are, however, no witnesses to corroborate the initial incident which made the police intervene.

As far as I have been able to ascertain by investigation, the initial incident consisted of M.E. (1) McLaren going up to horse of the gharry in which the four ratings had been travelling. He then took away or attempted to remove part of the decorative harness. The gharry driver shouted at him and Leading Seaman Skien said, "Give it back". The portion of harness was given back and the police intervention then started with considerable ferocity.

4. The following remarks regarding the characters of the four ratings involved are submitted:-

Leading Seaman Ronald SKIEN C/JX 371712.

A first class leading seaman of five years standing. Clean conduct sheet and his divisional records contain very good reports on him throughout his service. Joined OWEN in May 1955 and has shown himself to be a most efficient Leading Seaman and a good influence.

Leading Seaman Raymond Arthur MARTIN P/JX 371674.

A sound and steady going Leading Seaman of five years standing who behaves himself ashore.

He has served with me before in H.M.S. DAMPIER 1948-50, and joined OWEN in May 1955. I have always known him as being well behaved both ashore and on board.

Able Seaman Peter George CRAWLEY C/JX 904240.

A superior Able Seaman whose conduct has always been excellent.

He has served with me before in H.M.S. SHACKLETON 1953 - 54, and joined OWEN in June 1955. He has always had a clean conduct sheet.

M.E. (1) Donald Fleming McLAREN C/KX 907987.

He has served with me in OWEN since October 1954. He has a clean conduct sheet and I have always known him as a very sound M.E. (1) and well behaved both ashore and on board,

5. The exact charges against these ratings as to why they were being arrested have not been preferred, but notices to appear in court at a time and date to be decided later have been served as follows:-

Ldg. Sea. Skien)	For resisting arrest and attacking the police.
Ldg. Sea. Martin)	
A.B. Crawley)	
Lieut. Cdr. Vaughan)	For obstructing the police in the
Lieut. Neill)	lawful execution of their duty.
Mr. Miller, Cnd. Boatswain)	
M.E. (1) McLaren,)	

Unless the police can produce evidence that these ratings committed a nuisance or an offence more serious than tinkering with the harness of the horse, it would appear that the treatment received by Skien and Martin from the police was out of all proportion to the initial incident for which they were being arrested.

The officers also seem to have been unfairly charged as they did not appear on the scene until Martin and Skien were already under arrest in the police station.

The other two ratings entered the police station quite voluntarily later on.

6. I would also respectfully represent that should these officers and ratings be charged and punished by the Civil Power without further evidence of a more serious initial crime, the temper of OWEN's ship's company ashore in Malta might be adversely affected.

7. From the evidence that I have been able to obtain to date I do not consider that the officers violated Mediterranean Standing Order No. 775.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

J.S.N. PRYOR,

Commander, Royal Navy.

The Flag Officer, Malta.

JMK.

H.M.S. OWEN,
at Malta.

28th September, 1955.

Sir,

I have the honour to submit the following statement concerning an incident witnessed in the vicinity of Customs House landing stage at approximately 0040, 28th September, 1955.

"At the time of this incident, I was sitting in a dghaisa with Mr. E. MILLER, Commissioned Boatswain, Royal Navy, awaiting Lieutenant Commander H.L.F. VAUGHAN, Royal Navy and Lieutenant H.J. NEILL, Royal Navy, who were joining us to return to our ship, H.M.S. OWEN, having returned our hire car to its garage. Mr. MILLER and I heard shouts suggestive of a fight and within a few moments the brawl had come within our sight. There were cries of "leave him alone" and "Pincher, what are they doing to me" and the next thing, I saw a rating lying on the road with three Maltese police kicking him and striking him viscious blows with truncheons across the arms (which were protecting his head), the head and body. Mr. MILLER said "that is Leading Seaman SKLEN being beaten up". Knowing him to be one of our ship's company and having seen the ferocious manner in which he had been assaulted, I felt duty bound to see this rating in case any immediate treatment was necessary".

Having landed on the jetty, Mr. MILLER and I went straight to the nearby Police Station where the rating had been taken. I showed the duty Sergeant (No. 330) my identity card and said that I would like to see the rating detained in cells as I had witnessed the incident, and being the prisoner's medical officer, wished to see if any first aid treatment was necessary. This request was refused, on the grounds that no one might see the prisoner until the inspector had given permission. Shortly after this, the Naval Patrol arrived, and having stated the situation to the Petty Officer in charge, he arranged for me to see SKLEN.

SKLEN was in a highly hysterical state, being very concerned about the injuries that had been given to him. He had signs of multiple injuries, with marked bruising of several parts of the skull with associated bleeding, as well as severe bruising of his arms and chest. There was no evidence of any immediate emergency, but in view of the injuries to the skull I felt it advisable that the Medical Officer of the Guard should see him, to eliminate any possibility of a fractured skull.

Two policemen in the station had minor injuries - Sergeant No. 330 had a graze of the right elbow and a small cut of the upper lip. Another policeman had some minor abrasions of the face. The atmosphere in the Police Station was one of general excitement associated with unpleasant antagonism.

Continued/ After I had seen

After I had seen SKIEN, M. (E) 1 D.F. McLAREN, C/KX. 907987, entered the station to make enquiries as to what had happened to his friends. Sergeant 330 asked this man for his particulars - Lieutenant Commander VAUGHAN asked if there was any special reason for this, to which the Sergeant replied that he would be required as a witness.

Able Seaman P.C. Crawley, C/JX. 904240 also came into the station, to report the loss of his pay book and he also was held by the police.

At about 0115, the Inspector arrived. Leading Seaman R. Martin, P/JX. 371674, who was sitting on a bench at the entrance to the station had some verbal exchange with this officer who, in a rage, ended his words with "My Christ, I see you get what you ask for". Hearing this, I said to this officer, "I'd rather you did not speak to our ratings in that manner". In a further outburst of rage he said "You have no right to talk to me like that and have no right to be in here at all. You should get out". He later demanded my name and said, "You must remember, you are no longer a naval officer in here. When you come ashore, you are a mere Maltese citizen and I am the man with the power".

Having been advised by the patrol that no further good would come of talking to the Maltese police and that we should make a report to the Naval Provost Marshal, we left and returned to the ship.

At 0430 this morning, I was awakened in my cabin and told that SKIEN and MARTIN had returned on board. I went to the Sick Bay and examined them. Both ratings showed no evidence of being drunk. Leading Seaman SKIEN said that he had had a very cursory examination by a Maltese police doctor, and his hands had been bandaged. SKIEN said that the first blow on his head had been on his left temple. This laid him to the ground and he remembers no more till he found himself in the cell.

STATEMENT OF INJURIES:-

SKIEN.

(i) Skull -

3 haematomas left fronto-parietal region, the posterior of which was bleeding.

Severe bruising over left zygomatic arch.
Right temporal region - one small haematoma.
Right mid-parietal region - grazing.

(ii) Upper Limbs -

Right anterior shoulder, one severe kick.
Right lateral mid-arm, one severe kick.

Left elbow - very severe bruising with limitation of movements.
Left shoulder - deep marking of truncheon.
Severe bruising both hands and wrists.

(iii) Chest -

Deep truncheon marking below left axilla.
Deep truncheon marking over both scapulae.
Two truncheon markings below both scapulae.

General condition does not suggest a fractured skull, but an X-Ray has been arranged for confirmation. All those injuries as stated above are consistent with blows from truncheons and kicks. The general impression was one of severe assault.

MARTIN.

- (i) Teeth - This patient was struck in the mouth by a truncheon. His 21 - 1 have been displaced in a posterior direction which is almost proof positive of a fracture of the alveolar margin of the maxillary bone of the skull.
- (ii) Bruising and cut of upper lip.
- (iii) Markings of truncheon over right loin and right buttock.

This patient has been admitted to R.N. Hospital, BIGHI for surgical treatment.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

D. B. L. SKEGGS.

SURGEON LIEUTENANT, ROYAL NAVAL VOLUNTEER RESERVE.

28th September, 1955.

Sir,

I have the honour to submit the following statement concerning an incident I witnessed in the vicinity of Customs House Steps during the early of Wednesday 28th September, 1955.

"At about 0100 I was sitting in a dghaisa in the company of Surgeon Lieutenant D.B.L. SKEGGS, Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, at the steps of Customs House. We were awaiting the return of Lieutenant Commander H.L.P. VAUGHAN, Royal Navy, and Lieutenant H.J. NEILL, Royal Navy, when we heard shouting. We assumed that a fight was going on and ordered the dghaisaman to lay off which he did. The fighters then moved forward towards the water-front and we could see clearly that two ratings were being attacked by five policemen. The ratings were very quickly knocked down by the use of truncheons and while they lay the policemen continued to use their truncheons and kicked them. This attack was sickening and appeared to be unnecessary.

We told the dghaisaman to go alongside because Surgeon Lieutenant SKEGGS considered that the ratings would require medical attention. The dghaisaman refused but eventually landed us at Customs House steps. By this time the ratings had been carried into the Police Station but we gathered that they were from H.M.S. Owen from Able Seaman P.G. CRAWLEY C/JX 904240, who had been with them earlier and had arrived at the landing stage to catch a dghaisa back to the ship.

After meeting Lieutenant Commander Vaughan and Lieutenant Neill, we proceeded to the Police Station and upon entering heard a man screaming hysterically in a cell. Leading Seaman R. MARTIN P/JX 371674, was sitting down quietly on a bench just inside the door. His mouth appeared to be badly injured. The Maltese Police were in a very excited and provocative state generally. The Sergeant had a trickle of blood from the corner of his mouth and his fore-arm was scraped slightly. Constable No. 999 was the only other policeman who appeared to be injured or deshevelled. He had lost one of his shoulder numbers and had a small cut under his left eye.

Surgeon Lieutenant SKEGGS stated that he was the Medical Officer of H.M.S. OWEN and asked permission to examine the rating they had just arrested and if necessary render first aid. This was refused by the Sergeant. Lieutenant Commander VAUGHAN then asked to see the Duty Inspector and was also refused. However, at this time a Naval Patrol under an R.P.O. arrived. I had served with this Petty Officer before and after explaining what had happened to him, he arranged for the Inspector to be called and for Surgeon Lieutenant SKEGGS to examine the rating in the cell whom I then knew to be Leading Seaman R. SKIEN C/JX 571712.

Able Seaman CRAWLEY came into the station at about this time and informed me that he had lost his Pay Book. The R.P.O. of the patrol sent a Leading Patrolman with him to look for it and when he returned after an unsuccessful search was told by the Sergeant of Police that he would be required as a witness.

The Inspector came in next and my first knowledge of his presence was when he started excitedly shouting abuse and threatening to give

somebody what they had asked for. Lieutenant Commander VAUGHAN then asked to speak to him but his request was not granted. It was re-stated again at this stage that a medical officer was required to deal with Leading Seaman SKIEN and the police surgeon was called.

As little progress was being made, Lieutenant NEILL then rang up the Assistant Provost Marshall and the officers mentioned then left the station and returned to the ship, the time being 0215 on arrival onboard.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

E. Miller.

COMMISSIONED BOATSWAIN, ROYAL NAVY.

The Commanding Officer,
H.M.S. OWEN.

at Malta.

Sir,

I have the honour to make the following statement concerning an incident that I witnessed while in the vicinity of Customs House, Valetta at approximately 0040 A on 28th September, 1955.

I was walking down Crucifix Hill at the time, in the company of Lieutenant Commander H.L.F. Vaughan Royal Navy, also of H.M.S. OWEN. On approaching the bottom of the hill, I saw a group of five policemen gathered around two naval ratings. One of the ratings was lying on his side in the middle of the road. The second was being held in a crouching position by two policemen. A third naval rating was standing back from the group, watching. When I reached the bottom of the hill, I saw that three of the policemen were kicking the rating lying in the road and hitting him over the head, shoulders and arms with their truncheons. The rating was offering no opposition at the time, other than trying to ward off the blows with his arms. This state of affairs persisted while Lieutenant Commander Vaughan and I walked from the bottom of Crucifix Hill to the Dghaisa landing steps close to the police boat moorings. The five police then dragged the two ratings into the Police Station. The third rating went down to the Dghaisa Landing.

At that juncture, we met Surgeon Lieutenant D.B.L. Skeggs, R.N.V.R. and Mr. E. Millar, Commissioned Boatswain, R.N., both of H.M.S. OWEN, who had been waiting for Lieutenant Commander Vaughan and myself at the landing place. Surgeon Lieutenant Skeggs stated that he had witnessed the incident and wished to examine the ratings, whom he considered might have sustained serious injuries. The two ratings had been recognised as Leading Seaman R. Skien C/JX.371712 and Leading Seaman R. Martin P/JX. 371674, both of H.M.S. OWEN. The four of us went into the Police Station, where we were met by a police sergeant, No. 330, and several other policemen. They all appeared to be in an excited and truculent state. Surgeon Lieutenant Skeggs made his identity known and asked to be allowed to see Leading Seaman Skien, who was shut in a cell, with a view to rendering first aid and examining for serious injuries. This request was refused at first, but on arrival of the Naval Patrol at about 0050, he was allowed into the cell. After examining Skien, he asked that the Naval Medical Officer of the Guard might be sent for, as he considered Skien to be in need of medical attention. Skien appeared to be in a hysterical state as a result of his injuries. During this time, Leading Seaman Martin had been seated in the main part of the station, guarded by numerous policemen. He was also in a bad state, having had his front teeth battered in by a blow from a policeman's truncheon.

Lieutenant Commander Vaughan requested to see the duty Inspector of police, with a view to making a complaint about the manner in which the ratings had been treated. Before the arrival of the Inspector at about 0105, Leading Mechanic (E) D.F. McLaren C/IX.907987 and Able Seaman P.G. Crawley C/JX. 904240 came into the Police Station.

McLaran wished to enquire what was happening to his friends, while Able Seaman Crawley reported to the R.P.O. of the Patrol that he had lost his paybook. The Sergeant of Police No. 330, detained both ratings. He stated that they were required as witnesses.

As the Inspector came into the Police Station, Leading Seaman made some remark which I did not hear. The Inspector immediately broke into a long excited tirade, ending with the statement, "By Christ, I will give you what you ask for". He then went into an office with the sergeant having explained at length that the citizens of the United Kingdom were to be treated as "Mere Maltese" and that he was the "Power" around here.

During the absence of the Inspector and Sergeant, I tried to take the numbers of all the police present. The sergeant came out of the office and endeavoured to snatch the note pad I was using out of my hand, saying that I had no right to take their numbers.

I did in fact obtain the following numbers:-
330, 103, 315, 715, 708, 714, 999.

I noted that Nos. 330 and 999 had sustained slight injuries.

At about 0115, the R.P.O. of the Patrol telephoned to the Duty Naval Provost Marshal. I spoke to him on the telephone and he advised that all those who were not detained by the police should leave as soon as possible and to make statements to the Naval Authorities as soon as possible. During this telephone conversation, Mr. Miller had seen the Inspector in his office, to complain about the treatment of Leading Seaman Skien and Leading Seaman Martin.

On completion of this conversation, Lieutenant Commander Vaughan, Surgeon Lieutenant Skeggs, Mr. Miller and I left the Police Station, returning to the ship.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

H.J. Neill
Lieutenant, Royal Navy.

The Commanding Officer,
H.M.S. OWEN.

H.M.S. OWEN.
At Malta.

28th September, 1955.

Sir,

I have the honour to submit the following statement concerning an incident I witnessed in the vicinity of Customs House Landing Steps at approximately 0040 on 28th September, 1955.

"At the time in question I was proceeding down Crucifix Hill from Buckingham's Garage in the company of Lieutenant H. J. NEILL, Royal Navy, also of H.M.S. OWEN. As we reached the bottom of the hill I noticed a group of five policemen gathered round two ratings, one of whom was huddled on his side in the road, and the other was being held in a crouching position by two policemen. Upon drawing closer I observed that the three policemen gathered round the rating lying in the road were engaged in kicking him and striking him about the head with a truncheon. The rating was making no effort to defend himself but was attempting to protect his head with his arms. It would appear that this savage attack had been continued throughout the time it took for us to walk from the bottom of the hill to the scene near the Water Police Station.

Surgeon Lieutenant D.B.L. SKEGGS, Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve and Mr. E. MILLER, Commissioned Boatswain, Royal Navy, both of H.M.S. OWEN, were awaiting us in a dghaisa at the dghaisa landing place immediately opposite the scene of the incident. Upon approaching these officers I was informed that the rating being beaten up was Leading Seaman R. SKIEN, C/JX.371712 of H.M.S. OWEN. Surgeon Lieutenant SKEGGS who stated that he had witnessed the entire scene, considered that the rating had received injuries sufficient to warrant immediate medical attention. In the company of these three officers I entered the Water Police Station where I was met by Sergeant No. 330 and a number of other policemen all of whom were in an agitated, emotional and aggressive mood. The Sergeant had a small cut on his mouth and one other policeman had a small facial abrasion. I observed no other signs of physical hurt or disarray of uniform among the police present. Surgeon Lieutenant SKEGGS informed the Sergeant that the rating they had just arrested belonged to H.M.S. OWEN and as medical officer of that ship he desired to examine the rating and render first aid. This request was refused but subsequently after the arrival of the Naval Patrol he was allowed to see Leading Seaman SKIEN. As a result of his examination, Surgeon Lieutenant SKEGGS requested that the Medical Officer of the Guard be summoned to the rating who was in need of medical attention and in a near hysterical condition as a result of his treatment. This could not be arranged but eventually a Maltese police doctor arrived but did not examine Leading Seaman SKIEN whilst I was present in the station.

In addition, Leading Seaman R. MARTIN, P/JX 371674, the second rating observed with the police, was under arrest in the station. He appeared to have suffered injury to his mouth but was not confined in a cell and was sitting quietly on a bench in the passageway.

/Shortly.....

The Commanding Officer,

H.M.S. OWEN

Page 2.

Shortly after the arrival of the patrol M.(E) 1 D.F. McLAREN, C/KX 907987, of H.M.S. OWEN entered the police station to enquire after the other two ratings who he said he had accompanied down in a gharrey to the front. He was detained by the police.

A few minutes later Able Seaman P.G. CRAWLEY, C/JX 904240, of H.M.S. OWEN entered the police station and reported to the Naval Patrol that he had lost his cap and S. 43A which had been left in the gharrey in which he accompanied the other three ratings concerned. He was detained by the police.

In reply to my enquiry, Sergeant No. 330 stated that these ratings were being held as witnesses. Sergeant No. 330 then ordered me from the Police Station stating that I had no right to be there. I thereupon requested to see the duty inspector in order to lay a complaint against the sergeant and the policeman concerned in the incident in the roadway. This request was ignored.

At approximately 0105 the Duty Inspector arrived. As he entered the station Leading Seaman MARTIN made some remark which I was unable to hear. The Inspector answered this with a torrent of rapidly spoken English ending with the statement "My Christ, I see you get what you ask for".

I again repeated my request to see the Duty Inspector but without result and in view of his general demeanour I was advised by the duty Master-at-Arms to state my complaint through my Commanding Officer to the Naval Provost Marshall.

I thereupon left the Police Station, but having secured transport I returned to the station to collect the other three officers who I accompanied aboard H.M.S. OWEN".

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(H.L.F. VAUGHAN)
LIEUTENANT COMMANDER, ROYAL NAVY.

STATEMENT BY ABLE SEAMAN P. G. CRAWLEY, C/JX, 904240, H. M. S. OWEN.

I had come down to Customs House in a gharrey with Leading Seaman MARTIN, SKIEN and M(E) McLAREN. We got out of the gharrey level with the dghaisa landing place and I started walking over towards the dghaisas with Leading Seaman MARTIN. I heard Leading Seaman SKIEN cry out "Pincher, Pincher, help me". I turned round and I saw SKIEN standing up trying to fend off blows and kicks by several policemen, about five or six. SKIEN was knocked down and the Maltese police continued to kick and hit him with their truncheons. SKIEN was shouting "Stop it, stop it, don't hit me no more". They went on hitting him. MARTIN and I went to see if we could get the police to stop attacking SKIEN, and I was grabbed by two policemen, who tore my white flannel and knocked off my cap. I also lost my pay book. I did not even struggle but tried to reason with them and get them to stop beating up SKIEN. The police holding me let me go after a few minutes, when they had dragged off SKIEN and MARTIN. I went to try and get a boat, so that I could get back to the ship to report to the Officer of the Day. None of the dghaisas would take me, so I stood at the top of the steps with McLAREN until the Sergeant came out of the station and took McLAREN back with him. He told me that he did not want me. I wandered over to the station to see McLAREN and when the Naval Patrol arrived I went over to them and reported the loss of my pay book. I wanted to speak to the ship's officers who were in the Police Station, but the Patrol wouldn't let me, so I sat on the bench at the entrance of the Police Station to wait. I was sitting beside McLAREN and MARTIN. Some time after the Inspector had arrived, the Sergeant came over and said that he wanted me and not McLAREN. I did not give my name to the Sergeant so I suppose that the Patrol must have done this. The Patrol eventually took us all away in their van.

At no time was I charged with anything by the Maltese Police.

P. G. CRAWLEY.
ABLE SEAMAN.

I was in a Garry on the night of Tuesday 27th September 1955 with Leading Seaman SKEIN, Leading Seaman MARTIN and Able Seaman CROWLEY, proceeding to Custom House Steps to catch "dghaisa" back to the ship.

As I got out of the Garry, I went round to look at the horse and I held the tassel on the horses chest, in my hand.

The Garry driver shouted at me and I immediately gave the tassel back to the driver and then went along the jetty with Leading Seaman SKEIN. Then two Maltese policemen came along, pushed me aside and spoke to Leading Seaman SKEIN, and manhandled him. A number of Maltese policemen then came along, then I saw Leading Seaman MARTIN come to the assistance of Leading Seaman SKEIN. About ten policemen, then set about the two Leading Seamen who finished up on the deck. The policemen kept on kicking them and flourishing truncheons.

After this the police took the two Leading Seamen to the Police Station.

I then went down to Custom House Steps to get transport back to the ship.

A sergeant of police then got hold of me and took me back to the Police Station, and kept me until a Naval Patrol Van arrived.

An inspector of police asked me what happened previously and I told him that the Maltese Police had attacked and manhandled the two Leading Seamen.

The patrol van took me to the patrol headquarters for about quarter of an hour, and then took me in the patrol van to Custom House Steps, where I caught transport back to the ship.

STATEMENT OF LEADING SEAMAN R. MARTIN, P/JX. 371674, H.M.S. OWEN.

The first thing I know about the melee is that I was walking towards the jetty at Customs House to look for a boat, when I heard Leading Seaman SKIEN shouting out my name. I turned round to see Leading Seaman SKIEN lying on the ground being kicked and beaten with truncheons by the civil police. I went towards them with the intentions of getting Leading Seaman SKIEN out of it and onboard. Before I could get anywhere near him I was turned on by a policeman, and without even raising my hands, the policeman hit me in the mouth with his truncheon. I fell to the ground and remember being kicked several times in the back, before losing my senses. The next thing I remember, I was sitting on a stool in the Police Station.

R. A. MARTIN,
LEADING SEAMAN.

The above is a statement written by Leading Seaman MARTIN, in my presence, read out to him by me, and signed by him.

J. COOPER,
LIEUTENANT, ROYAL NAVY.

STATEMENT OF LEADING SEAMAN RONALD SKIEN, C/JX.371712, H.M.S. OWEN.

At approximately 0040 on the 28th September, 1955, I alighted, with the three other ratings concerned, from a gharrey outside of the Police Station at Customs House steps. Upon paying the driver I then started to walk over to the Landing place to catch a dghaisa back to H.M.S. OWEN. After taking a couple of paces the gharrey driver started to shout for the police saying that someone had stolen a part of his horse's bridle. I saw one of my party (I am not certain which now) holding the particular part and I said that he had better give it back to the driver, which he did. At this moment a Sergeant of the Malta police (No. 350) and one P.C. (No. 999) came over. I said to them "He has given it back to the driver so don't worry"; the Sergeant just pushed me out of the way and in doing so he ripped the front of my white flannel. I told him "Stop throwing your weight around" and he immediately struck me across the left side of the head with his truncheon. I fell to the ground semi-conscious. The two above mentioned policemen were then joined by another P.C. (No. 978).

I started to rise from the ground but was immediately seized by the policemen. In my dazed condition I struck out to defend myself against their attack and called to Leading Seaman MARTIN "Pincher, look what they are doing to me". I was quickly beaten to the ground and lost consciousness under their repeated blows and kicks. My next recollection was of finding myself in the police cell in a battered state. As I had no feeling in my arms and a rapidly swelling head I shouted and kicked the cell door to attract attention in order that I might receive medical aid.

Subsequently Surgeon Lieutenant SKEGGS of H.M.S. OWEN was allowed in to see me.

R. SKIEN.
LEADING SEAMAN.