

‘Recollections of an Able Seaman’

**-A record of the WWII experiences in the
Royal Navy of Enos ‘Eddie’ Fellows.**

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Dedication

To Enos

Thank you for being my best mate and surrogate father while being part of my family and for the advice, support and self-belief you instilled in me, during more than forty years of my life. Your standards for living that you upheld and passed onto me, and the stoic good humour you displayed for dealing with life's problems, were an enviable example to us all. I remember your patience, perseverance, reliability and trustworthiness because these were the characteristics I most admired in you- which you clearly illustrated in your wartime experiences- and I have tried to recount these as faithfully as possible.

I will always wear your gold signet ring that you left me, with pride.

Prologue

It all started early one spring, when I decided to ask my father in law if he would be prepared to tell me some of the more exceptional incidents he had experienced during the Second World War.

Enos (or Eddie, as he liked to be called by his shipmates, he told me) had been in the Royal Navy for almost the duration of the War, and I knew from several asides he mentioned, that there were certain experiences he had not wanted to discuss fully with his wife Peg or his daughter Sandra (my wife).

Eventually, it was agreed that as I had some time off work, he and I would sit in the garden with my tape recorder, and I would fire him with relevant questions so that he could try and reply with as many of his wartime reminiscences as possible.

It eventually ran to several days of these reminiscences, and I followed them up with specific queries on his replies in order to fill in the gaps where possible. Some of the records were on tape, some were hand-written by Enos, and others were typed out by me- based on Enos's recollections subsequent to our original discussions.

We both have attempted where possible, to check Enos's memories of what happened, against available records and of course linked them to Enos's own collected photographs and other memorabilia shown at end of text.

The timescale

This is from August 1939 until almost the end of the War.

Enos's experiences include various types of training on land in both England and Scotland, as well as on the seas around Britain and the Atlantic Ocean while serving primarily on HMS 'Carinthia' and HMS 'Tartar'.

It covers Royal Navy seaman service throughout the Mediterranean and the North and South Atlantic. Enos's seaman training and duties were on board the above warships and some submarines, and include being sunk in battle, commandeering a German vessel, and protecting merchant ships carrying supplies from USA to the Russian people on the 'Murmansk Run'.

His commando training was carried out in Scotland and England, and his commando service included working with 'Combined Operations' in North Africa and during the Sicily beachhead landings.

The Royal Navy *(photos 1& 4)*

Enos was registered in February 1939-for six months conscription, at the age of nineteen.

He received his calling-up papers on sixth November 1939, and reported to Butlins Skegness on seventh November 1939 - It had been renamed H.M.S. Royal Arthur by the Royal Navy - as a training centre.

He had three weeks with only part of his kit -‘bits of Navy uniform’. Then he was drafted to H.M.S. Drake at Devonport (Plymouth) where after one month’s kitting up and training, he was passed out as ‘Ordinary Seaman’. He was granted one week’s leave, then was back at Devonport for two week’s gun training and ‘square bashing’. On the twenty-third of January 1940 he was passed out as a gunner and the rest of his experiences are set out as follows....

H.M.S. Carinthia. *(photos 2, 3,5 and 6)*

Enos was with 129 others and they found themselves on draft to their first ship, the H.M.S. Carinthia. This had been a 21 thousand ton luxury liner in peacetime, which had been taken over by the Royal Navy A.M.C. Some of the Cunard crew, including the captain officers and chef, were still on board- just the swimming pools were closed!

Within two hours of embarking they were underway and two hours later they were heading out into the North Atlantic - on what he and his mates thought was a training trip - this turned out to be a fortnight's patrol in the North Atlantic on 'Contraband Control'.

This was the first time at sea for most of the H.O's (6). It turned out to be an experience he describes as "not frightening, but a taste of what a 'sailor's life' was to be - as if outside the war". For example, 'holystoning' (rubbing down) wooden decks in bare feet, in Arctic conditions. Their relief ship, H.M.S. Caledonia, later joined them to head home, which was docked on the River Clyde. There, their ship was fitted with two 4" guns and one 3" gun. The cabins and certain other parts of the ship were closed to R.N. seamen.

It was on the twenty eighth of February that the ship left the Clyde, to start its second patrol. This patrol was in thick fog, visibility nil, when H.M.S. Caledonia

rammed the Carinthia! Enos explains “...we knew she was about to relieve us- through radio contact- but visibility was nil and there was no radar in those days. We were called to‘action stations’, ‘abandon ship stations’ and ‘emergency stations’ - all at once! None of which we had been shown officially, by the merchant navy officers - as they were more concerned with having us ‘Rooky lads’ scrub decks and polish brasses. As I see it, they resented having to leave their Bermuda to New York Runs - mingling with Bing (Crosby), Alice Fay, Bob Hope and the other top film stars. We were ‘Rookies’ and they took advantage of us.”

Enos continues...“A hole as big as a bus was ripped into the Carinthia’s port side just above the waterline, which the merchant navy lads bunged up with ‘Kapok rafts’ (*see glossary 9*). Although our navy lookouts were blamed for negligence, no-one could have seen or avoided the collision.”

They then were escorted ‘home’ by a destroyer, but instead of entering the Clyde, they were diverted to Liverpool and put into dry dock (Cammell Lairds, Birkenhead). This was alongside the ill-fated sub. ‘Thettis’ which had been sunk on trials, with sixty-odd dockyard ‘mateys’ on board - this had happened just off Liverpool, in shallow water.

Enos was then sent on fourteen days survivors’ leave, which he spent at home in Newcastle upon Tyne..

Enos continues “...we were real sea-dogs by this time! On returning from leave, we were to spend two months in dock. The ship was patched up, refitted/ repainted and loaded with 40/60 thousand forty-

gallon empty oil drums “. (see comments further on). Train load after train load of these were hoisted aboard and stowed away never to be seen again. A good move, which you will no doubt agree to later! The navy crew were issued and kitted out with Arctic-type clothing -balaclavas, fur-gloves, fur-lined duffel coats. At last we were underway out of the dock and heading for the cold Arctic weather (as we thought.....) However, the morning watch lookouts were then informed that we were heading South..... Come daybreak, it was plain to see we were - looking into the rising sun – and that we were passing the Scilly Isles (as we were told.....). From then on, the weather got warmer. The ship then tied up at Gibraltar, when all seamen were issued with ‘tropical gear’- white shorts/ shirts/ hat-covers etc. and we were given two hours ashore in Gibraltar before getting underway again. The next port of call was Casablanca.” Enos continues... “the Cunard lads had said it was more like a ‘Pre-War Cruise’-and to us H.O. lads, it was great.”

About 10 days at Casablanca and back to sea. They did 14 days ‘Contraband Patrol’ off the Canary Islands, and headed back to Gib. (as they thought..... but once again, they were about to be proved wrong). Without wireless, news or any escort they spent their ‘on’ or ‘off watch’ time sunbathing. Temperatures were around 110 to 120 degrees Fahrenheit in the daytime, 90 degrees at night. It was too hot to sleep below decks, so they slept on the Boat and Promenade Decks.

After a few days steaming North, the temperature gradually dropped - this reminded them that there was a War on in England and their luxury holiday was over for the time being.

Enos says “we had, on many occasions stripped the guns down, just to pass away the time!”

It was now into their fourth day and it was much colder.

Enos had the ‘morning watch’ on the Bridge called ‘Port Lookout’. He describes the sea as “like a sheet of glass, with shoals of porpoises breaking the glass-like surface in a fantastic display of direct symmetry, zigzagging alongside. The porpoises stayed with us for the ‘forenoon watch’- then suddenly disappeared”.

Like the others not on watch, Enos turned in for the afternoon.

He continues ” to this day, I don’t know whether I jumped out, or was thrown out of my hammock, by the explosion. I won’t say I didn’t panic, because I did. I climbed five flights of the main staircase in black darkness, to the Boat Deck and Gun Position. I lifted a ‘Carley Raft’ by myself onto the guard rails, ready to drop over the side. The time was 4-oclock. We learned that we had been ‘tinfished’⁽²⁾ and the ship was sinking.”

‘Actions Stations’ was piped, and Carinthia’s guns went into action, off and on for six hours - manned by H.O’s entirely. The U-Boat time and time again, tried to see what damage he had done. On the ‘Carinthia’ they were told they had hit the U-Boat- but couldn’t get near to find out- as their engines had been put out

of action. By this time the boiler rooms, engine rooms and lower dining rooms were flooded. The sinking and flooding of the ship was, by now slowing down- thanks to the thousands of oil drums in the lower compartments- they could hear them floating and banging against the bulkheads. They raided the shop, two decks below in the black darkness and loaded their ‘Carley rafts’ (*see glossary 10*) with chocolates, cigarettes - and anything edible, just in case. By morning, the stern was almost awash - but the merchant navy skipper ordered them to put everything back - risking their lives unnecessarily. Then he ordered the Paymaster to pay them on the upper deck - which was by now forty-five degrees over from stem to stern. Incidentally, almost every day the merchant navy officers had ‘blasted’ the H.O’s (who were by now just as much sailors and gunners as their men were, if not more so.)

Enos continues “.....I always carried or had on, my lifejacket at sea. During the afternoon when we were engaged in firing at the ‘U-Boat’, an officer ordered me to give him my lifejacket, as his was below decks. He threatened to put me on a charge, when I refused (and told him where to go).” The ‘U-Boat’ was never seen again, so all they had to do was ‘wait and be ready’. About 2p.m. on the Thursday afternoon, a tug and a destroyer were sighted, although still a few miles away.

Enos states “....I’m sure the H.M.S. Wren’s crew must have heard us all cheer!” While the Wren’s lifeboats and dinghies ferried Carinthia’s survivors onboard, the tug hitched up to the Carinthia’s bows

and began towing her home. Although the sea was 'like glass' and not a ripple was to be seen- the tow-rope broke. A second attempt was made but that had to be abandoned. They circled and watched the 'not so old ship' as Enos says "...with lumps in our throats and tears in our eyes." Suddenly, without warning, she broke in two and slowly went down with three of her crew. We were told the position in the charts was about 130 miles west of Ireland and 300 miles from the Clyde."

The H.M.S.Wren's officers told them that they had been about to go on leave, when they had picked up the 'Carinthia's' S.O.S. on their wireless and turned about, in the direction of the 'Carinthia'. Enos said "...us survivors volunteered to paint the Wren for their crew in order to enable them to get more leave, as they had been promised."

They disembarked at Gourock Jetty just in time to hear the 6 o'clock news stating that '....the Carinthia has been torpedoed and sunk'. The Navy put a stop to this news soon after, as the next of kin had to be informed first.

Enos says "...we could just imagine the panic at our homes. We panicked to get our telegrams to home sent off! We were standing in just what we had managed to grab- I had an old pair of trousers and a T-shirt. We were served a slap-up meal at the Station Hotel and given V.I.P. treatment, after which we were put on a train for Plymouth. Some of us managed a quick wash at the station, but hadn't shaved for five days. The civilians on the train soon got to know us and treated us well."

Ten hours later, they pulled into Devonport Barracks Siding- where they had embarked only six months previously.

Once again, they were re-kitted up and sent on 14 days 'survivor's leave'.

Before they left the barracks they were told that three merchant navy stokers had been killed in the explosion when the 'Carinthia' had sunk.

23 January to 12 June 1940-Back to Devonport.

Enos continues "...we were 10 days back in the barracks. (Incidentally, Devonport Barracks were originally built to train and feed about 3000 men. I estimated 15000 were there at this time). Within four days there were six of us from the 'Carinthia' who volunteered for sea service 'we said, anywhere to be out of there' after all, we were sailors by now- not like these 'rookies' just joining!

We ended up as 'Admiralty Guard' at Bath....

Hotel Guard Duty in Bath for Admiralty staff

Enos continues.. "For 3 months we were guarding all the 'Gold Braid' of the British Navy, in hotels as big as Buckingham Palace. We each had four hours on duty and eight hours off every day, then 24 hours away from the hotel and were located in the basement of one of the hotels. We lived like Lords!

One officer - I can't remember his name, but he was a 'big noise' in the Admiralty - wished us 'good morning' every day, on his way out from the hotel and his wife brought us cakes and apples every morning.

Half of the Admiralty top staff was in the hotel and after a day or two, they got to know each of us by name and came to chat, asking "are you enjoying yourself here?" or "I hope no-one is doing anything you shouldn't" and "are you being well-looked after?"

We could go anywhere, when off-duty – except if the air-raid sirens went off. You then had to report back to whatever hotel you were allocated to guard.

That's when I became sick, and was sent to hospital for about 3 weeks. An air-raid was on and I had gone to the basement, into the air-raid shelter, in the hotel I was guarding. We had seats rigged between boilers, where I was allocated and next thing I knew I was in hospital!! The fumes off the boilers had got to me! Apparently, they had found me flaked out next to the boiler - gassed. Someone had shouted "where's Eddie?" started a search, and found me 'fast asleep', so they picked me up and took me to hospital. I woke up, but was 'well away' flaked out and the first thing I heard was one of the nurses saying "he needs a bath". I thought 'oh no, she's not going to bath me' and that's when I woke up properly! But they did bath me and I was in hospital for three weeks, then sent home on sick leave for another 14 days.

I lost my job and ended up in barracks again. I then volunteered along with a few of the ex-Carinthia

survivors who were still in barracks, for sea service-anywhere just to get out.”

Submarine training.

Enos explains...”all twelve of us were sent by train from Devonport to Scapa Flow, on a five day Submarine and Torpedo Course. We went aboard a sub. about 9 a.m. and by 11 a.m. we had submerged twice (just normal dives). You couldn’t feel any difference from the surface - until we were told to look through the periscope. In the afternoon we were warned, but didn’t know, what to expect of a crash dive. The order was given and the officer on the bridge (conning tower) and two ratings slid down the ladder, the last one getting soaked as he closed the hatch-from seawater coming in after him. Things that were loose (like our three o’clock tea) were scattered around the deck. When the second crash dive happened, we were ready (as we thought!). The order to ‘crash dive’ sounded and six of us were in the Torpedo Room. Within seconds, the powered bulkhead doors were closed. That put us ‘in the soup’- as our action station was in the Battery Room in the after end, and that is where you are supposed to be when at sea. At night, we slept on board a sub. supply ship in Scapa Flow - for sub. crews only. The next day, we did a course on ship electronics. I’m afraid I can’t remember how many miles of cable there were in a destroyer, but that was about it! Day number three was more like what we had volunteered for. Back on board the sub. we thought we were way out to sea - but again learned we had never passed the Boom Defence (that we learned was a tough wire

mesh stretched across the entrance of the Flow, to stop U-Boats from getting through.)

About 11 a.m. without warning, we crash-dived. Then again without warning, a destroyer dropped depth charges onto us (reduced explosive power we were relieved to hear - but not by much.) Two or three more depth charges went over during the afternoon watch and then we went back to the sub. depot ship.”

Anchor-Watch on a French ship

Enos explains...”these watches were intended to make sure captured vessels did not break their moorings (due to winds, tides etc.)in the river and cause a hazard to allied shipping. The French ship we were aboard was moored in the mouth of the River Dart near Devonport. A French submarine called the ‘Circuif’ came alongside a group of merchant ships we had on ‘anchor watch’. This was, we were told, the biggest submarine in the world, at that time and could catapult aircraft from its deck. The sub had escorted the merchant ships to where we had to keep watch over them. The French merchant ship we were on was eventually, after a week or so taken away by a tug, to the breaker’s yard. This was along with ten others over a week., when all of us were returned to Devonport barracks to await our next draft which was to be HMS’Tartar’...”

H.M.S. Tartar *(photos 7,8,9,10,11)*

By eight o'clock we were on the train bound for Devonport. On arrival we told to start draft proceedings - pass the M.O. check kit etc. About 24 of us- all strangers - were on draft to various ships on the Clyde. Myself and two others were to join H.M.S. Tartar- a tribal class destroyer built on the Tyne.

The date was Monday 6th September 1940.

By now I was A.B. Seaman and made ship's painter. With the hope of my transfer coming through, I would then have promotion to P.O. I was also made ship's postman. I collected mail daily and took it to the wardroom where it was censored, then taken ashore by me.

After a couple of days we slipped the buoy and made our way out to sea, joined by five other tribal class ships in line ahead." "Our next assignment was escorting two troop carriers to Canada - they had RAF Personnel under training - a nice quiet trip for a change (...as we thought!)

The sinking of the Bismark.

Enos relates..."wherever the King George V was, we were there, escorting her. K.G.V. was a Royal Navy Battleship, and the Tartar was a tribal class destroyer. Rough seas again and we were out, ready to meet a Russian convoy in the mid Atlantic. K.G.V. was there, after we had escorted her to mid Atlantic-but K.G.V. could not go on the convoy. However, we then got a call to change direction, in order to chase the German battleship 'Bismark'. Four days out into the Atlantic, we heard on radio that the H.M.S. Hood had been sunk by the Bismark, which was heading our way. American destroyers had taken over our job escorting the troop carriers. Tartar and H.M.S. Mashona (another tribal class destroyer), then joined up with H.M.S. King George V and H.M.S. Rodney, as well as aircraft carriers, cruisers and half a dozen other destroyers. An additional force just as big, was also in the chase. We were told the Hood had been sunk by a lucky shot - from 'Bismark'- that had hit one of their magazines. We couldn't let 'Jerry' get away with that!

With the K.G.V. we chased the 'Bismark for at least a week - in fact, a large part of the Home Fleet were chasing after the 'Bismark'- it was a disgrace, I think.

Swordfish aircraft from the Fleet Air Arm were sent out from the aircraft carriers but nothing was seen for a couple of days. Fog was against the Royal Navy-at least that was the excuse. At last, one aircraft

reported a sighting. Still a bit of fog, but the swordfish aircraft took off, carrying torpedoes. We steamed flat-out towards the Bismark. It looked impossible for the Bismark to survive - she had been hit two or three times by torpedoes and was reported to be on fire. It was incredible to think that hundreds of ships and aircraft were within range of sinking her - and we lost her.

The fog had lifted after a couple of days and after hundreds of miles searching the Atlantic - there she was, just 20 miles ahead!

Still burning from stem to stern, she opened fire as the King George V closed in. A few sixteen inch shells were exchanged - some direct hits from K.G.V - and still Bismark fought on. They were brave men.

At this stage a signal came through from Admiral Tovey (C in C of the Home Fleet) for Tartar to prepare for a high speed torpedo attack. We took off to do the torpedo run into her but the skipper said we unfortunately, hadn't the fuel to do it. (for a high speed run, our vessel used tons of fuel in order to do the attack and then get back). Captain Skipwith (our Captain) knew with regret, that he had to refuse that request, as we hadn't the fuel left.

He was a disappointed man, having to turn down an opportunity like that, but, being a great believer in safety for his ship and crew, it couldn't be carried out. We all knew, to do that, our oil fuel would have run out. The C. in C. (Admiral Tovey) of the Home Fleet was signalled, he understood and gave us the option whether to hang about, or return to base for another ship to take over.

Tartar and Mashona headed west towards Ireland at a very slow speed (about 10 knots) to conserve the little fuel we had, in order to get there. Twenty four hours after leaving the main force, we were called to ‘action stations’.

Enemy aircraft were heading our way. ‘Jerry’ planes came over in wave after wave, dropping six bombs at a time, for fifteen hours. Again we owed the skipper for saving the ship and crew, because of his cool calm way of dealing with the situation. He lay on his deckchair on the bridge and watched the bombs leaving the planes, then gave the order ‘hard to port’ or ‘starboard’ as the case became clear - he never left the chair for the duration. Bombs dropped either side of us, in some cases missing us by only a few feet - we were too busy firing our guns to worry about it. After a lull, giving us time to clear mountains of empty cartridges, and having a cuppa - back they came!

After about 10 hours, Mashona was hit by three of six bombs that had been dropped together. She listed rapidly to 45 degrees and she eventually sunk. We had to pick up her survivors as we were the only other ship there. The first two lads from the Mashona swam towards us and other men were seen stepping off into the water. Another brief lull, and we closed in on them with rope ladders and scramble nets, which were slung over our ship’s side. Some climbed aboard, but others had to be helped. Some were past helping and we had to push them away to one side, in order to reach for the next ones who were still alive and to get them aboard.

It was a grim task. We even sent grappling hooks down the side of the ship, which we hooked onto the

nets, then dragged the survivors aboard. Then one of our officers saw someone in trouble - on his 'last legs'- still trying to get to our ship, so he dived over the side and brought him aboard. Although we were trying to bring the lads from the Mashona in, we hadn't time to bring them all aboard as there had been about 320 men on board the Mashona. I don't know how many we pulled aboard - we didn't have time to count.

One of the men I brought aboard, I found out later, was the Mashona's painter, but he died later on board the Tartar. Then they 'piped' for me (I wondered at the time "what on earth do they want me for?"). So I went aft, where one of the officers said 'we picked up a Mashona survivor, the ship's painter, who later died, but we kept the key to his paint shop!' (I thought...'what good is that to me?'). The ship had by then 'turned turtle' and was sinking fast!! So I said at the time '...I'll take it as a souvenir if nothing else!' I kept it for years and eventually adapted it, to use on my locker back at my paintworks in Newcastle after the War.

We hoped to pick up the dead later, for identification purposes, but 'Jerry' came back, and we had to get underway. Some of those Mashona lads, dead alongside in the sea, must have got caught up in our screws at this time.

Back at 'action stations' Tartar's 'pom-pom' guns had hit a Heinkel Aircraft, we saw him go down - but nobody bothered to pick anyone up.(I think the bomber carried at least three crew.)

We looked around the spot where the Mashona lads were - she had turned completely over and just the

keel was showing. Anyway, we couldn't leave the Mashona as it was, so we had to sink her - as we couldn't leave her floating.

After an attempt to torpedo it failed, we had to sink it by gunfire - at point blank range.

A strange thing about firing the torpedo - it was funny how it happened - there was a heavy swell, the torpedo was fired directly for her, then the swell lifted the torpedo up and it went over the top of the Mashona. We could see this clearly, but we still couldn't believe it!! The skipper said we would try a second one, but this one missed (how, I do not know) so anyway that's how we ended up finishing her off with guns and that was the finish of the Mashona, sunk off the Irish coast.

'Jerry' planes resumed their attack for hours until dark. I think for the last couple of miles into Dock, only fumes from its oil tank kept Tartar's engines ticking over! We had survived over 15 hours non-stop bombing and we brought the Mashona survivors back home.

We had not been allowed to land in Ireland.

Incidentally, we found out that the U-Boat that sunk the Corinthia was based in Ireland. However, we were headed for Northern Ireland and we were told this was about 10/12 hours still to travel, some distance to go and so we had to go very slowly in order to conserve the little fuel we had left.

We just made it and we refuelled in a N. Ireland port, then continued to Gourock on the Clyde. We took the survivors off there and moved on to Scapa Flow.

It was while we were at our base in Scapa Flow that we heard that the Bismark had finally been sunk. We refuelled, stayed over several days and then went on a 'roving commission' (this meant the skipper could go wherever he thought we would be most useful). In fact, we just went out with 3 other ships including the Bedouin, another tribal class destroyer. We went out to Bear Island and blew up German wireless installations, as well as bringing back Quislings as prisoners on board. We also blew up other wireless installations in the region and this was done by the ship's own demolition lads. We also set fire to several small coalfields on these islands. They had dug into the mountains for coal, which was used by some of the German ships for fuel.

After getting rid of the prisoners - Quislings(8), at Scapa Flow - we stayed there for a week loading provisions as we were right on the bottom, for food by then. This was obtained from a 'mother ship' then we moored at Scapa Flow.

We then went to Spitzbergen, which was right up on the Arctic Circle. We had to get to Spitzbergen in thick fog and through ice floes 50 miles long and 15 miles wide, breaking through them night and day, they smashed over the ship's side. Tartar was bashed in a bit but stood up to the punishment (a present-day, welded ship would not have stood up). As Tartar was riveted on each plate, she was built to withstand conditions in that area- including the Murmansk run (she was built on the Tyne!) Then there was the jetty at Spitzbergen to contend with!

We were later told that ⁽¹⁰⁾ on 21/10/1941, HMS Hood and HMS Prince of Wales had left Scapa Flow for Iceland in order to intercept German battleships Bismark and Prinz Eugen at the Denmark Straits. The cruisers ‘Norfolk’ and ‘Suffolk’ were already there, shadowing the German ships. ‘Hood’ was an un-modernised ship and lead, whereas the ‘Prince of Wales’, which was new and untried, followed.

‘Hood’ was steaming straight-on towards the German ships initially, then turned in order to bring it’s own guns to bear, but was hit by an 8” shell from Prinz Eugen which hit ammunitions amidships then by a 12” shell from Bismark which hit the main armaments and broke the ‘Hood’ in two- it went down in seconds, taking over 1400 men including it’s captain (Vice Admiral Lancelot Holland) to their deaths .[11] ‘The Prince of Wales’ had been badly damaged but returned to base for repair.

Later that year (see ‘*The ultimate charter*’)-shadowed by HMS ‘Tartar’- the HMS ‘King George V’ carried Winston Churchill across the Atlantic to Newfoundland, where between 9-12 July 1941, he joined US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, for the Atlantic Charter Conference- which emerged as the ‘Grand Alliance’ against the Axis forces. Later again, HMS ‘Prince of Wales’ saw action in the Med.(Malta) and then steamed to the Far East in December when she was eventually sunk by Japanese bombers and torpedo planes near Singapore (on 10/12/41).”

Enos continues... “the next day we were back in Scapa Flow preparing for leave, along with survivors from the Mashona. I later had a well-earned rest, when I was able to spend time at home in Newcastle, during a fortnight’s leave.

The Tartar was in the Clyde having a boilers cleaned (it was of course, oil-powered)- when we were surprised to hear that ‘Tartar’ had been presented with a certificate.(see photo 7) This was for being the first ship since the start of the war, to reach the ten thousand miles seetime mark, and she was the first ship to receive this record of wartime service.”

(photo 7b)

Tartar- half leader.

Enos explains...“Scapa Flow was to be our base along with H.M.S. Somali, Bedouin & Zulu.(all Tribal class destroyers)

Back from leave, on the 10th September the skipper ordered us back to sea- he had volunteered to go to Norway. Within a few hours we were alone off Bergen and Stavanger, where we blasted the German shore installations. We nipped across there 2or3 times – this was rather than us stay at Scapa doing nothing. On one of my first runs on Tartar, we had been one of the last to leave Narvik in Norway when we took several ‘quislings’ (conspirators with Germany) away to Britain.

Then we stayed at the entrance of Scapa Flow for 2 days at a time, listening on Asdic for subs as well as on aircraft watch. We were outside the chain gate,

when a big tug opened the gateway because a Navy ship wanted to enter. The entrance was the width of 2 ships, and had 2 jetties. We slipped anchor and quietly made our way through the boom defence mentioned previously. Somali being the first on duty as boom defence patrol- which all in the flotilla had to take part in, we congratulated them as we passed.

Twenty to thirty miles out we did a U Boat patrol- the 'Asdics' searching the approaches to Scapa for U Boats- nothing was seen on this occasion. We learned that a depth charge which had reached a certain age- had to be scrapped. So, over the stern two or three went. These explosions were different to the ones that had been dropped on us, as they sounded louder when in the water. The lifeboat was lowered and the crew picked up as many stunned fish as they could. Fish suppers with chips were had by all the flotilla crews!

This happened sometimes twice a week. Now and again, two or three destroyers again slipped anchor and nipped over to Norway to bombard German Coastal Batteries or German shipping on the Fjords. Tartar's crew were sure our skipper (Captain Skipwith, R.N.) had volunteered for these trips- as had most of us- as we got sick of hanging around Scapa."

A trip to Murmansk & Archangel 1941 *(pictures 13,14 & 15)*

Enos explains...” Once again, Tartar was back at sea, this time escorting H.M.S. King George V, along with two other tribal destroyers, as a shadowing force to a convoy from U.S.A. to Russia. We were to meet them in mid-Atlantic and escort them to the Russian ports. On the 1st January 1941 we slipped anchor about noon, to call at Iceland *(see photo12)* to top up with fuel- we knew then that this was going to be a long trip.

Three days out and almost constantly ‘on watch’ or at ‘stand by’ or ‘action stations’- sleep was only to be snatched where and when we could. This was in the Gun Shield, under a tarpaulin or in our hammock fully clothed. Food was to be grabbed when you could. The chef had hot meals ready at all times, and supplied at regular intervals as well as ‘Dixies’ full of hot ‘Passors Key’ (5)-

I assumed this 3000 mile trip was going to be a trip to remember.

There were about a dozen merchant ships and we circled the convoy all the time. There was eventually a refuelling ship which met us in mid-Atlantic. They fixed a rope line to us, which we hauled in and attached to a fuel line (sometimes a double line to fill two tanks at the same time) this went on for 24 hours to fill one tank. On one occasion, we heard an Asdic

‘ping’ and we dropped a depth charge- but we didn’t see any survivors from a sub. Another Asdic ‘ping’ was heard right in the middle of the convoy. The merchant ships were ordered to disperse- but we never saw the enemy. Near Murmansk, enemy aircraft appeared, but there were too many destroyers, so they couldn’t cause any damage to the convoy. (We heard the enemy had a base in Spitzbergen). Some convoys went into Murmansk, ours went into Archangel. ‘Jerry’ planes then bombed and sank merchant ships- we learned a lesson from this- so the escort did not leave them next time. In Archangel harbour we were shown a merchant ship, but found it camouflaged. It had very big guns hidden under the covers- ready to fire when dropped.

We went ashore at Archangel for a brief leave. The Russians offered us some vodka they had hidden and some tea. There were Finnish prisoners of war working on the streets, clearing snow. Some had no boots- just cardboard tied on, and they wore rags. There were both women and men. I saw my first transport bus- it was a sleigh (double-decker) drawn by horses! The workers were clearing snow for this bus- there were maybe 10 passengers per deck. After 2 days, we refuelled from the shore jetty and loaded food. Leaving, we moved outside the harbour and waited for a different convoy to reform (same escort ships, but different merchant ships). We escorted them back to the Clyde and then returned to Scapa.”

Iceland *(see photo 12)*

Enos states..."On the 19th December 1941 the ship's fridge was full of turkeys, one for each mess, and Xmas 'puds' were stowed away. After these days at sea we were told we were on our way to Iceland. All was set for Xmas dinner in Iceland!

On the 24th December the Tartar began to roll- we were cutting through waves twenty feet high and waves twenty five feet high were lashing over the fo'c's'le - and A Gun was forever under water. We were called off A Gun and had to shelter as it was too dangerous out there. The turkeys, which had been taken out of the fridge to defrost, were now floating around the mess decks in a foot of dirty seawater along with clothing and sea boots!

Everything was loose and for Xmas dinner we opened tins of corned beef!

We dropped anchor in Seydisfjordur, Iceland (1) *(photo 12)(see note1.)*-which is a small village at the base of a mountain (which was covered in three feet of snow) thankfully, no Germans there.. Ashore we went shopping in a small village store, where silk stockings ('Made in England' but couldn't be got there) were bought up by the lads!

On the 28th December 1941 we received a signal to

‘proceed immediately to assist ‘H.M.S. Acatches’^(see note 2)-as she had struck a mine about 12 miles east of Iceland. Her fo’c’s’le was completely blown off- just the stern-end from the bridge was afloat and 40 of her crew were missing.

Tartar took her in tow and brought her back to England- the Tyne of all places, to North Shields! Myself, the only Geordie, was allowed ashore for eight hours- to be back on board by 5p.m. as the ship was to leave at 6p.m.”

Another Russian convoy

Enos relates...”We again shipped about noon. After about two hours we were well out to sea and land was just visible through a pair of binoculars. Although the time was only two o’clock in the afternoon, it was as dark as midnight. The first ‘duty watch’ was on deck and the gun crews were huddled up in the gunshield. We knew it was cold, but it was not until the first wave broke over the fo’c’s’le and landed on the gundeck that we realised just how cold it was. The wave landed as one solid lump of ice and smashed to pieces as it hit the deck. Other similar waves followed and within a few hours the ship was coated with ice. Great chunks hung dangerously from the masts and rigging. No-one, except those on watch were allowed on the upper decks, as it was so slippery. The guns were practically useless, the ice jamming both training and elevating gear. These had to be thawed out by steam pressure jets, twice a day. Three days passed and by this time

the temperature had dropped to 12 degrees below freezing.

On the sixth night, we were wakened by what we thought was gunfire, and could not believe it when we were told it was the sound of ice breaking. We were cutting our way through an ice-floe twelve miles wide and must have been at least a foot thick. On the following day, we cut through another ice-floe fifteen miles long. You could not see any water-it was 'like crossing a ploughed field in a trolley-bus!'

It was on the eighth night (I couldn't say, in fact if it was day or night, as we hadn't once seen daylight during this time)we only saw one hour's dusk every 24 hours, caused I think by the reflections of 'The Northern Lights' and I was beginning to feel like a cat! Anyway, on the eighth day.... 6 lights were sighted off the starboard bow. Within a few minutes we were called to 'action stations' and revved up to 30 knots, towards them. Time and time again we challenged them in vain, as a quarter hour then half an hour passed (seemed like years to us). By this time, lights were surrounding us and the captain tipped us off that we were in the middle of a convoy- but he didn't know if it was our own or the enemy's. However, a few ships did not worry us (as we had sunk several before) so guns were loaded and starshells were fired, lighting the ships up. Almost immediately one of the other ships 'flashed' that they were British.

This was lucky for them-as in another few seconds they could have been blown out of the water! Another

couple of days went by and once again we were called to ‘action stations’ -as this time a submarine had been sighted. After loading guns and standing –by for ‘ramming stations’ this again turned out to be a British vessel. On the eleventh day our destination was sighted and here we parted company with the convoy, they going to one part of the Russian fjord -us to another part.

A few hours later we were tied up alongside the jetty, topping-up with fuel oil, when we received a signal stating two of the convoy had been sunk- by a German submarine- just outside the anti-sub. boom.

On the twelfth day- still alongside the Russian jetty- I went ashore for a few hours.

It amazed me to see whole battalions of Russian soldiers speeding down the mountainsides on skis. In the distance I could hear the roar of guns (Russians told me these guns were at the ‘Russian Front’ said to be only 25 miles away).

I was struck by the way the Russians envied us as we had smart uniforms and fur coats, and also by the way they made us welcome in their homes. They themselves we were told, had to queue for a little food at the food centres, and yet seemed disappointed if you refused to join them for a cup of tea.

The local trolley-bus was an eight-seat sledge drawn along by reindeer! Another pathetic sight was the groups of Finnish prisoners-of-war who were working on the roads, clearing away snow and clad only in rags with sugar-sacks round their feet instead of boots. Although the temperature was now 23 degrees below freezing, at the time we didn’t seem to feel the

cold. The 'Northern Lights' and the snow created a wonderful effect, lighting the place up considerably for a few hours each day- enough to see to walk about.

Back with the convoy again it was on the following day that we set out on our return trip. The snow and ice had been chipped off the ship- as well as paint and broken rigging (caused by the weight of the ice) and it was repaired. The temperature on that day was 24 degrees below freezing.

Three days went by, during which time the whole ship's company (officers and men alike) were kept busy ensuring the guns and gun-decks were kept clear of ice. It was on this third day of sailing that I reported sick, as my face had got a touch of frost-bite. It wasn't much, just enough to show me just what frost-bite is like.

On the fourth sailing day, we picked up a signal stating that a 'U Boat Nest' was operating near our course. Had we been on our own, we would have intercepted it- but we had to take care of our convoy. We immediately altered course, revved up to 30knots and circled the convoy. All was well for an hour or so, then the Asdic picked up a 'ping'- just ahead of the convoy. We heard 'action stations' and 'prime depth charges'. I, along with other 'torpedo ratings' and following orders from the bridge, released 6 depth charges- 4 were over the stern, 1 to port and 1 to starboard. These catapulted from the mountings on the quarter deck.

We circled the position for half an hour looking for survivors (not that there would be in this freezing

water)- but no-one surfaced. What a sight it was seeing 6 depth charges going off in pairs seconds after each other. The Tartar shuddered from the explosions- so we doubted whether any U Boat would have survived.

Two nights later we had another U Boat scare. We picked up a reading from the Asdic and immediately proceeded to the position which was shown on the Asdic screen, and at the same time were called to 'action stations'.

To our amazement a U Boat surfaced dead-ahead of us- no depth charges needed this time! 'Stand-by for ramming stations', we heard and at an estimated 35 knots we headed straight in for the kill. They must have seen us as they immediately crash-dived and we felt the crunch- as we ripped apart the conning tower and the hull must have almost been cut in two- by Tartar's bow and keel plates.

We hung around the area for a considerable time, but no debris or survivors were to be found, although our skipper Commander Skipwith, said it had been a gamble, and it had paid off.

Two 'probable kills' on just one trip wasn't so bad. The chief engineer reported the damage to the Tartar. Keel plates were leaking badly, the bilges were flooded- but the pumps were keeping the water at an acceptable level.

The Asdic Ratings reported 'asdic dead' – 'not as dead as those Germans' -we all commented, and I felt revenged for the sinking of our previous ship, the Carinthia.

The convoy was met by U.S. Destroyers and escorted back across the Atlantic. They were relieving us so we

could return to our base at Scapa Flow- where Tartar was put into a floating dry dock.

There we got to know the extent of the damage- apart from plates gashed and twisted, our Asdic dome had been ripped off- that explained the ‘dead Asdic’. After 14 days leave per watch (totalling a month) Tartar was repaired, her boiler cleaned, a new Asdic dome fitted, and painted ready to return to sea.”

Capturing a German Weather&Wireless Ship/station

Enos relates...”On the 6th March 1941 we were sent on a ‘mystery trip’. Naval intelligence informed us that ‘Jerry’ was receiving weather reports from inside the Arctic Circle from a ship- Tartar had to find it. It was the most fascinating trip I had experienced.

The weather was perfect for a few days- no U Boats or enemy aircraft to be seen. We even topped up with fuel oil from a British tanker based in a Norwegian Fjord. It was breathtaking to see the sheer walls on both sides, hundreds of feet high. Ice and snow covered with every pastel colour you could imagine. This tanker had been there for five months, unknown to the Germans.

Two days after leaving the fjord, we cut through ice floes miles wide-some were covered with seals and seabirds. Suddenly without warning, we ran into dense fog. A screen was rigged at the peak of the fo’c’s’le (6) for ‘iceberg watch’. Each lookout was only allowed ten minutes at a time with only eyes

uncovered. Every seaman on board had to do a ten minute watch, including midshipmen. Ten minutes was more than enough of this punishment- but when an iceberg loomed ahead, you knew you weren't standing there for fun. It was exciting, but it was up to you the lookout, to get the message to the bridge quickly. Visibility was no more than 200 yards. The 'burg. itself helped- it seemed to shimmer light through the fog.

The icy-cold fog cut through the clothing I had on, and eyebrows and lashes just froze solid. Suddenly, again without warning the fog lifted and ahead 4/5 degrees to port, we could see what this trip had accomplished.

We went alongside -at 'action stations'- what was seen as a floating wireless station -which had no guns of any kind. A boarding party went aboard and rounded up the crew- about eight of them- true Germans, but friendly. The Naval Intelligence had been right about this -and to put us 'right on target' thousands of miles away, we thought was clever- at that time Radar was in it's infancy.

The skipper decided to blow up this ship, but got us to remove the prisoners' personal gear and any other equipment we could pick up (remove or dismantle). Our quarter deck was piled up with gear. I got one of the ship's clocks. Depth charges were placed on board and fuses set at 11a.m. That gave us half an hour to shove off.

On the way home the prisoners were well fed and looked after."

The Ultimate Charter

Enos remembers....”within two days back off leave, Tartar was once again at sea, to rendezvous with what was to be the biggest convoy to Russia. We took over from the U.S. escort in mid-Atlantic as usual, and headed north. Unknown to us, we were to rendezvous with the H.M.S. King George V –with Churchill on board. The K.G.V steamed up and down the ranks of merchant ships, crews cheering as K.G.V passed. -what an opportunity ‘Jerry’ missed!

Tartar was then ordered to leave the convoy and proceed with K.G.V. We took up our new position as leader of the destroyer escort- requested by Churchill, we presumed.

The Atlantic charter was held a few miles from Newfoundland, Churchill went aboard a U.S. ship to ‘pow-wow’ with Roosevelt. After about four hours, he was back on board K.G.V and we headed home.

We visited Iceland (Reykjavik) where Churchill transferred to Tartar for his journey to Scotia. We were to keep out of sight, unless on watch, but he told us to ‘carry on as usual’ and to treat him as ‘one of the lads’. Some of the lads were seen scrabbling for his ‘cigar dumps’ -and he knew it. He was often on the bridge, or visiting the gun-crews, on the two and a half day trip to Greenock on the Clyde.

We then left him and made our way back to Scapa Flow.”

The Lofoten Islands Raid (*photos 16a,16b*)

Enos remembers...’’Germany occupied nearly all of Norway by this time and HMS ‘Tartar’ was involved in the evacuation of Narvik. British Navy vessels took Norwegian volunteers to join the British Navy- with no opposition.’ Tartar’ was the last navy vessel to leave Narvik, and the Lofoten raid happened some months later.

A landing craft carrying 200 commandos was escorted by ‘Tartar’. The Germans were taken by surprise when ‘Tartar opened fire on their oil installations and the German ships in the harbour, which were loaded with glycerine (for use in manufacturing explosives and were to be transported to Germany). The commandos landed, and within half an hour, all factories were blown up or on fire.

Hundreds of German prisoners were taken aboard troopships and destroyer escorts (including ‘Tartar’ No British ships were sunk- or even damaged.’’

Chasing the Scharnhorst and Greisenau

Enos says...’’this was to be another trip I will never forget- and the last for the Tartar’s crew- that I knew.

The Scharnhorst-which was another ‘pocket battleship’, and sister ship to the Bismark- was

heading up the English Channel. Once again, the best part of the Home Fleet gave chase. The K.G.V, half a dozen cruisers and of course, the Tartar, along with other tribals as escort.

After a couple of days heading northeast, a storm such as I had never experienced before, had us 'head-on'. -A 60/80 m.p.h. gale-force wind was blowing.

Tartar cut through waves that I reckon were 70/80 feet high (to be seen to be believed) and at times we were on deck at the top of one looking down, then at the prow at the bottom looking up. This went on for a full day and night.

A and B gun crews (A on fo'c's'le and B - f'ard of the bridge) were not allowed up there. The after gun crews managed to get to their guns, by hanging onto a toggle rope and line, stretched from the mess deck to the quarter deck. At times the f'ard gun crews had to relieve them. It was a test of nerves- as you had to hang onto a toggle while waves ten feet high swept you off your feet, then you were left dangling from your toggle rope with nothing but water beneath and then the deck comes up to meet you. By the time the watch was over, you were dry, but getting back was worse- you were head-on into it.

Hanging on for grim death, you reached the mess, only to find it was awash and flooded with no chance of drying off. Trying to rest or sleep under these conditions was hopeless. Nevertheless it was exciting to know we had another of 'Jerry's pocket battleships' on the run.

The weather stayed as it was for days. It was now 12.30p.m. and I had just come off the morning watch

when it happened- we thought we had struck a mine. Tartar shook from stem to stern, the forward mess decks were flooded and waves were still coming in. There was no deck-head there to stop it- half inch steel plates that were once the fo'c's'le deck right from the bows to A deck guns were lifted and turned back 'like a milk tin lid'. Deck bolts and everything else was just ripped apart by the sea. Even the A Gun mounting had been moved by two inches. On the mess deck 4 inch round steel stanchions were bent 'like hairclips'.

It was unbelievable, but there it was, the fore part of the ship was filling with water. This was the North Atlantic, and although the sea was not frozen yet, it was very close to it. The whole of our mess deck was opened up and of course, the water was pouring in. They had to stop engines and reverse the whole ship then come stern-first instead of trying to plough into the waves. The skipper ordered watertight doors to be closed and at the same time signalled C in C, Admiral Tovey, that Tartar would have to pull out and return to base. The answer was that it was 'imperative that you stay with us'. Commander Skipwith rightly 'told him where to go' and gave us the instruction to make way for base. We were then nearly flooded and we continued stern-first and a few miles from Scapa we were met and escorted- not to the Tyne, as I had hoped- but ended up in dock on the Clyde.

There- after a few weeks and much to our sorrow- Tartar was 'paid off' (decommissioned). Commander Skipwith went into naval intelligence, and his crew

went back to Devonport- where we were split up one by one.

I myself , after a week in barracks volunteered ‘for anything’ to get out of that lot, and ended up in the ‘Commandos’. (We were told later that the Scharnhorst had been sunk by the fleet air arm.)”

Back to Devonport again- before signing up for ‘hazardous service’

The Commandos. *(photo 17,18)*
(‘Hazardous Service Training’)

Enos explains... “our uniform was army battle dress with a navy blue hat, ammunition pouches and webbing.*(see photo17)*

The ‘Beachmaster’ was Lt.Commander R.C. Richardson of the Navy- and he was respected by all. I carried a Tommy-gun/revolver/commando knife and I was ‘Beachmaster Bodyguard’, and went everywhere that he did, to protect him.

Each ‘Special Service Commando Brigade’ was divided into three troops. I was in 3-Commando, troop C (A.B & C trained together.)

We were kitted up at Devonport, then boarded a train (in the barracks, where all doors were locked) for Gourock in Scotland.(to the naval commando headquarters at H.M.S.Copra, on 21August 1942.)

From there, we crossed by ferry to H.M.S.

Armadillo- our commando camp, which was near Ardentinny and was where strenuous commando training began. This was to be 3-Commando’s base.

For weeks, day in day out, we were taken to the other side of the mountain, not too high but rough and hazardous countryside, then told to get back to camp the best way we could. We thought it was great then, but 4/5 months later we were still doing it in six feet snowdrifts, dumped up to the chest in deep snow!

In Scottish fjords, we were up to our waists when crossing icy streams. I always got wet on assault courses (as I was the smallest) and we landed on beaches from landing craft. We were then split into 3 divisions- I was in third C Division. One group was ashore and the other two were in L.C.A's invading the shore. We put signs with lights up on the beaches- Yellow for wheel-treaded vehicles, Red for tracked vehicles.

Then we trained at bringing up the vehicles onto the correct roads. We put wire mesh across beaches to a rail at back, installed sleepers for tracked vehicles (very heavy work, but we were trained for this, in case the engineers were not available).

One of my jobs was to swim underwater to 'recce' for rocks and other vehicle traps underwater- and mark them by putting up warning signs. When L.C.T's or L.C.A's came ashore we then allowed bren-carriers and similar trucks across and allocated them to the correct roads assigned. After food and ammunition-carrying craft were unloaded, we made piles at the back of the beach in order to keep the roads clear for the rest. For this we were timed in training for each activity, as the time had to be reduced for each exercise- which we did.

Then we went to an army camp at HMS Dundonald for extra demolition training. This involved felling

trees by using charges (including hand grenades) to break them up. We mainly used charges which looked like thick tape. This explosive was wrapped around the tree once or twice depending on the thickness of tree, then setting the fuses and firing- which cut the tree in two.

We then were given training in unarmed combat (use of knife etc.) I learned how to creep up on a sentry in woods- the technique was, that you walked backwards making some noise- it was a clever idea and it worked! Our sentry swore he could hear us walking forward, away from him. We learned how to kill quietly, with an arm round the throat and throttle them. Also, how to stab them in the back or lungs- under the rib-cage.

I learned how to drive a tank- in fact, anything from a motorbike to a Churchill tank! The reason for this was that we were to be able to take over if a driver died. It worked later in Sicily, as some of our lads had to take over on tanks and other vehicles in order to clear the way through the roads.

We went from Ardentinnny to Dartmoor next- to an old army camp where we had to tackle a Rough Assault Course. This included climbing ropes up a cliff-wall, then slinging the ropes over, then hand over fist down this rope on the other side. Then a net was laid, which was eighteen inches above the grass, which we had to crawl through with full equipment on. Then we climbed onto drainpipes for the water jump (I could never do this, as I always fell in!) Next came a sliding trolley you grabbed and slid down the wire over water (most of the lads, me included, fell in the water). Then for the cable you had to pull yourself

along by what was normally a steel cable, and it tore your hands to bits- I only just managed to complete this part.

In between, there was small arms training, using a variety of guns and firing at targets which had been set up. Firstly, a Tommy-gun fired from the hip and then using the sights (I was the best from the hip), then other firearms including a revolver & Lewis Gun.

We were shown signals using flags and Morse Code using lamps. I could do this, but was not quick enough. We had to signal from a tower or church to someone a half-mile away.

About Xmas 1942, 3-Commando moved to H.M.S. Dundonald, near Troon and there we had amphibious training- how to handle landing craft. We went on firing ranges using revolvers, rifles, Tommy guns, Lewis guns and each of us was issued with a weapon- me with a Tommy gun and a revolver. The Army took us on an assault course which we had to go over twice a day. Some of us went over every chance we got, just for fun.

Back at base H.M.S. Armadillo, we carried on training as before, but now with full packs- weapons, hand grenades and a commando knife (but no ammunition). For a couple of months, we made amphibious landings on beaches all around the Western Isles. I was appointed 'Beachmaster's Bodyguard' for Lt.Cmdr. Richardson. A sub lieutenant and two others were to step ashore and find an opening or road through the beachhead, and mark with a lamp facing the sea. Then the remainder of the Commandos were brought in to 'recce' the

beaches for obstacles, etc. The beachmaster then signalled the assault troops, the tank landing craft and other vehicles to come to their appointed lights which had been rigged up by the lads. These ‘mock landings’ went on day after day (and night), for weeks.

3 Commando were told to pack up their gear and board a ‘lighter’ with only an hour’s notice- without a hint of where we were going. We thought this could be ‘the real thing’, but the next day we found ourselves at Castle Howard in Yorkshire- which had been taken over by U.S. Forces as a marine base- to be there for a few weeks. We did mock landings like before- on the lake in the grounds- with the ‘Yanks’ as ‘assault troops’- with one exception, they used live ammunition! Some bullets were ricocheting around- no-one was hurt (I think) but it was a bit ‘dodgy’-as I remember this was from machine guns as well as rifles. Still, we were fit and we were told we could be making a landing in Norway, in conditions like this.”

The invasion of North Africa

Enos remembers...”On 18th October 1942, the British Commandos, including Commando troops C1,2 and 3 landed first. We were closely followed by the American Assault Troops.

We had arrived in North Africa on the vessel ‘Monarch of Bermuda’ at a place called Moda Zar Bir. We disembarked at dawn onto landing craft. They piped C-Commando to muster on the boat deck,

while it was 'black dark'. With our full kit, we lined up at the left side of the ship, transferred to landing craft and landed onshore.

The Germans (Rommel's troops) had been surprised by us and only one shot was fired- by one of our group (a mistake)- there was little or no opposition from the Axis forces, at that time.

We put signs up (as we were trained to) and brought in the U.S. Assault troops, while signalling the other vehicles to the correct roads. We then signalled for the heavy armaments- and like in Sicily Landings, the first American vehicle ashore was their 'Ice Cream & Coffee Pot' vehicle! It came in handy then, and I got a new taste for hot dogs and coffee- for the first time in my life!

We got the other armoured vehicles ashore- one snag however, we received a signal from an officer stating that a craft called a 'Maracaibo' was next. It was a normal ship that they had cut the bows away from and put ramps onto these bows. You should have seen the number of vehicles that came off that vessel- I'm not kidding you, I thought that half the Yankee Army must have been aboard it!!- there were tanks, bren gun carriers, heavy vehicles with big chains for clearing mines, etc, etc- we didn't know where they all came from, considering the size of the ship! They must have got a whole battalion in as well with all of their heavy equipment- it was a marvellous craft! So, we got all the troops and gear ashore, then more battalions arrived on L.C.A's.

We (the Commandos) were the only British to land there and we were instructed to stay on the beaches to

keep them clear. The rest of the Allied troops proceeded inland, eventually pushing back Rommel's troops towards the beaches, where they were sandwiched between two Allied forces.

We had been left on the beaches while landing craft carriers were sent back to England to bring more troops.

After about 3 weeks we went to Alexandria travelling by army trucks, then by train to Port Said. From there we travelled on a Dutch ship to Greenock, eventually transferring to Ardentenny Commando Camp for normal training."

The Sicily Landings *(see picture 19)*

Enos continues..."this time we travelled by train from Ardentenny to Liverpool, then embarked on an L.C.A./troop carrier with 1000 troops with us on the ship as well as landing craft.

We headed south- once again crossing the Bay of Biscay-calling at Casablanca for a couple of days- but no-one was allowed ashore. After steaming west for a couple of days, we turned about and entered the Mediterranean at Gibraltar. We linked up with 20-odd big troop carriers- there must have been over 1000 troops with us- onto Landing Craft Carriers and 20 plus other ships all headed for Sicily.

I was with C3 commandos. At dawn, we were piped on deck, and there was heavy gunfire from our big ships in the Med., all firing at Sicily.

Hundreds of gliders were coming in to land on the Sicily beaches- some miscalculated their landings and landed in the sea. We lined up into 3 sectors as before

and in we went into our landing craft -approximately 30 men- carrying small arms equipment and our original 6 groups were reformed into just 3 groups, from the 6 L.C.A.'s from our ship.

The next morning at about 4 a.m. three L.C.A.'s were lowered with a Beach master and 6 ratings in each.

The beach was about an hours travel at about 3knots (it seemed like three days!). We beached, going down the ramp- not knowing where we were or what to expect- it was a nightmare. However, there wasn't a shot fired at us or by us, then.

We reconnoitred the beaches, rigged up lamps, and signalled the troops in, as we had been trained to do.

A converted merchant ship beached and its bows opened up- when we were amazed to see what came out first! It was a 'mobile coffee bar'- which we put to one side for our break.

Then came the tanks/ Bren Carriers etc. The troops by then had met some 'Jerrys'. The Germans had opened up crossfire only on them- known as 'rough gunfire'^(note4) gliders came in (some landed in the sea), before the assault troops. We further recce'd the beaches and then signalled in the assault troops, while the last of the bombs were fired from our ships.

We could see others were being fired on by 'Jerrys'- but we just got crossfire. This was our first taste of real action!

We did not have time to put up any signs, due to 'rough gunfire'^(note4) and gliders were landing over our heads at the back of the beaches- some had to deal with opposition from the enemy. We then did a 'recce'^(note3) at the back of the beaches to ensure clear

pathways and then signalled the assault troops from the next assault craft.

I'll always remember what happened next, it was a Scottish regiment and they marched ashore in time to the bagpipes playing!! It was marvellous, I reckon.

'Jerry' knew we were there then-after we had gone ashore and signalled the assault troops in, a few groups at a time. Then the assault troops went ahead up the beaches, led by the piper (I was singing in my mind, to the tunes they were playing)- it really bucked everyone up!

After the assault troops, we led the heavy units in-from the L.C.A's, tanks, bren-gun carriers, army trucks and they all came ashore and went off on the various roads, that we had by then marked off.

We signalled, to ensure they kept to the correct roads and then they all went inland.

We could hear the sound of the guns, carrying over from the direction they all went -'Jerry' was firing at them, continuously.

All our sector was British controlled and by that time it was daylight, enabling us to see the ships in the bay. There were L.C.A. carriers and troop ships, all of which had been unloaded ashore across our beaches.

Afterwards, things quietened down a bit. But our ships were still shelling the shore, L.C.A's were coming in and going out with troops and the injured. 'Jerry' planes came across and strafed the beaches with machine guns.

The Beach Commander at Sicily was Commander Norris- and it was daft really, what he said next. He came around and wanted us to clear up the beaches by picking rubbish up!

We had seen some 'Ities' which we took prisoner- we then told them to dig a hole in the sand and put armour plating on top- this was our 'air-raid shelter' for when 'Jerry' planes came over strafing with their machine-gun bullets. We then rounded up all our 'Itie' prisoners (2/300 approx. on our beach alone) and our troops built a compound to keep the prisoners in, while we took over and were told to guard them. They didn't take much guarding- a lot of 'women' I think! Later, the prisoners were taken away on board an L.C.A., and then transferred onto a troop ship. We were left on the beaches, with the food not sent on to the assault troops. Some gliders landed in the sea, and these lads were drowned- as they could not get out.

We went swimming during daylight- it was so clear that we could spin sixpenny coins out and then dive for them- you could see them clearly lying on the sea-bed more than 20 feet down. However, a week or so later, we saw floating dead bodies (some probably from crashed gliders) in the sea- that finished me with swimming there!

There were at least half-a-dozen gliders that went into the sea in our area-but we couldn't help them, as the German planes were coming over all the time, strafing the beaches, so we went under the shelter.

Some of our troops came back- they had commandeered a train from near where we had

landed and took men, trucks and even tanks right up to Northern Sicily. Later they had gone on that and it saved the invasion force a lot of time.

The Italians had given up straight away and some of the Germans were also being taken prisoner. These prisoners were brought back to us on the beaches.

The 'Jerrys' planes came a day later and dropped a couple of bombs near us.

A Sikh troop came ashore- they were manning the guns on the beaches as the rearguard, in case any 'Jerrys' or 'Ities' came in from the sea after us. They were on Bofors guns entrenched on the beaches. But 'Jerry' planes came over and had a direct hit on one of these guns, at the back of the beach. Phew- what a mess there was- it made me sick at the time, I'll tell you. Their own people (Sikhs) got their rifles and put them through whatever clothes they were still wearing, in order to carry them away to bury them near the beaches. It was a hell of a mess- there would have been about 8 men in this gun crew who had died, as well as 2/3 men carrying ammunition in from the ammo. dump nearby.

Then things quietened down and 'Jerry' planes had stopped coming over. But the beach commander came round ordering "tidy the beaches up, they look a disgrace"(the troops had brought hard tack biscuits, billy cans etc. and some had been left behind). He was just giving us something to do! Then he came towards me ordering "that man there" 'me?' " yes, you- pick up that shell". Like a daft

bugger, I went and picked it up.(It hadn't been fired but I didn't realise that until later.) Then he ordered " carry it as far as you can and put it on the seabed, and come back". I then thought that it must have been a live shell and that it could have exploded any minute, as it hadn't been fired. When I came back, I said to myself 'it's my lucky day!' Anyway one of the lads said "hey lad, you took a chance there!" I replied, 'Aye, but he gave me a direct order and I didn't know if it was live' (if I had realised at the time, I wouldn't have done it 'though). Anyway I did it, it might have exploded afterwards, I don't know, I just left it stuck in the sand- it might be there yet!!

Things were quiet then, sometimes 'Jerry' planes came over strafing beaches, but we went swimming, we lay on the beach sunbathing, eating from big baskets of black grapes that we had collected ourselves. There were vineyards all around the beaches but we didn't realise until later those vineyards were booby-trapped- we found out later, when the tanks came in with the big chains to explode the booby-traps!!

Anyway we were living the life of luxury eating grapes and food from army trucks full of rations on the beaches. We were there about three weeks- as they had forgotten about us- until our beach commander signalled H.Q. We said then "he would do that!" There had been nothing else for us to do then- all the ships had gone except for hospital ships. We assisted injured troops that returned from the fighting to these ships, and prisoners kept coming in. Things quietened down more after this, then more of

our troops came back, and L.C.A's took them away to the troop ships.

So, our beach commander signalled for a landing craft and eventually we went aboard an L.C. Tank (a flat-bottom L.C.A. to carry 3 or 4 tanks). We loaded our gear and all our sector climbed aboard, to go to Grand Harbour, Valletta, Malta- into a hospital for recuperation! It was good grub, nice beds and lots of nurses looking after us.

However, I had received a snake-bite on my arm. This happened after we had made our air-raid shelter at the back of the beach and there were big rocks where we had slept. This snake had apparently bitten me when I woke up and I had to go to an Army Field Dressing Station in Syracuse, which was across the beach in our sector.

As soon as the doctor saw my arm, he said "do you know you have been bitten by a snake?" My arm had come up 'like a pudding' and when he squeezed it, loads of 'stuff' came out of it. After he had finished, he left a hole 'like a small volcano' in my arm. He started putting lots of gauze in the hole (a big reel of gauze was used). He left it in and put my arm in a sling. When I came back to my unit, the photographers were taking cine photos of the beaches, but I made sure I didn't get my photo taken- for showing in a cinema back home! (I didn't want Peg to see the state I was in!) I had said to the Doc. "I suppose that's the end of my swimming in the sea?" he replied "Oh no, get in there, that's the best thing to get it to heal". The saltwater in fact, did it

good and he took the bandages off after three days or so-no further bother.”

Enos remembers... “Later, at the Malta hospital, we were well looked after. We travelled in these old buses they have (Leyland buses) but the drivers... well I was glad to get off! In fact, I thought I was in more danger on that bus, often turning corners on two wheels, than I was on the beaches! (To tell you the truth we said, ‘he was mad and the roads were bad!’).

We totalled about 40 commandos while we were at the hospital and we stayed nearly a fortnight in Malta. We were able to swim on lovely beaches every day. We were on the beaches for a week during this time, living like lords on holiday- sunbathing and regular American meals.

But then we had to pack our bags and board an L.C.A. to take us to a ship in the Grand Harbour, which took us to Port Said.(see photos 6a,b,c,d)

We then went by train to Alexandria, a transit camp where our kitbags and hammocks had been dumped and awaited passage home for a week.

This camp was next door to King Farouk’s Palace- here we spent another week’s ‘holiday’- sunbathing, swimming and boating- on a Lido built for Farouk’s palace staff.

At last, we were on our way home on board the H.M.S.Monarch of Bermuda- another luxury liner in peacetime. After 14 days leave we were back at H.M.S.Armadillo for more training, then more

snow, more icy cold soakings- still with the view that we might land in Norway next. We packed our bags etc. and one day without warning, we ended up in Dartmoor at an army camp, 20 miles from even the smallest village. It was three weeks of hazardous training, solid night and day, then an assault course which even as fit as we were, we shuddered at the thought of it. However after a week, all of 3Commando had it mastered. The Army that rigged it thought we couldn't do it!

I wish I had kept that fitness throughout my life.

From there we went back to our base in Scotland, before being demobbed.”

Enos's order for release from the Royal Navy was dated 5 December 1945, while he was based at HMS Copra, at Largs, Ayrshire, Scotland.

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Glossary

Enos Fellows *(see photo 20 etc.)*

- Born 06/02/1919 In Kirk Street, Byker, Newcastle upon Tyne

- Died 23/03/2003

- Married: 18/04/ 1942 to Margaret Westgarth (Banns read by L.MacManaway, Chaplain of HMS Tartar on 11,18 and 25/01/1942.)

- Only Child: 01/07/1946, Sandra (my wife)

‘Certificate of the Service of Enos Fellows’

- sets out the following record of training and service:-

Date of volunteering 5 June 1939

Commencement of time 6 November 1939

H.M.S. Royal Arthur- 6Nov. to 11Dec.1939

H.M.S. Drake- 12Dec.1939 to 16Feb. 1940

H.M.S. Carinthia- 17 Feb. to 7June 1940

H.M.S. Drake - 8June/6Sept to 17Dec.1940

H.M.S. Tartar - 18Dec.1940 to 31March 1941

Tyne(Tartar) - 1April 1941 to 1April 1942

Drake - 2April to 21August 1942

Quebec - 22 Aug. 1942 to 31 Aug. 1943

Cofta - 1Aug. 1943 to 5Dec. 1945 (released in class ‘A’)

N59 Order for release from Naval Service(Class A) was dated 5 Dec 1945 while based at HMS Copra, Largs, Ayrshire and signed for C.O. at HMS Westcliff.

Enos received a War Gratuity& Post War Credit of Ratings Wages of £71.07s.06d

Decorations given *(photo 22)*

Orders: 1939-45 Star, Atlantic Star, Africa Star, Italy Star, War Medal 1939-45; Clasp/emblems: Battle of Britain, Atlantic.

Note: Letter received in acknowledgement of Russian Convoy service, regarding the issue of Soviet Medal, issue of which unfortunately ceased before this letter was sent in 1987, from former USSR Embassy *(see picture 15)*.

Appendix

- (1) *Probably 'Seydisfjordur' on the East Iceland coast.*
- (2) *'tinfished' -means torpedoed by German U-Boat.....*
- (3) *'recce' - means reconnoitre, or check out an area.....*
- (4) *'rough gunfire' -means crossfire from one side across area covered.*
- (5) *'passors key' -a hot chocolate drink, with fat floating in it.*
- (6) *'fo'c's'le' - short for forecastle, at the front top of ship.*
- (7) *'H.O.'s- means hostilities only-(R.N. seamen like Enos.)*
- (8) *'quislings' – collaborators with Germany.*
- (9) *'kapok rafts' - buoyant filling used in many liferafts.*
- (10) *'carly rafts' - a form of invertible liferaft.*

References:

Website sources :

(1) www.history.navy.mil

(2) www.bbc.co.uk

(3) www.wikipedia.com

Timeline

Early 1940 - HMS Carinthia in Gibraltar & Casablanca,

East coast of Africa - South Africa –Durban, West Coast Africa, Suez.

6 June 1940- HMS Carinthia sunk by a torpedo.

July/August 1940 - Devonport barracks, Admiralty guard duty, Bath.

6 September 1940 - joined HMS Tartar.

Early 1941 - (Tartar) Evacuation of Narvik, Norway.

3 March 1941 - (Tartar) Vestfjord, the Lofoten landings, Spitzbergen, Bear Island.

1941 - (Tartar) Murmansk (4trips- Russian convoy escorts).

28 May 1941 - HMS Mashona sunk by Luftwaffe.

26/28 May 1941 - sinking of the Bismark.

18 October 1942 - (Commandos) Invasion of North Africa (with the Americans)

6 August 1943 - (Naval Commandos)

Siracusa, Sicily. 1948 - HMS Tartar broken up (launched 21/10/1937)

Photographs and Sketches(1-22)

1. Initial training at HMS Drake (Devonport)
2. Aboard HMS Carinthia
3. HMS Carinthia photo & report of sinking 4.6.1940
4. Devonport Barracks pass-outs 1940
5. A trip to Cape Town, South Africa 1940
6. Suez Canal and Port Said
7. H.M.S. Tartar -photo and steaming record.
8. As gunners on HMS Tartar
9. On leave from HMS Tartar 1941
10. Full crew of HMS Tartar 1940
11. Views of HMS Tartar, above deck.
12. Seydisfjordur, Iceland (base for HMS Tartar)
13. Russian Convoys sketch (Aug.1941-May 1945)
14. The Russian Convoys- 1941 and commemoration.
15. Enos's letter from USSR Embassy dated 28 May 1987
16. The Lofoten Raid (4 March 1941)
17. Commando training in Scotland
18. Royal Naval Commandos, C3 Group, Burnham on Crouch, Essex.
19. Sicily Landings sketch (July-August 1943)
20. Marriage 1942 and together 58 years later
21. Awards granted to Enos.

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Invitation to all readers from Biographer:

I hope you found this biography as interesting to read as I have in writing it.

If you would like to add some additional relevant information and/or constructive comments, please contact me at the Email address below:

g.brewis@btopenworld.com