

COVER PHOTOGRAPH

Photograph of Alf Hattersley taken late 1942, after completing signalman's training at HMS Impregnable, Plymouth. The note on the back of the original reads: "To Joan. With all my love. Alf xxxxx."

END PAGES

Recent family photographs, pictures at Alf and Joan's Golden Wedding, and photos of D-Day 50th Anniversary visit to Juno beach and Arromanches.



Combined Operations arm badge. The three armed services are represented by: an anchor (Royal Navy), a 'Tommy gun' (Army) and an eagle (Royal Air Force). Image taken of Alf's original cloth arm badge, which he wore (right hand side, lower sleeve) in WWII and kept as a memento.

NOTE 1

This account records recollections told to, and written by, Paul Hattersley (Alf's son) by his father Alfred Hattersley (service number 340306), over many years up to and including June 2012. This version has been read and edited by Alf.

Document prepared by Paul Hattersley, at home in Dalmeny, New South Wales, Australia.

This version dated 16 November 2012

NOTE 2

We should ever be thankful to all those who opposed the tyrannical and evil regimes of Germany, Italy and Japan during World War II.

We should not forget that this freedom was mainly achieved by the service men and women and political leaders of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the USA, Canada, India, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and other British Empire and Commonwealth countries and colonies. They gave us the opportunity for freedom of thought and speech which we should value and not take for granted. The people of the USSR also opposed the Axis powers, at great cost, after June 1941. Resistance and freedom fighters in occupied countries around the world also risked their lives for freedom, as did tens of thousands of volunteers from some countries, such as Eire which did not declare war against Germany, Italy and/or Japan in WWII.

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JOINING UP

In mid-1941 when I was eighteen, I received a letter telling me to attend a joint services registration office in Halifax. At the time, I was working as an accounts clerk for the Halifax Corporation Gas Company and living at home with my two older sisters (Eva and Irene) at 6 Crown Street, Boothtown, Halifax. My mother and father were living at Barrow-in-Furness. Because my father was an engineer by trade, he had been directed in late 1940 to work at Villers Armstrong shipbuilding dockyard in Barrow, working on submarine torpedo tubes. My father and mother were there until the end of the war.

I was asked at the interview which service I would prefer to join. I opted for the army because my older brother Eddie was already in the Royal Army Service Corps (transport lorries). He thought it would be a good idea if we were together during our service, and told me he would try to get me into the same regiment as him.

That was it for a while, then early in 1942 I received another letter telling me to report to a recruitment centre to actually join up. The centre was at a school somewhere in Halifax; I can't remember exactly where. I entered a long hall at the school. I was to sit for written tests and undergo medical examinations.

There were about forty of us. Chatting amongst ourselves, it seemed as if everyone had opted for the navy. I thought this was a little odd, as I had previously indicated a preference for the army, but I didn't say anything.

We were lined up and then marched into a large room for medical testing. We moved individually from one cubicle to another for each of the various tests. After the medicals we took written tests, sitting at separate desks. Testing was quite comprehensive: English and arithmetic tests, and general knowledge. Women's Royal Navy ratings (WRNs) handed out the papers, supervised the tests, and collected up the papers et cetera.

After the tests, I went up to one of the officers present. There were actually navy, air force and army officers in the hall. I explained that I had previously opted for the army. “Was this recruitment for the navy?” I enquired. “Yes”, he replied. ‘Hmmm . . . perhaps the navy’s a better option’, I thought to myself. “Could I change, then, and join the navy?” “Yes”, he replied. “Just continue with this process.”

Eventually, we were being called one by one into a room where a naval officer sat. I patiently waited my turn. As each young man came out, he went straight across the hall into another room where an army officer sat. Some indicated disappointment, indicating ‘no’ with their heads or screwing up their noses. They had been rejected for the navy, and were to join the army instead.

As the same thing happened time and time again, it was becoming obvious that I was going to be one of the last to be called. When only a few of us were left, it was my turn. To my surprise, the naval officer asked me: “Would you like to join the navy?” “Yes”, I said. “What would you like to be?” he asked next. I hadn’t thought about it, so he ran through a list of options: stoker, telegraphists, gunner, signalman, cook, ordinary seaman, etc. The only one of these that stuck in my mind was ‘signalman’. Certainly it promised to be much better than a stoker I thought. “Signalman”, I replied. “Yes alright”, the officer continued. “You have the qualifications for that. I’ll put you in for signalman.”

It turned out that only three or four of us had been selected for the navy; all the other young men that day went into the army. Who knows what their fate was. But this is how mine was determined during World War II, as a signalman in the Royal Navy.

TRAINING IN ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND

Devonport

I returned home and waited to hear when and where to report. After a week or two I got a letter, with a railway pass, telling me to go to Plymouth. A lot of us on the train that pulled

into Plymouth railway station were to join the navy. There were three or four lorries waiting. I boarded the one going to HMS Impregnable at Devonport, near Plymouth, where I was to start training.



Alf Hattersley, 11 April 1942, aged 19. Taken before being drafted.

HMS Impregnable was a training school for telegraphists, coders and signalmen. Every single day ‘signallers-to-be’ focussed on just one thing: signalling. We used to manoeuvre around the parade ground, each pretending to be ships signalling to each other. We practiced semaphore (flags) first and later took Morse code lessons and then Morse with Aldis lamps. We also did a little training as coders; just enough so that we understood what their job was. Coding was a system to communicate succinct radio messages between ships rapidly, for example sailing and navigation instructions, using a code comprising numbers and letters. Signallers also had to learn some radio basics.

At training I paired up with Ray Ponting, a Londoner and we became good friends while training. But we didn't keep in touch after leaving HMS Impregnable and I never saw him again. Although the training was intensive, only about 2–3% of us in Class 56 failed. Some basic seamanship was also taught, but not much really. Surprisingly, we had no weapons training, though I was later issued with a pistol and also manned a Vickers gun on a Motor Torpedo Boat in 1945.

I recall a couple of (now) amusing incidents at Impregnable. I had a dental appointment there once. It was just the once; four teeth filled in one session, without anaesthetic! The second incident was when a Petty Officer came into the classroom one day and asked for volunteers to give blood. Only about four hands went up. "Good!" he said, "100%!" — and then left. My training at Impregnable concluded and I received my signallers badge in November 1942. I was moved to HMS Drake (also in Devonport), in Nissan huts, waiting to be drafted. After a week or so, a voice over the intercom said: "Would Ordinary Seaman A. Hattersley report to the drafting office." I was issued with rail passes to travel to HMS Dundonald in Scotland, along with three others whom I already knew.

We comprised two signallers, a coder and a telegraphist. We packed our kit bags, little realising these were to be our companions throughout the war. All one's gear had to fit into the one kit bag, including the few meagre personal items one could fit in. We carried our kit bags with us, but our hammocks were transported separately.

Scotland

It was only when we arrived at HMS Dundonald that I discovered it was a Combined Operations (CO) camp. All kinds of CO groups trained there, not just communications. So there were commandos, landing craft crew, separate army signal sections etcetera as well as navy signallers, telegraphists and coders.

The four of us from Drake were to join a new RN Beach Signal Section (BSS) — BSS Number 6 (COBSS6). The Section comprised one officer (Lieutenant JC Morgan), two Petty Officers (one ‘visual’ and one ‘telegraphist’) and 33 ratings — 36 naval servicemen in all. It was here at Dundonald that I became good pals with Ray Priddle, another Bristol lad. We called him ‘Jimmy Priddle’, with reference to ‘jimmy riddle’!

I didn’t know it at the time, but our group was to stay more or less intact until we were disbanded after D-Day, nearly two years later in 1944. We were issued with army uniforms, including tin hats! The uniforms bore an RN arm flash to show we were really RN.



I am on the left, with my mate Ray Priddle (right), Glasgow, January 1943

The BS sections were specially trained to serve as beach-to-ship signals for amphibious assaults and landings. We trained around the Isle of Arran and Loch Fyne, in Argyll. One of our training exercises was to travel to the Clyde in Glasgow, then set sail for Loch Fyne. Here we would practice alighting from ships down rope nets into landing craft and undertake mock landings.

A landing craft assault complement for these exercises comprised about 30 personnel: one officer (army), assault troops of course, a military policeman, an army signalman, two RN

signalmen and two RN telegraphists. I remember that we had to teach the army signallers flags semaphore as this had not been part of their army signals training.

We would chug away in the landing craft to land on a beach, in the early hours of the morning and waist deep in wintry cold water! When the exercise was finished, we were instructed to find the main road and walk along it until an army lorry passed. If the lorry was full, we had to wait till the next one came along to take us back to an army camp in Glasgow (Pollokshaws). We did this two or three times as I recall.

We had to spend one night in a field because we couldn't get a lift. We sheltered in little hen huts; two of us to a hut. It was raining heavily and our hen house leaked. We shared groundsheets in order to keep dry. One groundsheet was put on the ground and the other we used to cover us both. Our legs were sticking out the door and, to add to the discomfort, the hens were pooping on us from their perches above!

Another amusing incident I remember was on the beach at Loch Fyne. One of the ratings put a tin of baked beans (in tomato sauce) onto a naked flame to heat it up for a meal. He didn't pierce the tin at the top — it exploded. So we all got a share!



Ray Priddle (left), a Londoner (nicknamed 'Brownie'—centre) and me (right). Glasgow, 1943.

After the training at HMS Dundonald concluded, we awaited posting. We knew we were about to take part in a 'theatre of war' somewhere, but we did not know where.

MIDDLE EAST

One day COBSS6 were all suddenly issued with Arctic kit. I thought ‘Bloody hell — we are off to Norway!’ We knew things were not going well there and I did not like the prospect of joining what was turning out to be an unsuccessful attempt by the British to support the Norwegians in resisting the Nazi invasion of their country.

A few days later the Arctic kit was taken back. Events in Norway had gone from bad to worse and the army had to evacuate. The intervention had failed badly. We were issued instead with tropical kit, obviously for the Middle East.

On 16th March 1943 we boarded a troop transport ship (SS Winchester Castle) at Greenock in the Firth of Clyde, Scotland. We were bound for North Africa and sailing in convoy with destroyer escorts. BSS6 was destined to be attached to the 6th Durham Light Infantry (DLI) in Egypt.

Because most of the air space over the Mediterranean was dominated by the Luftwaffe, we had to sail the long way round. We called at: Freetown (Sierra Leone, West Africa, on 28th March); crossed the Equator (1st April); Cape Town (South Africa, 11 April); Durban (South Africa, 15th April); then Aden (Yemen, 1st May); and, Suez (Egypt, 5th May). Thankfully, there were no incidents and the whole convoy arrived safely.

What amazed me most about this journey was how crowded the troop ship was. The SS Winchester Castle had previously been a passenger liner. As navy personnel, we were very lucky in having cabins with bunks, which was much better than sleeping on the deck like the troops.

The conditions were terrible for the troops. For example, the toilets were improvised, consisting of long wooden planks set over a long chute. These temporary latrines provided no privacy at all and the smell was dreadful of course. I used to time my visits to the night if I could, when it was not so busy!

And, talking of toilets, I should mention that part of BSS6's non-issue equipment was a toilet seat. This was to be used extensively in the Middle East and later in Italy when we found ourselves in out-of-the-way places with no toilet facilities; we would dig a pit, then place a large, empty mess box over the pit and position the seat on top that. There would be a shovel in the pile of dirt/sand next to our latrine, which we would use to cover 'number 2's'. I don't recall having any screens around the latrine.

At Freetown I remember, we would wrap farthings (copper coins worth a quarter of one penny) in silver paper and toss them over the side of the ship. Local inhabitants in small boats would dive in the water to fetch these 'Glasgow tanners', as they were known — a tanner is a silver sixpenny piece. The locals soon cottoned on to the ruse.



Cinema ticket from Suez

From Suez, all of COBSS6 travelled by train to Gaza, Palestine (10th May), with Sikh troops. We were to join up with an infantry battalion there for exercises. At Gaza, we slept in big bell tents right by the beach. On a couple of occasions at night, local Arabs on horses lassoed the tops of some of the tents and galloped away with them, amid the curses of the soldiers! We spent most of the rest of the time at Gaza eating Jaffa oranges and swimming at the beach. We would swap fags (cigarettes) for Jaffa oranges with the Arabs. I never smoked while in the navy — in fact I have never liked to smoke — but I could trade my cigarette rations for something I did like.

While at Gaza (c. 15th May), we were occasionally given leave in Tel Aviv. We would investigate the town, go to the cinema and the like.

In Tel Aviv, two or three of us were once invited to a Jewish man's house for some hospitality, which included wine and fine food. Such invitations were common. The local Jews seemed pleased we were in Palestine. We sensed they felt more secure with British troops around, amongst the mostly Arab populace.



*Roy Hardwick (from Bath), Jimmie Fitzsimmons (from Barrow) and Alf Hattersley (from Halifax)
Tel-Aviv, 15th May 1943. All RN COBSS6.*



BSS6 in Palestine. Tel-Aviv, 15th May 1943. On railings: Jimmy Fitzsimmons (left, from Barrow), Roy Hardwick (middle, from Bath) and Alf Hattersley (right, from Halifax). Standing: Yeoman Agnew (left, from Belfast) and Petty Officer Dougie Wright (right, a 'Geordie' from Bishop Auckland, near Newcastle). Kneeling: Neil Mackay (left, from Glasgow) and Sandy Kettle (right, from Leeds).



In Tel-Aviv, Palestine, 15th May 1943. Roy Hardwick (L), Alf Hattersley (middle) and Jimmy Fitzsimmons (R).

We finally left Gaza on 25th May, heading for Cabrit (on the side of the Suez Canal somewhere) for training with the Durham Light Infantry (DLI). The DLI had already seen action in North Africa, as part of General Montgomery's famous 8th Army. Some of the DLI lads told us that they had previously lost all their original officers in North Africa.



On beach. Tel-Aviv, 1943. I am sitting in the centre.

We exercised with the DLI for the next few weeks at a number of locations. For example, on 4th June we boarded the SS Winchester Castle for a large scale invasion exercise along the Red Sea coast somewhere. On 6th June we left Cabrit for Ataka, about two miles from Suez, for another exercise on 15th June. We returned to Ataka on 17th June, including being on board the SS Oronto for a few days. Another exercise was on the Bitter Lakes.

If a Calling out of the whole Army Reserve is ordered every soldier on pass must return immediately to his unit without waiting for instructions.

No. R/V Tait Regiment all Melish

PASS /ix Army Force B295, (In pads of 100.)

No. 206 (Rank) Sic (Name) Natole-y

has permission to be absent from his quarters/duty, from Thos.

for the purpose of proceeding to Shey

(Station)

(Date) 7/6/43 Commanding

*Destination not required unless absence is to exceed 24 hours, unless notification is desirable owing to local conditions or it is necessary to ensure purchase of a rail ticket at reduced rate.
~~To delete whichever is not applicable.~~

A Soldier on pass who requires medical aid must apply for it personally if possible to the nearest Military, R. Naval or R. Air Force hospital or other Medical formation, showing this pass. If, however, he desires more than two miles from such hospital, etc., he may apply to a civil surgeon or doctor, whom he will show this pass, and the doctor will then be allowed the following rates for medical attention on the soldier at the latter's residence.

VISIT	1 mile	1 mile but under 2	2 miles but under 3	3 miles but under 4	4 miles but under 5	Greater distances
Day 3 4 5 6 7	An addition of 1/- for each additional mile, or at a visit.
Night 3 4 5 6 7	An addition of 1/- for each mile over 5 with a limit of 4/- for each visit.
	4	6	8	10	12	

When the soldier visits the surgery of a civilian doctor, the fee payable in respect of such visits will be -2/- per visit. The soldier will at once report the employment of the civilian doctor by a letter addressed to his Commanding Officer, or to whom the emergency call was equivalent.

If hospital treatment is necessary, the soldier will, at once report the fact, if possible, to the nearest Military, R. Naval or R. Air Force hospital, Military Reception Station or Medical Inspection Room for Troops, and telling that to his Commanding Officer, who will post him off to the appropriate hospital as soon as possible, and to be given from military sources. If a soldier is admitted to a R. Naval or R. Air Force hospital, he will carry this pass immediately to his Commanding Officer. In the event of commencing a course of admission to a civil hospital, he will report the fact immediately to his Commanding Officer, who will at once notify the Assistant Director of Medical Services concerned.

When a soldier on pass is proved by sickness, which must be properly certified, or by other unavoidable causes, requiring his Corps by the date with which his pass expires he is to report himself before that date—To the nearest General or other Officer on the staff of the Army, Navy or Royal Air Force, or to a Justice of the Peace. If in the Irish Free State, he is to furnish the medical certificate to his C.O.

If his pass exceeds the number of days he has leave to travel he is to advise his commanding officer, and he must at all times be prepared to rejoin on the shortest notice.

Soldiers passing through London are to observe beard and feeding.

Note—The above instructions are not applicable to a soldier on Field Service overseas.

One of my leave passes when I was in Suez

I was also BSS6's barber while we were in the Middle East! I was given this job because I had let slip that I had had experience as a 'lather boy' in a barber shop in Halifax when I was a young lad. As 'lather boy', I would lather the chins of clients before Harry (the barber) gave them a shave with a cutthroat razor. Then I would clean the customers up after he had finished the shave and sweep the floor and the like.

The first haircut I ever did as BSS6 barber was not a success. I couldn't get the trim right, and so kept on re-trimming. The victim ended up with what looked like a skull cap on the top of his head. Needless to say, not all my BSS6 clients trusted me with the hair clippers and Coleman scissors! P.O. Agnew, though, wanted only me to trim his beard because, unlike some others, he thought I did a good job.

All the time we were in the Middle East, we were wondering where we would be sent next. On 30th June, after about two weeks ashore at Ataka, we re-embarked on SS Winchester Castle and steamed up the Suez Canal to Port Said, arriving there on 1st July. Thence we set sail with the rest of the assault convoy, on 3rd July, to take part in the allied invasion of Sicily (Operation Husky).

ITALY — SICILY

The assault at Avola

At about 5–6 a.m. on 10th July, I was aboard a landing craft with the 6th Durham Light Infantry heading for a rocky beach near a place called Avola, at the extreme southern part of Sicily. We were at the extreme left of the main landings and our landing craft was very isolated on this left flank. To all intents and purposes, we were alone.

The sea was quite rough, which made it difficult enough for an amphibious landing. But we had beached right opposite a pillbox. We were under heavy machine gun fire from the pillbox and mortar fire from slit trenches near the pillbox. We were pinned down. Scattered rocks emerged from the shallow water and out of the sand on the beach. The beach was mined. I took cover behind a rock, waist deep in water. I was armed with a side pistol only, unlike the assault troops, as my job was to communicate with the ships out at sea. Machine gun and mortar fire was going over my head.

I remember one very amusing incident while we were pinned down — amusing in retrospect, that is. A navy launch suddenly appeared behind us. Someone, somewhere I suppose, had noticed that we were having trouble. An officer on board the launch had a megaphone. He called out: “Do you require assistance?” (!!). Needless to say, the gun fire from the shore now turned on him and the launch. The launch did a quick about turn and raced off. That was the last we saw of any potential assistance!

Fortunately, the machine gun from the pillbox couldn’t quite ‘elevate’ far enough down to sand level on the beach. The troops from our single landing craft therefore managed to advance up the beach from rock to rock, though slowly. There was four-foot high wire to traverse. Troops made a hole in the wire and the infantry crawled through then fanned out.

The Italians in the slit trenches retreated, but not those in the pillbox. Then the firing ceased.

We could see that our troops had occupied the grassy sandy low dune area at the top of the beach. We navy lads then made our way up the beach.

I remember noticing many abandoned army packs in the water. Only about three feet from where the infantry had cut a hole through the wire, an unexploded mine that had been uncovered by the troops lay exposed. I also saw a blown-off leg of one of our poor infantryman who had been killed by a mine in the action. The boot was still on.

Looking into the pillbox, I saw two dead Italian soldiers. The gunner was led on the ground, still holding on to the two handles of the machine gun such that it was now pointing up into the air. His companion, who had been feeding in the ammunition belts, was slouched beside him. Both had machine gun wounds across their chests, and were covered in blood. The two of them had obviously fought to the end.

The whole action had seemed to last a very long time. It's strange, but I could not say how long it was. I guess that it was probably an hour or so.

At Avola beach

At the pillbox, a DLI officer told us that they would be moving inland. We weren't to accompany them, so they left without us. There were three of us left on the beach — me, another signaller and a military policeman (MP). During the landings we had not received any signals from ships at sea nor had we sent any. We had no orders, so we were left wondering what we should do.

The three of us thought we should join up with the navy further northwards, nearer the main landings, but I said that it would be suicidal to walk along a mined beach. There was an isolated house in view, which the army had said they had searched, so we decided to take a look around. I remember there was a garage with an old car inside, but it had no tyres. All was quiet. We returned to the pillbox, still wondering what we should do.

Suddenly, about twenty Italian soldiers appeared behind us. They had come from the cellar of the house we had just visited, and that the army had previously searched! But they were unarmed and clearly wanted to surrender. We would have been no match for them and would have been taken completely by surprise if they had chosen to fight.

The MP with us had a rifle, so he indicated to the Italians to put their hands on their heads, which they did without any fuss. They seemed only too glad to be out of it all. The MP decided to march the prisoners northwards along the beach towards the main landings. They marched ahead of him, as he figured they should know where there were mines and where not!

The two of us signallers were now alone. We needed to join up with the navy somewhere. We found an old Italian rowing boat among the rocks and decided we should row ourselves along the shore to join up with the main force. It would be safer than walking along the beach.

Off we set. But the boat started leaking. As we baled the water out with our tin hats, it became obvious that it was a losing battle. We could not bale out fast enough and row at the same time. However we probably got about three quarters of the way along the beach towards where the main landings had taken place before the boat finally sank. We again found ourselves wet and wading to shore — our second landing for the day! We eventually linked up with the main section of our RN signal party, probably late afternoon.

We were feeling pretty uncomfortable by then, having got soaked twice. On all landings, we were expected to be self-contained and mobile. So all we ever carried was our signalling equipment, pistol, food and some water. The only dry clothes we had was a pair of clean socks. The rest of our clothes just dried on us. It would take anything from 3 to 14 days before our kit bags joined us. How lovely it was though, to put on those clean dry socks after the landing at Avola!

Avola to Syracuse

A few days later, on 14th July, three or four Landing Craft Infantry vessels (LCIs) came inshore and took aboard all those personnel who were not part of the main force advancing inland. We were told we were off to Syracuse. These LCIs linked up with others, and about 16 LCIs plied towards Syracuse late afternoon. LCIs are quite large steel vessels, much larger than LCA (Landing Craft Assault) vessels. Some could carry up to 200 personnel.

I shall never forget this journey and the sad events that followed. They highlight how unlucky or lucky one can be during war. At dusk we were dive-bombed by German Messerschmitt fighter-bombers; they came in one by one. As they did so, all the guns from the LCIs would go up.

At one point I was near a bulkhead forward (forward), chatting with two other blokes: a regular Petty Officer telegraphist (Doug Wright, who we knew as 'Shiner Potts') and a rating telegraphist who I think was called Tom Bowler (from Exeter).

The LCIs were suddenly being dive-bombed and our flak started. I quickly decided to go through a metal door in the bulkhead and take cover there, while my two fellow seamen (who could have done what I did) decided in that instant to stay outside and crouch by the bulkhead. As I got through the door, a bomb hit our LCI.

I was unscathed but both telegraphists were hit. Petty Officer Dougie Wright (photo of him in Tel-Aviv, p.9 above) came through the metal door, wounded and looking totally shocked.

"I've been hit", he said to me. I and others started trying to stop his bleeding from the shrapnel wounds in his chest. The rating had been killed instantly. Later, I noticed he had been covered up with a blanket. "Don't look," someone said to me. "Half his head's gone."

The LCI was very badly damaged. The bomb had gone through our ship, glancing through the upper deck near us, then exploding and leaving a gaping four-foot wide hole. The ship's

crew were trying to stop seawater coming in through the hole. Our LCI was the only one of the sixteen LCIs that had been hit.

Shiner Potts was being given morphine. An officer said we needed to get him to shore to get proper medical aid, as he was in a bad way. He asked three or four of us to go ashore with a lifeboat. I volunteered, and we set off for the shore in a rowing boat with Doug Wright on a stretcher. It was pitch black by now.

It was hard going and took a couple of hours to reach the shore. We did not know if it was occupied by friend or foe. I was holding one end of the stretcher as we struggled along the beach, looking for a gap in the barbed wire. Someone said, "We'll have to get through the wire and take a chance, you know." Then, out of the darkness, we suddenly heard: "Halt! Who goes there?!" We replied: "We are RN! Friend", we shouted. "How do we get through the wire" we asked, "we have a wounded man."

I remember the sentry had a Welsh accent. The sentry took us through the barbed wire. "We are on the front line," he explained. "I'll show you where there is a medical tent. We'll see to him alright." We took Shiner Potts to the medical tent. The front line at this point was manned by the 1st Welsh we learned later.

We left Dougie Wright for the night. As we came out of the tent, shelling started. We decided to take cover, and came across a water well. Half way down there was a sort of landing, and three of us sheltered there for the night. Although the shelling stopped, we stayed in the well until daylight. We were very cold, as we wore only shorts and short-sleeved shirts. At daylight, we went to the tent to see how Shiner Potts was, but he had died during the night. We were very saddened.

What to do now? We could see our LCI offshore, still afloat but on its own. We found our rowing boat and rowed back out to join it and report the sad outcome. The engines were now running and the hole in the side of the boat had been temporarily sealed. Then we slowly

plied our way north-eastwards along the Sicilian coast towards Syracuse, which had been our original destination. It was now 15th July.

Of the three major landings I took part in (Sicily, Reggio and Normandy), this first one in Sicily was the worst for me. Like many veterans of WWII I suppose, I have never talked much about my experiences. Nor did I realise how much of an effect it had on me. I cannot now talk about it without becoming very upset and feeling sad about those disturbing events and sights.

While in Sicily (on Avola beach), I picked up an Allied propaganda leaflet (in Italian) dropped by air to influence the local Italian population (Appendix 1). I also kept one of the Eighth Army News leaflets we received frequently (written for English speakers on one side [Appendix 2] and in Italian on the reverse side [Appendix 3]). They are both quite battered now, but have scanned well into this document.

Syracuse

Syracuse was occupied by our forces by the time we got there. I remember seeing a big ship on fire as we arrived at the harbour. We tied up alongside other LCIs, some of which had been hit. There were also corpses wrapped up in hammocks, all along the quayside. The army had met a lot of resistance. The Germans were counterattacking. At one point, the army was told to evacuate and we all prepared to re-board. But then another signal came to say that the counterattack had been repulsed, so the order to set sail was cancelled.

RN Beach Signal Section 6 stayed at Syracuse for about 3–4 weeks. I remember one particular day when I was on the quayside about to eat along with my mates, I had a mess tin with the day's rations in it. The Italian locals were starving and as I opened the ration tin a load of children suddenly came crowding around us all. The tin was whipped out of my hands and the children cut themselves fighting over its contents. Their hands were covered in blood.

Respite in Malta!

A couple of days later on 17th July, we were sent to Malta for a few weeks to recuperate. We sailed on HMS Bulolo, an armed merchant cruiser which had previously been a passenger ship. We arrived at the capital Valletta on 18th July, then we travelled on 20th July to the rest camp at Ghajn Tuffieha, which is on the opposite side of the island to Valletta.

The camp was very isolated. We slept on metal bedsteads. There were no mattresses so we spread our hammocks over the bedsteads and slept on those. I remember that after the first night, we were all itching. Bed bugs! We lit big bonfires outside and took the metal beds outside to the fire to run them over the fire to kill the bugs. We could hear the bugs crackling! After that we had no further problems.

Back to Sicily

We spent about four weeks at the rest camp, swimming frequently, jumping from rocks and lazing in the sun. All good things come to an end and we were sent back to Sicily, arriving at Port Augusta near Syracuse on 18th August. By this time the island of Sicily had been taken. On 28th August we went by road from Syracuse to Catania with the 1st Welsh Division, via a place I think was called Fontei hn. Catania is about 20 miles further along the Sicilian coast from Syracuse. Here our section now prepared for the landings on the Italian mainland, practising at Catania beaches at the foot of Mount Etna.

LCIs and LCAs were all lined up along the quay at Catania, side by side with all the bows pointing to the quay. One day when I was on the wall next to our ships, a lone Messerschmitt suddenly appeared from seaward. It strafed the line of ships and quay wall, all the way towards the town. It made a couple of passes, or maybe it was two German fighters making a pass each.

Everyone was taken by surprise. All our guns eventually came into action; Oerlikon guns from the sterns of the LCIs. These were a kind of heavy machine gun (20mm), smaller than

the Bofors anti-aircraft guns (40mm). Oerlikons made a kind of ‘pop-pop’ noise. The German fighters had not had much impact as far as I know, nor had we hit any of them. Anyhow, I was not hit so that was a relief!

Messina

On 1st September we boarded an LCA with the infantry and crept round the Sicilian coast under cover of darkness heading for Messina. We landed in darkness on the beach. We were given a day’s worth of rations and told to dig slit trenches and lay in the trench under cover. The LCAs that brought us to the beach slipped away during the night.

We were at the Strait of Messina, just opposite Reggio di Calabria on the Italian mainland. We were ordered that night to stay in the trench for a full 24 hours, remaining hidden during the daylight hours of the whole of the following day (2nd September). We were not even to raise our heads above the trench. There was to be a surprise attack on the 3rd at sunrise. We did sneak a peep above the trench and could plainly see Italian police walking along the coast at Reggio. We were to cross the Strait in the morning.

ITALY — THE MAINLAND

Reggio

On 3rd September we embarked on LCAs with the assault troops at early daybreak. On board, there were troops, an RSM (Regimental Sergeant Major), a Captain, three sappers, four army beach signallers and four navy beach signallers (including me).

There was a terrific allied bombardment from air and sea. Shells whistled overhead. Our LCA was the first boat to touch the beach and I was the tenth man ashore. The air was thick with smoke and I couldn’t see a thing. The assault troops came in two minutes later. In front of us there was a fort, which covered the beach where we landed. But not a shot came from it, and we met no resistance. We found we were near the mouth of a dried-up river bed.

The Germans had cleared out and the Italians happily surrendered in their thousands! We worked the beach for three days, being machine-gunned pretty regularly by the Luftwaffe. But we had a smashing air umbrella from our ships. We four navy signallers next set up a signalling station nearby, at an abandoned defence post. The few defence fortifications we saw were empty.

One day, about 8 or 9 a.m., we saw an Italian army officer leading about 400 to 500 soldiers towards us — to surrender! They carried no arms and had no boots, but rags tied around their feet. They were carrying suitcases, all packed and ready for the POW (prisoner of war) camp! The officer approached me and, using a little English, he and his men surrendered. We kept watch over them until we could hand them to the military police. All we had were sidearms, and this made us feel somewhat vulnerable when there were hundreds of them, but there was no trouble.

While at the signalling station, we once witnessed a flight of German Luftwaffe fighter planes in the distance, machine gunning allied troops and Italian prisoners-of-war all along the beach. On another occasion, a lone German plane passed us. We had earlier found an Italian Breda gun and we tried our luck at shooting the plane down. We were hopeless and missed.

One day at Reggio when Jimmy Priddle (fellow signaller) and I were sat on a wall by a dirt road, wearing our tin hats and shorts, a cavalcade of cars and jeeps suddenly appeared.

Among the vehicles, there was General Montgomery! — sat in the back of an open car.

Although we were taken by surprise we managed some sort of salute and he waved back!

Also while stationed at Reggio, we would explore the inland when off duty. We came across enemy machine gun posts in the side of the hill, full of Breda machine guns and ammunition.

In an enemy fort near the arid river bed, there were barracks carved into the caves underneath. We also found 10-inch howitzers there, with shells on trolleys ready for loading.

They had not been fired by the Italians during the allied landings. There were also racks and racks of unused rifles. Not a soul was about.

The allied army had moved inland and bypassed this fort. We supposed they did not know about its contents. Jimmy and I took the opportunity to improve our shooting, using Italian tin hats, tin cans and other items for target practice. No-one around seemed to take any notice of this gunfire. Italian rifles were horrible. After a few rounds, they were red hot and would burn one's hands if not careful.

At this station, after the landing itself, we again never received any signals nor did any officer give us signals to send. We were eventually assigned to man the signal station at Messina and again found ourselves sailing back across the Strait. Quite soon afterwards we were told eight RN signallers, including me, would accompany 500–600 Royal Marine commandos in a landing at Rocca Imperiale, a small town in the 'instep' of the 'shoe of Italy', about 40 miles south of Taranto. The operation was to mine and secure the railway line to prevent the Germans using it to retreat eastwards from the Reggio area.

Rocca Imperiale

We landed in the evening of 17th September. Again there was no opposition thankfully. Our troops prepared to lay explosives on the railway line. As it turned out, the Germans retreated northwards on the west coast of the mainland instead, so the explosives were never in fact laid.

The Italians had a proper signal station there, which we commandeered. One day when off-duty, a New Zealander called 'Digger Mitchell' and I decided to explore and go a mile or so inland where we knew there was a village. We arrived there, armed only with revolvers. It appeared deserted and we walked warily down the main street. Then children's heads started popping up from behind walls and doorways. Next a few adults appeared. A few came out to see us and soon we had quite a crowd around us. "Any Germans around?" we asked. No —

they had all gone, they indicated, and they seemed pleased to see us. Later, some of them gave us a conducted tour of their village, including a pottery.

There was a nearby castle which we decided to explore. We found an old man and old woman in it, both bedridden. We didn't disturb them. The castle had been looted and all the doors broken. Drawers had been opened, their contents scattered, and all the paintings had been removed, we assumed by Germans.

I found a large, nicely embossed leather book, which had beautiful colour illustrations. I decided to take it and put it in my knapsack. Later on, back at the signal station, someone else took a fancy to the book and offered me a deal. In Cape Town, on the voyage to the Middle East, he had bought a gold-coloured powder compact for his wife back home. He offered me this in exchange for the book. I later gave the compact as a gift for my fiancée Joan, back in Bristol. I said I had bought it in Cape Town and did not tell the story about wrongfully stealing the book.

On other occasions, four of us would take a trip along the railway line. We had come across a hand-powered railway cart which we used to ride along the line. It was great fun. One of us would be up a nearby tower so as to warn the others in case a train came along.

Life was very quiet and relaxed at Rocca Imperiale. We were there about two weeks. The signal station was quiet as we had no signalling to do and no instructions. However, one night when I was on watch I must have dozed off because the next thing I knew it was sunrise and I woke up to see through the low mist, what seemed like hundreds of landing craft, busy signalling to our station to verify a navigation fix! I quickly replied and as soon as I answered they were content. They were just checking their position and had not been waiting to land thank goodness. They were sailing further east. How long they had been signalling before I woke up I do not know.

Any delay must have been glossed over or had not been too long, because I was never hauled over the coals about the incident. Later my colleagues used to take the mickey out of me.

They would announce that they had just taken a signal from Captain Black, wanting to talk to that signalman who was meant to have been on duty that morning!

RETURN TO SCOTLAND

Our signals section was then pulled out of Italy, which in retrospect was fortuitous. What if we had been involved in further Italian operations, including landing at Anzio? In October 1943 we set sail to return to the UK via the Straits of Gibraltar, the quick way this time as the Germans no longer had control of the skies in the Med.

There were many German prisoners of war on board our ship and I often had to stand guard over them. I once got talking to a German despatch rider; he had a despatch rider breast plate. “Do you speak English?” I asked. “Yes”, he said, and he told me he had been captured on his bike in Italy while carrying a despatch.

He had previously been posted in France opposite Dover. He knew all of the English songs and would whistle or sing them in English, including the ‘Siegfried Line’. I once opined that the Germans were beaten and would lose the war, especially since Russia was our ally. “Oh, you’ll never beat us!” he would contest. We would banter like this, but he really believed they would win.

Another interesting thing this German told me was about the allied bombing in Italy. He said that when the British bombed, only the German army would take cover because the British targeted only the military. But when the Americans bombed, everyone would run for shelter! This was, he said, because the American bombing was indiscriminate.

The ship stopped briefly in Gibraltar on the way back to England, but I do not remember much about this. We eventually arrived back in Blighty early in November 1943. I had been away for nearly eight months.

BACK IN ENGLAND

Poole

Back in England from Italy I was first sent to HMS Don Donald, our combined operations camp. But soon we were ordered to travel by train to Poole (Dorset) to be stationed with the army.



Left to Right: 'Digger Mitchell' (the Kiwi), Jimmy Priddle (from Bristol), ?Hoffman (York) and ? (from Birmingham). BSS6 members at Poole, Dorset.



Combined Operations Beach Signals Section 6 at Poole, Dorset. We are wearing combined operations uniform (khaki). I am in the front row of the left photo, sat on the right, and in the middle of the middle row in the RH photo, with Roy Hardwick on my shoulders.

In Dorset, we would often march around country roads, to help keep fit and pass the time. We would march out of step, but whenever we passed through a village our officer Lieutenant Morgan would call out for us to smarten up, put on a show and march in step! He would hold his head up high and proudly lead us through the village.

‘Digger Mitchell’ (the ‘Kiwi’) was a bit of a rebel. Out of sight at the back of the squad, he would purposely swing his arm the same way as his leg on each side of the body to take the mickey out of the whole show. He did this the whole time I knew him and he always got away with it.

Once when on leave, I asked Joan (Joan Skidmore, from Bristol) if she would marry me. We had first met in Torquay (Devon, England) in June 1942 during a weekend leave from training in Devonport/Plymouth. It was love at first sight for both of us. We became engaged on 19th November 1943, while I was located at Poole.



Joan Skidmore, 1942, at age 17. Wearing the same dress she wore when I met her.

I spent Christmas at Poole and one night when I was with some cockneys in a pub, a young woman cottoned on to me, cuddling and kissing. But I was faithful, as I was engaged, and nothing else happened.

Bursledon

Shortly after Christmas and still attached to the army, we moved from Poole to Bursledon, which is near Hamble le-Rice on Southampton Water. We were under bell tents in a field. The field is definitely still there. I recognised it when I visited the area recently (June 2012) with my family (see photo).



The field at Bursledon, where BSS6 and troops were stationed prior to D-Day. Alf Hattersley with his son Paul (right) and daughter Cheryll (left), 18 June 2012.



The field at Bursledon, where BSS6 and troops were stationed prior to D-Day. Back row: Alf Hattersley (with walking stick) with some of his descendants! Daughter Cheryll with husband Chris Cole (left); son Paul (right) with two of Alf's seven grandchildren (Louise Lu, left, and Katie Brackley, right). Front: three of Alf's seven great grandchildren, from left to right Yasmine, Amelia and Jamie Lu (Louise and Kevin Lu's children). 18 June 2012.

It snowed that winter. All we had was a ground sheet and hammock each. To try to stave off the cold, we would leave our uniform on while sleeping at night and pull our oilskins over us. We never slept well.

There were no showers and no hot water. We washed under a cold tap in the field. We were always cold. To get a shave, we would get our mess tins and collect hot water from the cookhouse, but it was cold before we got back to the ablutions hut (doorless as I recall!) on the other side of the field.

The army was strictly disciplined. But as Navy lads, we were left alone and could muck about. Sometimes, to amuse ourselves at night in the tent, we would throw tin cans at each other in the darkness. We made a hell of a racket.

We would often go to have a night out in Southampton, by train from Bursledon Station (also still there). Coming back home on the last train was interesting! The train would be blacked out in case enemy aircraft were about. At Bursledon Station when we got off, the ticket collector would hold his cap out to collect the tickets as the army lads bustled through the exit. He would have been amused at what he found in his cap after we'd gone. Old tickets, pieces of cardboard, half a single ticket, or perhaps a platform ticket! I once travelled back from Bristol all the way to Bursledon on a platform ticket!

In March 1944, we were sent on leave for ten days. We were told this would be our last leave for some time. Having been on previous landings at Sicily and Reggio, it wasn't hard to guess why. Joan and I hoped that I would get leave about June or July 1944 to get married, two years after we had first met. Unfortunately, General Eisenhower obviously had other arrangements for me in June 1944!

So there was no time to lose. One weekend I proposed to Joan and we decided to get married as soon as possible. I asked her father (Sid) for her hand. He asked: "Can you keep her?" (financially that is!). I replied confidently — "Yes." So Sid agreed. Joan and I used to find this quite an amusing story to tell in our later years, considering that we struggled financially in the first part of our marriage while raising our three children (Cheryll, Paul and Stephen).

Marriage

Within a week (which these days would be almost impossible), we had arranged a white wedding for 11 March at St Mary Redcliffe parish church in Bristol, by special licence. We had organised the church, taxis, a photographer and a reception at the Windsor Hotel on Durdham Downs in Clifton, Bristol. This left only about three days out of my leave, for honeymoon — which was at 21 Fitzgerald Road, Joan's parents' home in Lower Knowle! Our financial situation was 'nil' after the wedding, having utilised all the money we had received as wedding presents for the wedding itself. I remember having to borrow ten

shillings (120 old pennies or half a quid, equal to 50 pence of a modern British pound) to complete a round of drinks at the pub! Nevertheless — poor but happy!

Mrs Edge

I returned to the army camp at Bursledon after our wedding. Joan visited me a number of times in Southampton before D-Day on 6th June 1944. The first time was 1 April. The last time was about two weeks before D-Day.

Joan used to stay at digs in Southampton — Mrs Edge's. Mrs Edge was a lovely old woman. Her husband had been a crew member on the SS Titanic and had drowned in that tragedy. Mrs Edge told us that nearly every household in the street where she lived had lost someone as crew in the Titanic sinking in April 1912.

I used to take your mum to dances in Southampton. RN lads always changed into Navy uniform when we left camp or went on leave. On one occasion, I booked a taxi to drive Joan from Botley where the dance was, back to Mrs Edge's. The taxi didn't show and we started walking the five or six miles to Southampton. Joan could not walk very easily in her dancing shoes, so we took to the grass verge where possible.

While walking along the road in the darkness, a car came towards us with headlights dimmed for the blackout. I waved it down, and it happened to be the taxi we had ordered. I said "I thought you'd never come." "I would never let an English sailor down!" he said. So Joan got back to her digs OK and I walked back to the camp.

D-DAY AND THE NORMANDY LANDINGS

Preparation and the Channel crossing

By the end of May 1944, there were masses of troops in the Southampton area. These included British, Canadian and US troops. Our beach signals unit was moved to a wooded area in the New Forest (Hampshire), again under canvas. Here, I joined the French-Canadian

Le Regiment de la Chaudiere, part of the 8th Brigade of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division, which was to assault ‘Juno Beach’ in Normandy.

All of the original 36 of our beach signals unit were with the Canadians (except our two comrades who had died on the way to Syracuse). By this time, we had two officers, Lieut. Morgan and a new Sub Lieutenant, and two replacement signallers.

We were briefed extensively about our role on D-Day in *Operation Overlord*. The camp was surrounded by barbed wire. No-one was allowed outside for the whole week prior to the landing, set for 5th June. We were issued with French money and told certain landing details, though not the location of the beach head.

During the night early on 4th June, we were taken by lorry to Southampton Docks. Each lorry was accompanied by an officer (the driver) with instructions that no-one should talk or whisper until on board the landing craft. Arriving at the docks amid a stream of lorries, tanks and other vehicles, I boarded an LCI for the journey across the English Channel.

BSS6 was split up among other types of landing craft. Our kit was ‘assault kit’, which included a gas mask each and one Lanchester (a submachine gun) between us. (Every citizen in Britain had in fact been issued with gas masks during the war.) We wore army uniform as usual.

The landings were put back 24 hours and we remained on board all that time, on deck. Before we set sail, all the troops received leaflets from both General Montgomery (C-in-C 21st Army Group) and General Eisenhower (Supreme HQ, Allied Expeditionary Force)(Appendices 4 & 5). We did not depart until nearly midnight on the 5th June. It was a pretty rough crossing.

One incident on the way over I shall never forget. It is amusing in retrospect, but we were all too nervous to think so at the time. A coder in our signals group on the LCI declared he was feeling very seasick. He had false teeth so, anticipating he was about to vomit, he took his

teeth out, wrapped them up in a handkerchief and put them back in his pocket for safe-keeping while he leant over the side and threw up.

Of course, the inevitable happened. After he finished, he went to wipe his mouth with his handkerchief from his pocket — and the teeth went in the drink. But, do you know, by the time we were returning from France he had a new set of teeth provided for him by the services.

Juno beach

We reached the coast at Juno beach 6th June at a place called Bernieres-Sur-Mer, eight miles from Caen which is a town inland from the beach. We were in the second assault wave I think. Everyone was very tense and quiet. On the run to the beach, the LCI to our right side hit a mine and blew up. I remember seeing a sailor flying through the air. Apparently, the one on our left was also hit. I understand that the record shows that one third of the landing craft were lost on Juno Beach. Luckily ours got through unscathed.

Rocket ships fired over our heads from the ships behind us. The rockets seemed like shoals of arrows. One of our planes mistakenly flew into a shoal while it was strafing the beach positions — it blew up in a flash. Artillery shells were also being fired from somewhere inland. As a shell came over, there would be a soft whiz sound and the air over my head would somehow change. In retrospect, I guess I was sensing a change in air pressure. This would be followed by a loud explosion further out to sea. Marker shells, by contrast, which were also being fired, would first ‘plop’ in the water, and then explode.

We had attached all we could to our webbing (waist/body belts) so that we could easily unclasp the belt button and slip the lot off in case we had to swim for it. We advised the soldiers to do the same if possible.

We hit the beach and out we went. As we were wading ashore, ‘Jumping Joe’ (a telegraphist) was next to me. He had a very heavy Radio Type 18 on his back. He stumbled and fell head

first into the water. I grabbed him with my left arm and someone else to his left grabbed him on that side. Between us, we dragged him onto the beach until he could manage to stand up by himself.

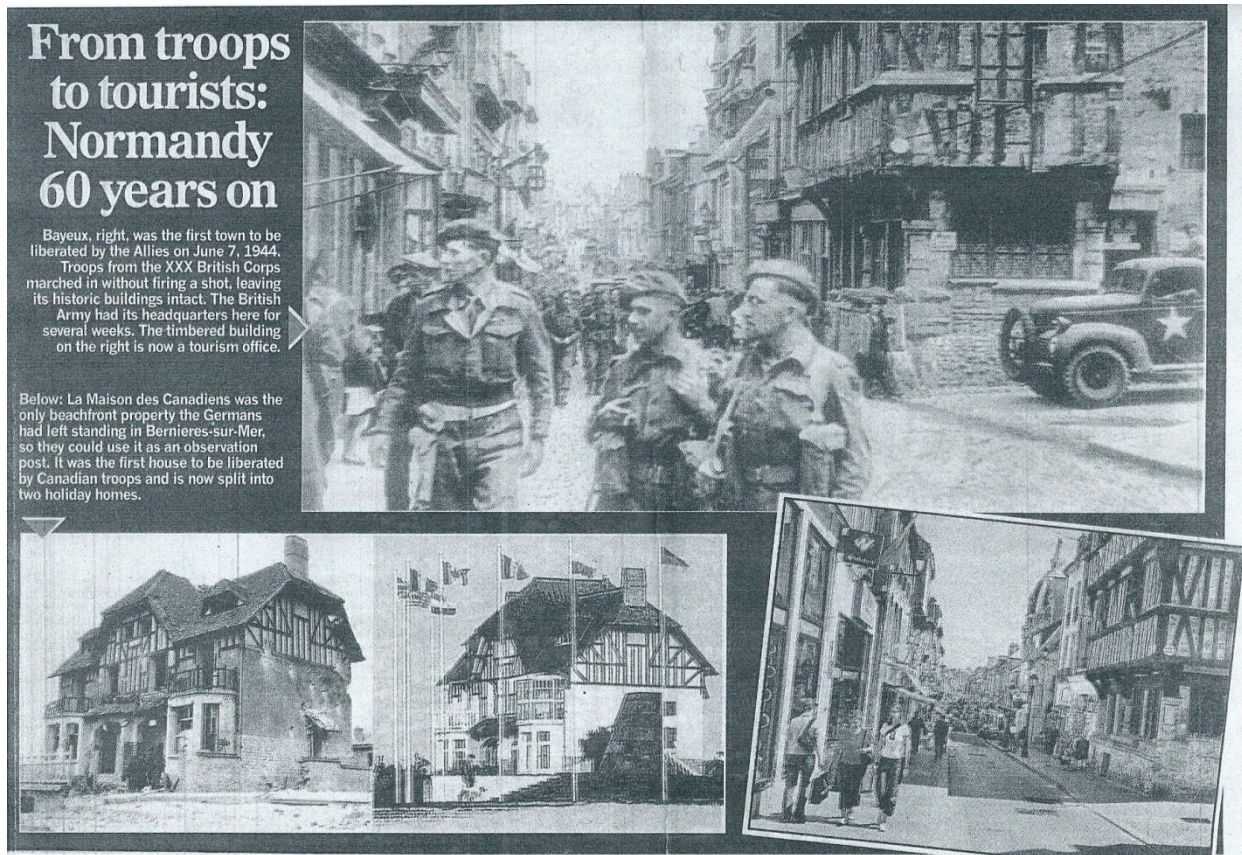
After our dash up the beach, I took cover under the sea wall just to the right hand side of a conspicuous-looking house, three stories high, with gables and timber, almost Elizabethan style features on its walls. The sea wall was only about two or three feet high, but high enough! It was a wonderful feeling to have reached cover on the shore unscathed.

I remember about six Germans coming out of the house with their hands raised. They took cover under the sea wall alongside me, whilst we hoisted the RN white ensign flag on the sea wall railings. We used this house as our main signal station between shore and the headquarters ship for our area of the beach.

The house is still there. I saw it again fifty years later. There is a photograph of it in the photo album that Joan and I prepared for our children after our trip to Juno beach in 1994 on the 50th anniversary of D-Day. The house also features in newsreels of the time, and my son Paul tells me a clip in a Canadian documentary of the landings made many years later (by the Canadian Broadcasting Commission), features the house. In the clip, an LCI is approaching Juno beach, the door goes down, and there is the house. This LCI must have been very close to the one I was on.

The house was the only one on the beachfront at Bernieres-sur-Mer that the Germans had left standing during their occupation. It has been fully renovated since 1994 and I noticed in a recent newspaper clipping (p.33) that the house is now known as La Maison des Canadiens. Another newspaper cutting of June 1994 (see Appendix 6) — from a Bristol local paper, the ‘Shire’ — gives Ray Priddle’s brief account of the landing. He was another member of our beach unit, but had been on another boat. Our signals unit of 36 Royal Navy men had been

spread among different landing craft and ships to ensure enough of us would get ashore to do our job.



From troops to tourists: Normandy 60 years on

Bayeux, right, was the first town to be liberated by the Allies on June 7, 1944. Troops from the XXX British Corps marched in without firing a shot, leaving its historic buildings intact. The British Army had its headquarters here for several weeks. The timbered building on the right is now a tourism office.

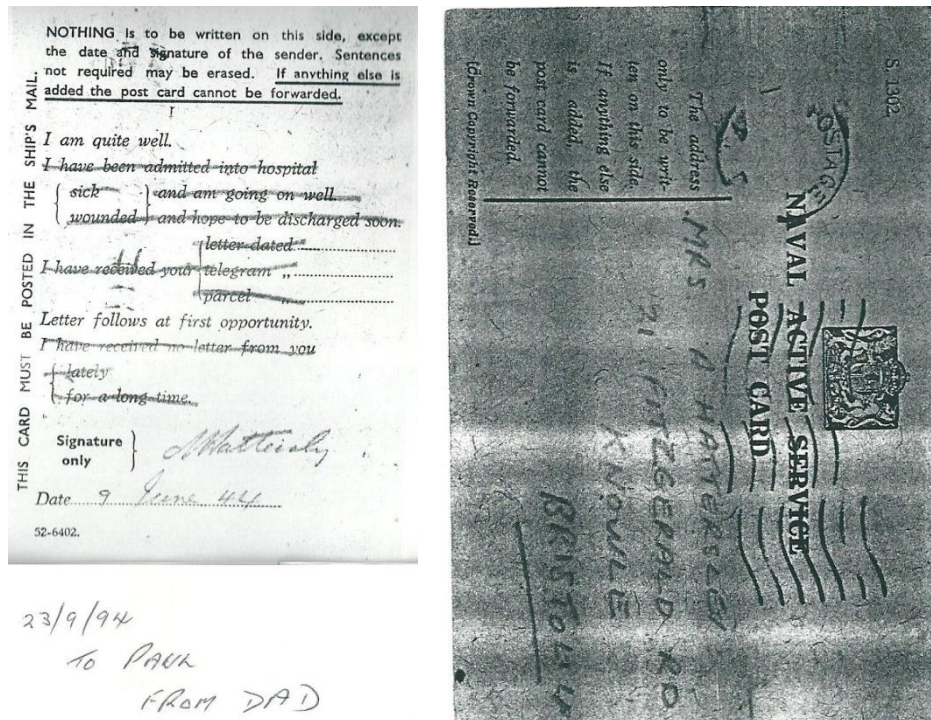
Below: La Maison des Canadiens was the only beachfront property the Germans had left standing in Bernieres-sur-Mer, so they could use it as an observation post. It was the first house to be liberated by Canadian troops and is now split into two holiday homes.

The Beach Master in charge of beach operations was a naval officer called Commander Maude. He and his team of junior officers dictated most of the messages we passed to the HQ ship, which was in overall control. I remember Commander Maude as a big massive chap, with a full beard, black leggings, a stick and the roar of a bull with which he blasted many army officers in charge of troops for not clearing the beach quickly enough and moving inland.

I was at Juno beach about a week. On one of these days, I was sheltering behind a wall one day, eating my food out of a mess tin when I heard a tank, with a rotating flail at its front, clearing mines behind me somewhere. Suddenly there was a flash and a loud explosion, as a mine blew up. I was not harmed in any way fortunately, but I guess things would have been

different if it had not been for that wall. There was a cloud of dust and when I looked down at my food, it was covered.

Not long after landing we were allowed to send a postcard and message to our loved ones. I sent one to Joan on 9 June 1944 to let her know that I was ‘quite well’! — and that a letter would follow.



On another occasion, I remember looking skywards and being astounded by the hundreds of allied planes coming in from over the sea on their way to drop bombs on Caen in daylight.

Then we would see them all coming back. Once I saw a couple of parachutes coming down, but I wasn't sure whether the airmen had landed in the drink or on land.

One of our coders while at Juno was known as ‘Arty boy’. He was a Londoner and he had a reputation as a ‘wide boy’, that is a bit of wheeler-dealer. He was assigned to be our section's cook, though he knew nothing about cooking and never looked clean! He would draw rations from the army. One of our favourites was tinned soup; it was American and very acceptable. One day he said he would make us a special treat — jam roly-poly puddings. He called us when they were ready and we saw that he had cooked them in his grey socks! We questioned

him about whether he had washed his socks first and he claimed to have done this, so we ate the roly-poly.

Mulberry harbour at Gold Beach

When the so-called 'Mulberry Harbour' was completed at Gold Beach at Arromanches, several miles to the west of Juno, a few of our section were moved there. We manned a large pill box at the exit of this temporary harbour. We used to sleep in bunks in a dugout in the German defences.

Our job was to pass messages to and from the shore about the landings. Most of the communications with ships were by radio, including orders, but we sent no coded messages. Communications traffic concerned information such as number of prisoners taken, casualties, whether tanks had been landed etcetera.

Tanks, lorries and other vehicles would come off the ships from the harbour and pass along the beach right in front of us. Unknown to me at the time, two of my brothers-in-law who were in the British army, landed on Mulberry at Normandy at Arromanches and would have passed right by me! These were: Ed Skidmore — one of Joan's two brothers in the army (her other brother was Ron) — and Les Bilsby, who was married to one of my sisters (Irene).

The beach was often shelled by a large German gun which apparently used to be brought out of a tunnel further along the shore somewhere. Once when Jimmy Priddle and I were inside the pillbox, a shell landed with a big orange ball of fire just in front of us and hit a lorry. We were unscathed because luckily we happened to be sat down below the level of the pillbox slit and so were protected by its three-foot thick pillbox wall.

We were showered with stones and dust. Our signals equipment and phone had been sat on the concrete sill in the open pillbox aperture and were blown to pieces. This would have been our fate if we had been stood up signalling or looking out to the beach. Yet another fortunate

escape. The pillbox has been dismantled now, but when I visited the beach in June 1994 I could still identify its exact location because the concrete base still remained.

We manned this signal station until the Port of Cherbourg was captured. I must have been posted at Arromanches for about two weeks therefore, because historically the dockyard of Cherbourg did not surrender to the Americans until 27 June 1944.

We were then told that Beach Signals Section Number 6 had served its purpose and was to be disbanded. We were to sail to England and be reassigned.

RETURN TO ENGLAND

All 36 members of BSS6 boarded a Landing Ship Tank (LST) which had just disembarked tanks at the Mulberry harbour. Most of us just had our kit bags and hammocks. But ‘Artie Boy’ had also persuaded the LST crew to load about three or four wooden cases of his as well. We wondered what ‘Arty Boy’ had in the cases.



‘Arty Boy’ is back row, 4th person in from the right of photo. BSS6 (at Poole).

We slept in bunks on the LST and on the voyage back to England overnight we decided to take a look in the boxes without Arty knowing. They were full of cigarettes, bully beef and other rations which he had purloined during his time as cook. We took all the contents out of the boxes and scouted around the LST in the darkness for alternative contents. We filled the boxes up with things like nuts, bolts, and other bits and pieces and resealed them! We shared the booty among us, so we had about eight tins of food or other treats each.

In the morning we landed and offloaded in 'Pompey' (naval slang for Portsmouth). We said nothing to Arty and he had no reason to suspect anything. Our hammocks and gear were taken from us, as usual, and we were sent on leave just in our naval uniforms.

I went to 21 Fitzgerald Road in Bristol to see Joan of course. I gave her the tins of food and other items (courtesy of Arty). She was delighted, not having seen some of the delicacies for quite some time.

When we got back to 'Pompey' from leave, 'Arty Boy' said someone had stolen all his 'clothing' that had been in the wooden cases! He made an official complaint, and an officer said he would need to put in a formal claim, which he did. He managed to get reimbursed for his lost 'clothing', but he never said anything to us about what had really been in the boxes and we never let on what we had done.

Back at barracks, we were all asked whether we wanted to go back to HMS Dundonald in Scotland to join another Beach Signals unit being formed to be sent to the Far East, or be assigned to general RN service. I opted for the latter. I didn't fancy the Far East, and anyhow I was now married and wanted to take my chances at being nearer home.

And so it was that BSS6 was finally disbanded. We had been together since November 1942 and had experienced much together. We had no formal disbanding or special farewell — we just went to other postings in our ones or twos.

MILFORD HAVEN

I was assigned to the Small Boats Unit at 'Pompey' and lived at the barracks. I was then drafted as the lone signalman aboard a merchant navy tug, operating out of Milford Haven, south-west Wales.

It was lovely on the tug. Food was much better than in the RN. I had no boss or naval officer in charge of me. I would mostly just send signals from the tug to the signal station at the harbour entrance as the tug sailed in and out of harbour.

One night I received a signal from the signal station that we should set to sea immediately. A French freighter, an old coal burner, was in distress and needed assistance and the crew might need rescuing. It was a cold night and the sea was very rough.

We eventually came upon the freighter and came alongside on the lee side. The vessel was foundering and the crew needed to be taken off. The only way this could be done was either by ropes or the crew would need to jump from one vessel to the other, as we had no special gear for such an event. Nearly all the crew were successfully rescued except one unfortunate soul who, it was said, had fallen between the two boats and was lost.

As we returned to port in rough sea, I needed to signal the situation to the signal station. I was next to the rescued French captain and he steadied me as I signalled by Aldis lamp. He had one arm around me and the other around the mast. As he was holding me, I could see that tears were streaming down his face. The freighter had sunk and one of his crew was lost.

Another incident I remember was being awoken once in the middle of the night because the shore station was flashing a signal. The signal said that one of the ships in the harbour was dragging its anchor and we needed to warn other freighters in port about the danger. We could only do this by sailing around the harbour, calling out about the threat and, as it turned out, no damage was done. The harbour was also a base for Sunderland flying boats which operated in the Atlantic.

While still assigned to the tug, in August 1944, I happened to be on seven days leave to Bristol. Unfortunately I became very sick with the flu while on leave and needed to be hospitalised for quite some time, at Barrow Gurney Hospital just west of Bristol. It must have been while still on leave in September that our daughter Cheryl was conceived.

While I was away someone else took over my duties in Milford Haven and that was the end of my nice cushy job on the tug which I had enjoyed for some months! I returned to barracks in Portsmouth. Next I learned that a new motor torpedo boat (MTB) crew was being formed and I was to be part of it. When the skipper had a complete crew, we all set off for Falmouth in Cornwall and picked up our vessel, which was a D Class Fairmile Motor Torpedo Boat.

MTB AND THE NORTH SEA

'Running in' at Holyhead

I can't recall the MTB number, but am pretty sure it was either MTB 749 or MTB794! My son Paul has shown me two books, written by Leonard Reynolds, about MTB and Motor Gunboat (MGB) actions in WWII in home waters. I have tried to identify with more certainty from these books which MTB and flotilla I joined.

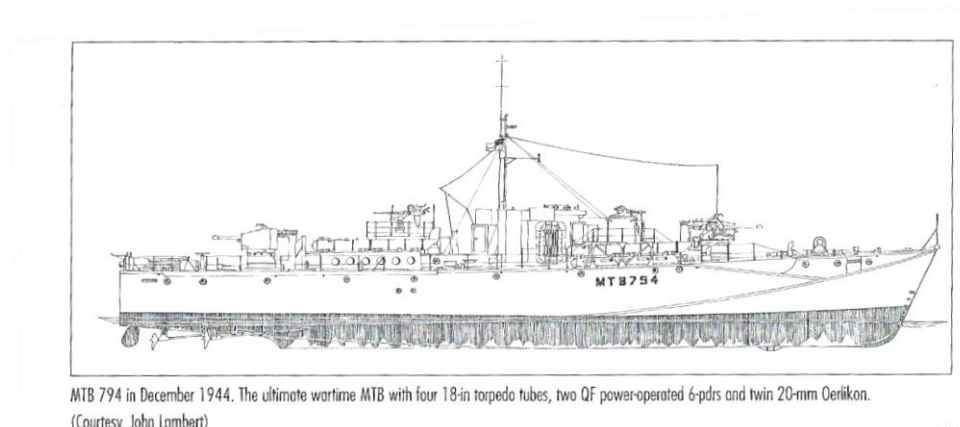
On page 159 of Reynolds' *Dog Boats at War* (1998, Sutton Publishing, Stroud UK) there is a picture of the crew of MTB 749 (64th flotilla) taken in 1944 while the vessel was involved in Operation Neptune (mine-laying—D-day to end of 1944), ie before I joined my MTB. I recognise a Leading Hand in this picture (first sailor on the left, front row), so MTB 749 might be the vessel I joined. But I recognise no-one else in the picture.

If indeed I was on MTB 749 in the 64th Flotilla, then unknown to me at the time, I was in the same flotilla as a Lt Frank Thomson (RNVR—Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve) who served on MTB 728 in 1945. Frank Thomson was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for an action with E-boats in the North Sea in 1945. But he was also the brother of Lt Alex Thomson RNVR, who later married Doreen Martin, a 'wren' (WRNS—Women's Royal

Naval Service). Their first daughter, Anne, was born in 1949. I know this now, because Anne was later to become my son Paul's wife (in 1972).

Quite interesting if this is the case! However, on the other hand, I may have got the numbers round the wrong way (!) and I joined MTB 794 (68th Flotilla)! This was a new vessel, my son tells me, that was not commissioned until 22 December 1944. The new MTB 794 sounds more likely perhaps, because first of all we set off from Falmouth for 'running in' trials.

Furthermore, Reynolds' book records that the 68th Flotilla did not commence operations until January 1945 out of Yarmouth, which is exactly what we were to do later.

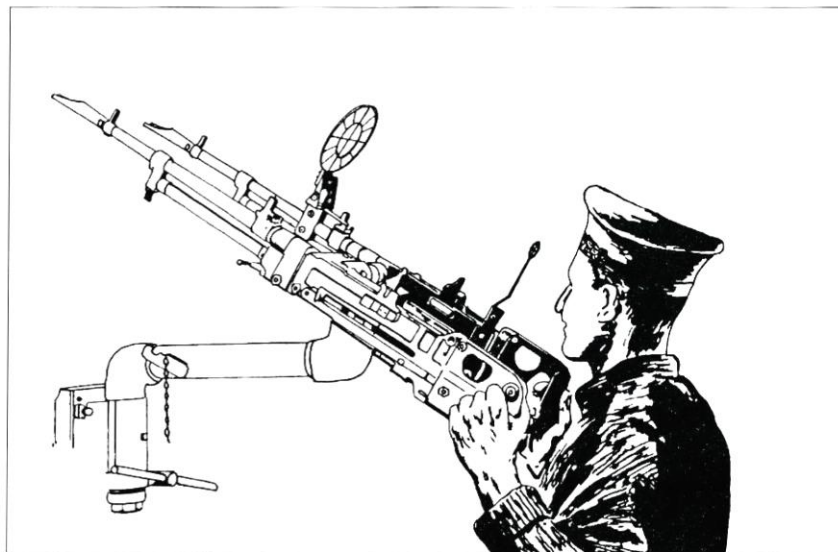


After joining the MTB in Falmouth, we sailed around Land's End to Holyhead (Anglesea, Wales) for the 'running in' trials. Trials included firing dummy torpedoes at a freighter. The officer would call out "Steady. Steady. Fire"! On the order 'Fire', my job was to flash to the freighter to let them know the moment we had fired.

Several MTBs would practice having shots at the freighter. The officers from the various MTBs had a competition going about who was the most successful. On one particular practice shoot, fortunately without the use of actual dummy torpedoes, I was as usual down by the side of the bridge while the 1st Lieutenant called "Steady. Steady. Fire"! Unknown to the officer, I accidentally flashed too early, on 'Steady'. Only I knew this and I didn't own up. But I was impressed later when I heard that our Lieutenant had been commended as the most accurate torpedo aimer that day!

Great Yarmouth

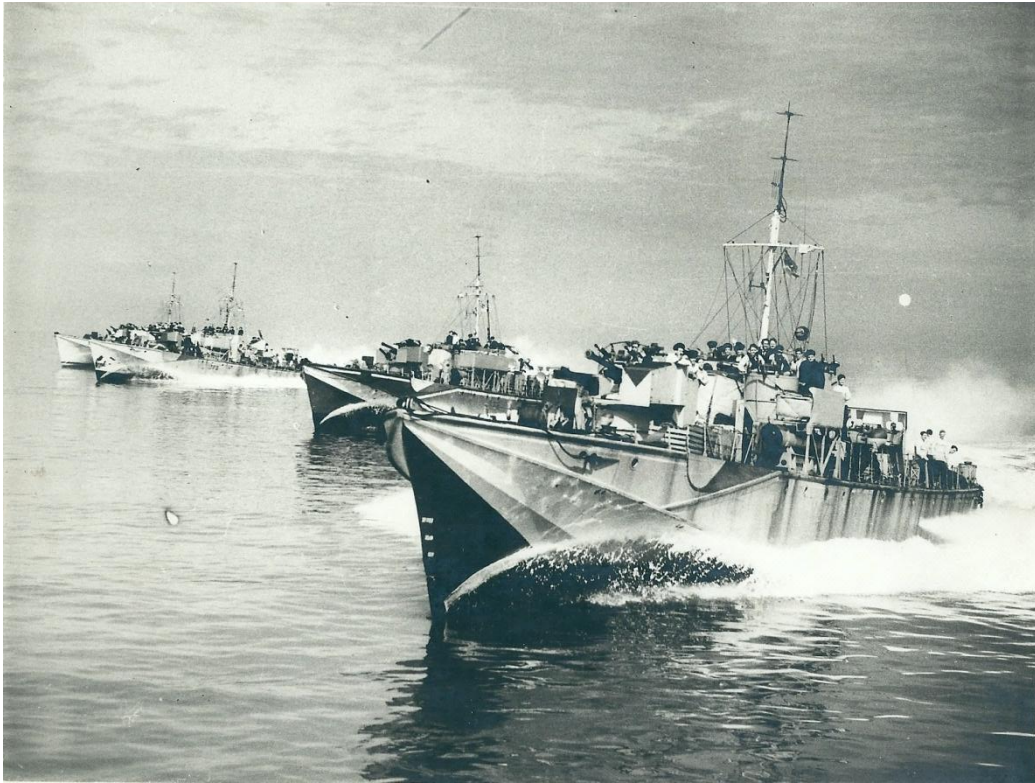
Our MTB sailed from Holyhead around to the North Sea and Great Yarmouth (Norfolk) to begin active service. We joined a flotilla of about five or six MTBs (again the records suggest MTB 794). I spent the remainder of the war in Europe on the MTB operating from Great Yarmouth and patrolling the coasts of Belgium and Holland two nights out of every three. As signalman I was in charge of identification signals and two twin 0.303 inch Vickers machine guns, one on each side of the ship's bridge. I knew nothing about Vickers machine guns until I joined the MTB. No-one taught me and so I had to learn myself. In Holyhead, we would be given practice by firing at a tow behind a plane. I was always firing too late and never hit the tow. But, then, I never hit the plane either!



The Vickers G.O. 0.303-inch on a twin Mark V mounting, fitted in all the class, and mounted in the spansons on each side of the bridge. (Courtesy, John Lambert)

A night's operation would begin by the flotilla sailing out of port to a corvette, frigate or destroyer already out at sea waiting for us to join it. The MTBs would follow this lead ship in a line. We signalled to each other with a small blue light. We would sail to somewhere offshore near Belgium or Holland and then stop engines and wait. The Germans would sail small freighters up and down the coast to run the blockade. We were there to intercept and sink as many as possible.

The corvette/frigate/destroyer would send a message back to us about a detected convoy size, direction, speed, et cetera. The MTBs would all turn through 90 degrees or so and so commence a wide sweep to intercept the convoy. In order to avoid firing on each other, lights on our masts would flash a pre-designated colour, for example red or green.



Picture given to us just after VE Day of an MTB Flotilla at sea (ours?).

We would exchange identification signals about every hour so that we could distinguish friend from foe. One of my jobs was to control these lights and run them up the mast every hour. We had encounters with German E-Boats or freighters on rare occasions, and I don't know that our flotilla ever sank anything.

In fact, as far as I know, I personally never hit any enemy objects nor shot anyone throughout the whole of WWII. In the North Sea, I was never actually called upon to fire the Vickers guns in anger, although our main armament (consisting of two twin 0.5 inch calibre guns and a Bofors gun) was sometimes in action.

I remember only one particularly dramatic action for our flotilla, in which an MTB collided with an E-boat. I did not see the incident. Both vessels sank. The general view I recall was that E-boats were faster and superior to our MTBs, but my son tells me that although British MTBs were slower, they were better armed.

VE Day

The Daily Sketch newspaper took a picture of our flotilla's combined crews on the quayside in Great Yarmouth on Victory in Europe (VE) day (8th May 1945). I was there (marked in the picture below) and our MTBs are in the background. One of our MTB's crew, who I knew quite well but whose name escapes me, had previously been on a minesweeper which was blown up by a mine in the Mediterranean. He had been the only survivor and become very religious. He was very well known in Great Yarmouth at the time, as he used to preach from the quayside.



*MTB Flotilla's crews on VE Day, Gt Yarmouth, 8th May 1945. With a captured Nazi E-boat flag.
Alf Hattersley is on edge of left hand side, halfway down, at right end of drawn line.*

After VE Day our ship's company returned by train to Portsmouth, to the Royal Marines barracks. The ship's company was dispersed, and I was next sent to Plymouth to await reassignment. One special day in mid-June, I received a telegram that I had become the father of a baby girl (Cheryll, born on 19th June 1945). I was very proud and happy but unable to celebrate with anyone because I was with personnel that I did not know.

FAR EAST

Joining the Fleet Minesweeper HMS Liberty at Portland

In Plymouth I was still awaiting a new posting. As the war with Japan was still raging, I hoped I would not be sent to the Far East. And, as luck would have it, Japan surrendered before I next set sail overseas and, better still, I also had leave to see Joan and our baby daughter. V-J (Victory in Japan) Day was September 2nd.

Later in September I was ordered to join a fleet minesweeper (HMS Liberty—see Appendix 7) at Portland (Dorset). I did not know for sure where we were to sail, but guessed. I travelled by rail and alighted at the main railway station at Weymouth at night and got a lorry to Portland, arriving there at midnight. I reported to the office at the base to say I was the signalman for HMS Liberty. She was moored out in the harbour and was to sail the next day. The Petty Officer said he would signal the ship to say I had arrived. I sat on my kit bag on the quay, frozen, waiting for the motor launch from the Liberty to pick me up.

There were three other minesweepers in the Harbour, HMS Hare, HMS Jewel and HMS Welcome. There was also a 'Bym' (B.Y.M., British Yard Minesweeper), HMS Trodday, a smaller type of wooden minesweeper for shallow water. Together, the vessels were to form the 10th Minesweeper Flotilla which was to sail to the Far East to clear mine fields. So despite cessation of hostilities with Japan, I would still be going to the Far East.

The vessels were waiting for HMS Courier to join them. Courier had the most senior officer on board and he was to command the flotilla which would comprise six vessels in all. But

Courier had broken down, so our sailing was delayed for 24 hours. We were allowed to go ashore and went by lorry to Weymouth for the day. In the evening when we got back, there was another 24 hour delay; another day off in Weymouth! This happened three times.

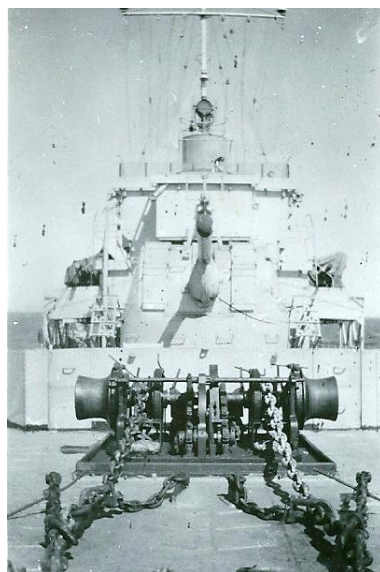
Courier eventually arrived, so in October 1945 I set sail on HMS Liberty for the Far East as part of the 10th Minesweeper Flotilla. Our voyage was to be via Gibraltar, Malta, through the Suez Canal to Aden, then Colombo (Ceylon — now Sri Lanka), Penang (Malaya — now Malaysia), Singapore, Manila (Philippines) and finally to Hong Kong. Our role would be to clear mine fields for 2–3 months along the coast of China and around the islands.

The voyage to Hong Kong

Sailing to Malta

On board Liberty, I needed to brush up on my flag hoist signals. I had not used them since training back in 1942, so I revised using the Flag Signals Book (FSB). We sailed through to Gibraltar alright and then set sail for Malta.

On the way we had a boxing competition. I was to fight a cook, who was a small, thick-set, stout fellow. I was a foot taller, but he was a proper amateur boxer so he slaughtered me. But I lasted a few rounds and got a few hits in.



The Bridge of HMS Liberty. Sailing in the Mediterranean, October 1945.

I was on the bridge with Lieut. Morgan at the time.

A few days later he fell ill. The medical artificer on board attended him. There was a doctor on board the Courier and I sent a message to him describing the symptoms (low abdominal pains). The message back from the doctor said it was possibly appendicitis and the artificer was told to put ice on his abdomen. I did wonder if it was anything to do with our boxing bout, but probably not! As far as I know that was the end of it.

I also did some more barber's duties. 'Customers' would pay 2d (two old pence) or 3d ('thruppence'). The money would go into a fund to pay for the barber's equipment.

The day before we were due to arrive at Malta, a terrific storm blew up. We were sailing along, the third in line behind Courier (leading). A signal came from Courier from its top mast — "Blue 180". This is a signal meaning "emergency — all ships must turn 180 degrees to port, together". Such signals must be repeated from the sender.

The navigating officer on Liberty said to me: "Did you get that bunce?" ('Bunce' is naval slang for a signalman. — it derives from 'bunting tosser', referring to bunting that signalmen hoisted up for signals in years gone by). "Well yes" I said, "but he should have sent it twice." "Bloody idiots", the officer said. The correct procedure was for the sender to send it twice, then for all receivers to acknowledge with a flash that they had received it, and finally for the sender to send a five-second flash, meaning 'Execute', upon which all ships should execute the order.

I didn't send a flash to acknowledge the 'Blue 180' signal, because we had received only one, nor did we intend to comply with the order at that instant. However, all the other ships in the flotilla must have decided to act, because at the 'Execute' signal they all turned to port together — while we steamed straight ahead! Then Courier flashed to us on its main signal lamp (not the top mast) — 'Blue 180' twice, then 'Execute'. We turned to port.

Another signal soon came to us from Courier, requesting our Captain to contact Courier immediately. I went to the Captain who was asleep below. I was dripping wet in my oilskins,

and said to him that he needed to come immediately and talk to Courier by radio. I did not mention the incident. He went in his pyjamas to the radio room, and later came back to the bridge and said that when we got in port, he was to report with the signalman to the Courier. The navigating officer I had been with on the bridge at the time of the incident, said to me “Don’t worry Bunce!”

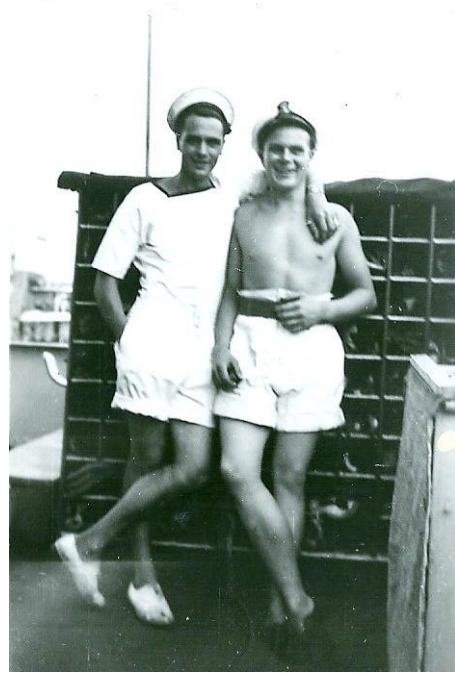
Ashore at Valletta (Malta), the Captain and I went aboard the Courier. The Captain went into the Flotilla Commander’s cabin while I waited outside. After a few minutes he came out. “Come on, Bunce” he said, “back to shore”. Naturally I asked what had happened. He explained that the Courier signalman had been in the cabin and had got a bollocking from the Flotilla Commander, as he had made the error.

His excuse had been that he thought the ships had been too close to the rocks (the reason for the emergency action) and so he had decided to send only one ‘Blue 180’ before the ‘Execute’ signal to hasten the action. Funnily enough, I had not been nervous or worried during the whole incident, because I knew I had done nothing wrong.

Penang and Singapore

I remember a few other things about the voyage to Hong Kong. At Penang we went ashore and I bought Joan some wedge-heeled shoes there; I knew her shoe size. I traded cigarettes for them. The flotilla set sail for Singapore next.

En route there was another signalling incident. This time it was a ‘Blue 150’ signal and sent correctly, so we turned to port at ‘Execute’. But one of the other ships behind us didn’t! Someone on board, perhaps the signalman, had made a mistake. The vessel cut right across our bows as it plied straight ahead while we turned to port. It seemed that we missed it by only a few feet! Needless to say, someone else got a bollocking when we arrived in Singapore.



Aboard HMS Liberty in Colombo, Ceylon, November 1945.

Left photo: Alf Hattersley on the bridge, using an Aldis signal lamp.

Right photo: Alf Hattersley (left) and Derek Baker (right, from Bristol) on the flag deck.

There were quite a few Japanese navy ships in Singapore harbour, all with black balls hoisted and guns pointing downwards to signify they had surrendered. They were still manned by Japanese sailors though. We were anchored very close to a Japanese destroyer. I was on early watch (4–8 am). At daylight, I remember seeing all the Japanese crew on deck, exercising in their whites. Meanwhile, our crew were all fast asleep still! We were waiting in Singapore for our sailing orders, and were able to go ashore quite a few times.

One day I received a signal by lamp to say that a message would follow. I acknowledged. Then a very long message started. Luckily an artificer gunner (a Bristolian called Derek Baker, who knew Joan actually) was chatting next to me at the time. I said to him, “Take this message down!” Just as well I did, because it was the longest message I had ever taken, all in code, and I wouldn’t have got it all if I had been by myself.

It was the complete sailing orders from Singapore to Manila, and included a detailed course out of Singapore harbour to avoid sunken Japanese ships. I was able to take the message to the coding room to be decoded without any need for repetition. At one point sailing out of

Singapore harbour, I remember the skipper saying that we should now be passing the mast of a sunken ship on our port side. Sure enough, there it was, and we sailed past it.

Manila

We now headed for Borneo and the Philippines. We sailed all along the north coast of Borneo, what is now the Malaysian coast of Sarawak and Sabah states with Brunei in between. At Manila we received a signal from a US Navy ship telling us where to anchor. The buggers had put us right on the outside of the harbour and we couldn't get to shore very readily.

We were allowed to take leave ashore. Our boats would be packed with as many sailors as possible to maximise our shore time. On one of these occasions, a Yankee speed boat saw us making the long crossing to the quayside. He raced towards us and sped round and round our boat to give us a rough time. As it was so full, the boat nearly capsized. We yelled out all the names under the sun to the Yankee boat, but they thought it was a great joke and were all laughing.

We went ashore with Malayan currency and our uniforms stuffed with English cigarettes, to exchange for whatever we bought. In Malaya our cigarettes had fetched a high price. But we were surprised when we went to a bar to buy drinks with Malayan dollars and were refused. Even our cigarettes were rejected. "No good", the barman said. We couldn't use them anywhere else either! The locals had got used to dealing with the Americans and their superior quality cigarettes and more valuable currency.

Eventually we found a place where they were serving free doughnuts and coffee. It reminded me of being like Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) hostels back home. It was all we could find! As we were all sat around a table, a group of Yankee sailors gathered around taking the Mickey out of us. 'You Brits are too late! We've already beaten the Japs' they boasted, 'and now you lot turn up when it's all over!', or words to that effect.

Some of us got stroppy, pointing out that the US had taken years to join the war and that we had been in the war for much longer than they had. It got quite serious and nearly came to blows, but as they outnumbered us by far, we weren't going to be the first to start a fight and it all ended without serious incident.

There were terrific storms on the voyage from Manila to Hong Kong. It was so rough that sometimes we could only see each other in the flotilla when two or more ships were simultaneously atop the crest of waves! We could see the screws of our sister ships right out of the water on occasion.

This was the only time in the navy that I was seasick. I was heaving so badly that I sometimes retched up blood. Nevertheless, I remained at my station when rostered as did the other two signalmen aboard. At one point in the storms, we thought we had lost our 'Bym' but we all eventually arrived safely in Hong Kong.

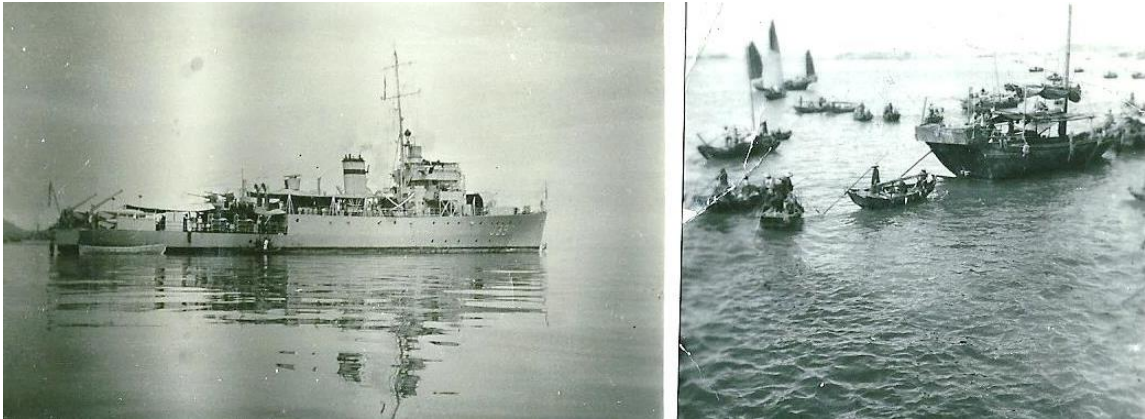
Hong Kong

Arriving in Hong Kong harbour, we immediately became surrounded by Chinese junks. They had nets out from over their sides. The Chinese on board were trying to catch any waste food in our refuse and any other garbage we threw overboard. They were starving and we saw them fighting over the scraps of food they landed on deck, eating soggy bread and any other scraps. This happened the whole time we were there.



HMS Liberty, Fleet Minesweeper, moored in Hong Kong. December 1945.

Again, we went ashore from time to time. The dock gates at Hong Kong were manned by huge Indian police carrying long batons. Outside the gates, dozens of prostitutes were waiting for the sailors. Some were very young I remember. The prostitutes would pull one's arms or collar, all outcompeting one another about the price.



*HMS Liberty (left) and Chinese junks and sampans — Hong Kong harbour, 1945.
[Some other photos on Liberty are at Appendix 8]*

On one occasion, a Bristol lad and I finally got away from the *melée*, into a side street. But the girls followed us. They went especially for him, trying to pull his trousers down in a doorway. He resisted. No sooner did he pull his trousers up than they pulled them down again. This went on for a while but eventually they gave up and left us alone.

We were about 2–3 weeks in Hong Kong. Three or four ships from our flotilla would sail up the China coast to a designated area to clear mines, for example a bay. Each trip comprised one day sailing to the area, one sweeping, and a third day for the return. Chinese would accompany us so that they could let everyone know in the designated area on the day we arrived, that on the following day the bay should be kept clear so we could clear mines. Sweeps were done as follows. Minesweepers would sail in a line abreast with the 'Bym' behind. We would each put our two paravanes (sweeps) out behind us. These are long wires with cutters at their ends. As the cutters cut the underwater cables mooring the mines, the mines would pop up to the surface behind us. The 'Bym' would then shoot at the mines with 0.5 inch armour-piercing heavy rifles in order to sink, not explode them.



Some of the crew of HMS Liberty. Signalman Alf Hattersley is in back row, 2nd from left, with telegraphists either side of him, and 'Barny' (another Signalman) on the right. Front row: the sailor on the left was a medical orderly, the middle sailor a signalman, and the right sailor (with glasses) a coder. Names to faces not recalled now, but there are some notes on the back of the photo: "Lecher, Barnickle [ie Barny], Round, Mercer, Rice".

Hong Kong, 12 December 1945

Arriving at one particular bay, we found it full of local fishing vessels. They had ignored the previous day's warning to avoid the area that day. The skipper said: "Take no notice. They have been given the warning. Carry on with the sweep." So we did. All the mines started popping up. The fishing boats scattered as quickly as they could and soon none could be seen. None hit a mine fortunately.

On another occasion, I went ashore with an officer at one of the bays to give the advance notice of a sweep. I had never before seen anything like it in all my life, nor have I since. At the market stalls near the shore, all kinds of beetles, bugs and other insects were for sale to eat, wrapped up in paper bags. A little inland, we were near some trees. 'What a smell!' I thought. Nearby was a pit full of human excrement. It was for spreading as fertiliser over the rice paddy fields. 'No more rice for me!' I thought.

A bit further on, there was another surprise, this time a pleasant one. We came upon a wonderful house and garden near a plantation and had a good look around. They were both absolutely beautiful and perfectly kept, and their beauty and peacefulness has left a lasting image in my mind. We didn't see anyone while there.



The crew of HMS Liberty. Hong Kong, 1946. Alf Hattersley is to the left of the cross in the photo—2nd row from the top, far right in the photo.

Ships in our flotilla each formed a cricket team so we could have a cricket competition. The pitch was cork matting. In one of the first matches I remember, I was batsmen number 3 or 4. Up came the bowler. I never saw the ball and it hit the wicket. It turned out this particular bloke had been a player for one of the English County teams! So then it didn't seem so bad. Needless to say, I was put lower down in the batting order from then on. I had also played cricket previously in the navy, at Great Yarmouth, where I used to do stumping for the team. Because I scored 54 in a match once, I was even made captain. So I suppose that I couldn't have been too hopeless, compared with other RN lads at least.

MY LAST DAYS IN THE ROYAL NAVY

Home to England

After being 2–3 months in Hong Kong, HMS Liberty was to sail for Japan. We were given a choice of staying on in the RN and sailing with Liberty or being released and demobbed. I was looking forward to going home to England and my family so I decided on a demob. We were given an option of being demobbed in Australia instead of England, with the possibility of settling there. If I had not been married, I would have considered it very seriously.

I was to be relieved by an RN signalman arriving from Australia. He was late arriving and the day before I was to leave for England, I was told I would not be demobbed and would be going to Japan if he wasn't on board by the morning. He hadn't arrived by day's end and I resigned myself to going to Japan. But at about 4 am on the fateful morning, I was awoken with the words "Hey — get your kit together and get the launch ashore! He's arrived!" This was only about three hours before HMS Liberty set sail. I and five others who were leaving the ship to go back home, boarded the launch to go ashore. We would await the next available ship to Britain.



Signalman 'Barny'. HMS Liberty, Far East.

I had become friends with a regular RN Signalman while on HMS Liberty — I can't recall his full name but I knew him as 'Barny'. He sailed to Japan. When I was back in England he wrote to me once telling me all his news. It was a very interesting account and gave me an insight into what I would have experienced if my relief had not made it to Liberty in time. For example, he had been to Nagasaki and Hiroshima shortly after the atom bombs were dropped on those cities. Unfortunately I did not keep the letter.

I took passage to the United Kingdom on board HMS Berryhead, a fleet supply ship. My route home was the same as the outgoing passage. I had no official duties on board HMS Berryhead but its signalman got me and others to help him out from time to time, which we were glad to do.

Demob and Civvy Street

HMS Berryhead docked in Shoeburyness, near Southend-on-Sea, Essex. From there I took the train to Plymouth arriving in Devonport on 5 April 1946. Soon after, I was discharged from the Royal Navy at HMS Impregnable where I had first reported for duty in 1942. My final demobilisation date was in June 1946. So ended my WWII and Royal Navy years. I had joined as an Ordinary Signalman and left at Signalman rank.

I had been told by Halifax Gas Company that there would be a job for me when I got back from the war. My wife Joan, however, did not want to leave Bristol so I looked for work there. As I had gas work experience, I tried Bristol Gas Company but they said that they would give me a temporary job only. They could not guarantee I would be made permanent as they were giving preference to their own prior employees who were returning from the war.

I thought about becoming a policeman and tried Bristol police, but I was rejected by them because I was five foot and nine and a half inches tall, falling short of their five feet ten

inches requirement. Joan's father Sid, suggested I apply for the British Railways Police because it had a lower height requirement, so I did.

I was accepted and joined the British Railways Police force in either July or August 1946. I did my police training in Caterham. I served from 1946–1951.

***BRITISH RAILWAYS POLICE TRAINING SCHOOL.
Seventh Course, October 1948.***



Alf Hattersley is in the middle row, 2nd in from the left of the photograph.

I left the police due to increasing hearing problems, which had started soon after the war. For example, I was in court one day giving evidence and I could not hear what the judge or others were saying. I transferred to a position as accounts clerk in the parcels division of British Railways, a job I did until I retired at age 58 in 1981.

I still have some memorabilia from those war years. These include letters and telegrams to and from my wife Joan, bank notes (low denominations!) that I used while in different locations, a camphor box with a unique padlock that I bought in Hong Kong, a few leaflets of

one sort or another (including the leaflets for servicemen from Generals Montgomery and Eisenhower just prior to D-Day — see Appendices 4 & 5) and, of course, my war medals. I received my medals and ribbons in 1947, I think it was. They were sent through the mail to my home, then 57 Saltmarsh Drive, Lawrence Weston, Bristol. This was Joan's and my first home together. I still have the original little cardboard box the medals came in. The box was sent from 'Director of Navy (Accounts), Branch 3B, "D" Block, Foxhill Huttments, Bath, Somerset', with the message:

"The Secretary of the Admiralty presents his compliments and by command of the Lord Commissioners of the Admiralty has the honour to transmit the enclosed Awards granted for service during the war 1939–45".

There were instructions on how to wear the medals (the Order of Mounting). From left to right (as you look at them) the medals and their order are: 'The 1939–45 Star' (a campaign Star for the Battle of Britain); 'The Italy Star' (another campaign star, for the Italy campaign); 'France and Germany Star' (another campaign star, for the Atlantic campaign); 'The Defence Medal' (for the defence of Britain); and, the '1939–45 War Medal (a general war medal I think).



[Paul's footnote: my father ended some written notes he once made about his war experiences, as follows: "*I hope this has been of some interest to you; it now seems a far-off memory to me! (Please excuse the writing; I still can't use my hand very well.)*"]

Alf and his wife Joan lived in Bristol all their married life. Joan died 31 December 2008 in Bristol. Tragically, Alf and Joan's third and youngest child—Stephen—had died only seven weeks earlier, on 13 November 2008.

APPENDIX 1—Allied propaganda leaflet picked up on Avola beach, Sicily. It was folded and faded on one side by the sun.



APPENDIX 2

EIGHTH ARMY NEWS

16 JULY 1943 No. 3 Vol. 2 SICILY

SIMETO BRIDGE OURS

News in brief

British Overseas Airways Corporation yesterday opened a London - Moscow air service by way of Cairo. Other halts will include Habbaniyah (Iraq) Pahlavi (Persia) and Astrakhan (Russia). In the meantime only official passengers and freight will be carried.

British «train-busting» planes are now operating on the banks of the Rhine, 300 miles from home.

American sources said United States troops now threatened the entire communications system in Central Sicily.

According to a British official statement the Allies by noon yesterday held seven airfields in Sicily and one flying-boat base.

Three major air attacks were made by Allied fliers yesterday on Messina, the port linking Sicily with the Italian mainland.

In the morning 200 bombers, including Fortresses, pommelled the port. Then came an all-Canadian fleet of Wellingtons and after them Liberators.

Axis communiqués on Sicily yesterday said the enemy was «beating back stubborn Anglo-Saxon attacks supported by large numbers of tanks.»

The main fighting yesterday was for the bridge across the Simeto river. This bridge is about 140 feet long and is the biggest RE obstacle on the island. Three days ago paratroops were dropped on it, but it was recaptured by the Germans. It is now in our hands.

Though the enemy has mined a good party yesterday when they captured 12 R 35's (French tanks) fifty motor cycles, six vehicles and 120 prisoners.

Our armour engaged the enemy north of Scordia and by yesterday afternoon the town was taken. They went on to engage the enemy six or seven miles from the Gerbini aerodromes.

Our left flank now rests on Caltagirone in close touch with United States 7th Army in close touch with them.

Further west the Americans are pushing on towards Palermo. They are established from Caltanissetta to Agrigento.

A British Field Regiment had low.

Red Army Strikes

News of a great Red Army offensive north and east of Orel yesterday completed the picture of a general Allied land offensive in Europe.

Striking into the German bulge east of Orel from two directions the Russians in two days fighting have pierced the enemy's 25 miles front and advanced 26 miles.

In three days fighting the Bolsheviks claim to have killed 12,000 German and captured 2,000. They have captured 100 tanks and destroyed 500.

The have routed three infantry and two panzer divisions.

For ten days the Russian Kursk salient, below Orel has been resisting violent German assaults.

The Berlin Radio commentator Ser-torius admitted last night: «North of Orel a regular Russian offensive has developed.» Moscow Radio confined itself to a brief flash: «The Red Army offensive continues.»

COPIES OF THIS NEWS ARE LIMITED PASS YOUR COPY AROUND WHEN YOU HAVE READ IT.

Memory Lane

Why the Italian Fleet did not interfere with the Allied landings on Sicily was explained yesterday by Virginio Gayda in «Giornale d'Italia» and broadcast through Rome Radio. «Italians must remember,» he said, «that mastery of the sea depends directly on mastery of the air.

In the invasion of our land the Royal British Fleet operated directly under massive air support.» It was only a year ago yesterday that the great Italian newspaper «Messaggero» had stated: «Italy has expelled the Royal Navy from the Mediterranean.»

BLACK DATE

Of the new Russian offensive the B. B. C. commentator W. N. Ewer said last night: «In two weeks Germany's summer offensive in Russia has broken down.»

«The Allies are for the first time in this war on the offensive everywhere,» Ewer recalled that on July 15, 1918, exactly a quarter of a century ago, Ludendorff launched his two-pronged offensive east and west of Rheims.

This provoked the Foch counter-offensive that ended the war. Although the German armies of 1943 had much more fight in them than those of 1918, July 15, 1943, might well become an historic date in German military annals.

Società Tipografica di Siracusa P. R. 2.

APPENDIX 3

CORRIERE DI SIRACUSA

16 LUGLIO 1943 Uffici: Via Minerva n. 3 Numero 3

Voce di Roma

Virginio Gayda del « Giornale d'Italia » ha spiegato perchè la flotta italiana non è mai intervenuta con lo sbarco alleato sulle spiagge della Sicilia. Ha annunciato per la Radio che gli Italiani debbono ricordarsi che la dominazione del mare dipende direttamente dalla dominazione dell'aria. Nella invasione alleata la Regia Marina Britannica ha avuto l'appoggio di una grande flotta aerea.

Un anno fa ieri il grande giornale « Il Messaggero » si vantò che l'Italia aveva spazato la Regia Marina Britannica dal Mediterraneo.

Roma si lagnava ieri notte che le Truppe Alleate cancellavano le massime del Duce dai muri in Sicilia.

Agli Anglo-Sassoni questo pare uno scherzo ma noi indichiamo che i veri vincitori non si inchinano a tale pettegolezza.

Notizie dal fronte Siciliano

Ieri tutti i combattimenti si svolsero intorno al ponte che attraversa il fiume Simeto. Questo ponte, lungo 60 metri, costituisce un ostacolo molto serio. Tre giorni fa i paracadutisti alleati lo conquistarono, ma i Tedeschi riuscirono a riprenderlo. Il ponte oggi è in possesso degli alleati.

Benchè i Tedeschi abbiano messo le mine sotto il ponte, parecchi carri armati inglesi riuscirono ad attraversare il fiume, dove incontrarono l'artiglieria tedesca a sud di CATANIA.

Le truppe inglesi sono penetrate a sud di SCORDIA e nel pomeriggio di ieri la città veniva occupata.

Si è rinnovata la battaglia a 9 o 10 chilometri dall'aerodromo di GERBINI.

VIZZINI, MILETTO e SCORDIA vennero occupati ed il terreno davanti a questi villaggi domina CATANIA.

Il fianco sinistro inglese è a CALTAGIRONE vicino le truppe americane.

Più ad ovest gli Americani si affrettano verso PALERMO.

Un reggimento di artiglieria inglese ieri si è distinto catturando 12 carri armati (R. 35) 50 motociclette, 6 cannoni e 120 prigionieri.

BREVI NOTIZIE

Roberto Paterson, sostituto Segretario Americano della Guerra annunciò ieri che le truppe dell'Asse in Sicilia ammontavano a 300.000, di cui 60.000 erano tedesche.

La vittoria alleata era assicurata ma non sarebbe necessariamente facile. Gli Alleati distavano molto da Berlino e da Tokio. Paterson aggiunse che le casualità alleate nello sbarco iniziale non erano grandi.

Un altro comunicato odierno informa che le truppe americane adesso minacciano tutte le comunicazioni della Sicilia centrale.

Secondo un comunicato ufficiale inglese gli Alleati al mezzogiorno di ieri avevano occupato sette aerodromi in Sicilia.

I comunicati dell'Asse ieri informavano che i tedeschi stavano ricacciando ferocissimi attacchi alleati con gran numero di carri armati.

La Divisione Herman Goerig, la 10. Divisione di Bersaglieri, e la 210. Divisione Costiera Italiana si erano comportati con molta bravura.

Forze aeree alleate hanno effettuato ieri tre violente incursioni contro il porto di MESSINA, che allaccia l'isola al continente.

Annuncio importante per tutte le classi lavoratrici

Da oggi (16 luglio) il Governo Militare Alleato ha aperto un Ufficio Civile del Lavoro nella Piazza Pancali (Ristorante Annino).

I lavoratori di tutti i mestieri dovranno presentarsi al più presto possibile nel suddetto ufficio per essere registrati nella loro categoria di lavoro.

Nella prima occasione verranno sistemati nei loro mestieri.

Nuova offensiva russa

Notizie di una violenta offensiva russa al nord e al sud OREL ieri completava il quadro di una generale offensiva alleata in Europa.

Assaltando i Tedeschi da due punti l'esercito russo ha penetrato nel fronte tedesco di 40 chilometri e anche avanzato su quasi 40 chilometri.

Accresciute perdite tedesche

In 3 giorni di combattimento ferocissimi, i Bolscevichi hanno trucidato 12000 tedeschi e fatto oltre 2000 prigionieri.

Hanno catturato 100 carri armati e distrutto altri 300. Hanno sconfitto 3 divisioni di fanteria e 2 divisioni corazzate.

Radio tedesca

Sertorio, commentatore della Radio berlinese, ammesse ieri notte «Al nord di Orel si sviluppa una nuova offensiva russa di grande proporzioni».

La Radio di Mosca disse brevemente «La nostra nuova offensiva continua».

Una data storica

Parlando della nuova offensiva il commentatore del B. B. C. W. N. Ewer disse ieri sera «In due settimane l'offensiva estiva venne rotta. Gli Alleati per la prima volta della guerra attuale sono dappertutto fra l'offensiva».

Ewer ricorda che nel luglio 15, 1918, precisamente 25 anni fa, il generale Ludendorff cominciava la sua offensiva ad est e ovest di Rheims.

Questo provocò il contrattacco del generale Foch che terminò la guerra.

Benchè gli eserciti tedeschi del 1943 siano in migliore condizione di quelli del 1914, il 15 luglio 1918 ben potrebbe essere una data storica negli annali militari tedeschi.

Si cercano venti persone che parlino l'inglese. Essi si devono presentare alla sede dell'Istituto Tecnico muniti di questo avviso.

Società Tipografica di Siracusa

Reverse side of Appendix 2

APPENDIX 4

21 ARMY GROUP

PERSONAL MESSAGE
FROM THE C-in-C

To be read out to all Troops

1. The time has come to deal the enemy a terrific blow in Western Europe.

The blow will be struck by the combined sea, land, and air forces of the Allies—together constituting one great Allied team, under the supreme command of General Eisenhower.

2. On the eve of this great adventure I send my best wishes to every soldier in the Allied team.

To us is given the honour of striking a blow for freedom which will live in history; and in the better days that lie ahead men will speak with pride of our doings. We have a great and a righteous cause.

Let us pray that "The Lord Mighty in Battle" will go forth with our armies, and that His special providence will aid us in the struggle.

3. I want every soldier to know that I have complete confidence in the successful outcome of the operations that we are now about to begin.

With stout hearts, and with enthusiasm for the contest, let us go forward to victory.

4. And, as we enter the battle, let us recall the words of a famous soldier spoken many years ago:—

*"He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
Who dare not put it to the touch,
To win or lose it all."*

5. Good luck to each one of you. And good hunting on the main land of Europe.

B. L. Montgomery
General
C-in-C 21 Army Group.

5-6-1944.

APPENDIX 5.

SUPREME HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE



Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force!

You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other Fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.

Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely.

But this is the year 1944! Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940-41. The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle, man-to-man. Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war, and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men. The tide has turned! The free men of the world are marching together to Victory!

I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory!

Good Luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.

Dwight D. Eisenhower

*given to D-Day troops
re landing on D-Day. 23/9/94
(6th JUNE 1944) To PAUA*

APPENDIX 6. 'Shire' article, June 1994 with brief account of D-Day landings by Ray Priddle.

JUNE 1994 SHIRE - Page 5

ANNIVERSARY - THE NORMANDY LANDINGS "D" DAY JUNE 6th 1944



This photo of Dennis Holt was taken in Holland during Operation "Market Garden", the clip being taken from Pathe News shown at that time at the Savoy Cinema, Shirehampton.

Some of us are still fortunate enough to be able to return to the Normandy Beaches again after 50 years. Myself, I am a D. Day man, and also a member of the Normandy Veteran's Association, Bristol Branch. There will be two full coaches leaving Bristol for Normandy, on board will be 60 veterans with their wives, families and friends. For some veterans it will be their first time back - myself, I've been back several times, but this time it will be the big one. People ask why we go back, it is to pay our respects to the thousands of our comrades who gave their lives for the freedom we have enjoyed to the present day. We do not forget also those who lost their lives in other campaigns Dunkirk, Middle East, Far East etc, and the thousands of civilians who died here on the Home Front. We remember too the millions who were put to their death in the concentration camps all over Europe - a very high price to pay and let's hope this will never happen again. In the years to come we hope our children's children will talk with pride of our doing. Perhaps Normandy was a little special, it gave freedom back to millions of people. All our yesterdays are their tomorrow's.

"WE WILL REMEMBER THEM"

Dennis Holt
(Other local lads going on the trip to Normandy are: George Jones, R. N. Sea Mill's Branch Chairman; Stan Carter, Army, Groveleaze, Shirehampton; Phil Reed, Army, Sunny Hill, Shirehampton; Dennis Stacey, M.N. Lower High Street, Shirehampton).

Ray Priddle was signalman with Dad (A. Hattersley) when taking up the shore station at Juno Beach 6/6/44

NOBODY
at Tails
ENTRY DAY SATURDAY 11th JUNE

I served during the war in the Royal Navy as a signalman in combined operations and was a member of a beach signal section.

We boarded the troopship "The Isle of Guernsey" at Southampton and crossed the channel, landing on the coast of Normandy at a place called Bernieres-Sur-Mer, which was part of JUNO section. The time was 7.30am on D-Day. I was one of four in an advance party and landed with the Canadian assault troops. We disembarked from the troopship down scramble nets into the landing craft, which gave us a very bumpy passage to the beach, as the sea was very rough.

Having made the shore safely, we ran a couple of hundred yards up the beach to the shelter of a sea-wall, which gave us some cover from the enemy's fire. We then dug ourselves in and set up our signal station to transmit and receive messages from the Headquarters ship, under the command of the Beach Master.

After the initial onslaught and a few hours later, things became a little quieter, the Canadian troops had pushed on inland. I then ventured to look around me and to my surprise walking along the shore I recognised a fellow I knew, he lived in the next street to me in Avonmouth - his name, Bob Watkins. He was a crew member of a landing craft which had been damaged and he was looking for another craft from his ship to give him a lift back on board (small world isn't it!).

When our main party came ashore later in the day, we set up our headquarters in a house on the beach promenade and there we stayed for a couple of months.

My wife and I recently celebrated our Golden wedding and to mark the occasion our daughter, Sue, and her husband, Tim Rose, took us to Normandy for a week, this being the first time I had returned in fifty years. We visited all the beaches used for the invasion, many museums and war cemeteries. It was a very interesting, and also a very moving experience for me.

I showed the family the spot where I landed on D-Day and the house we used as our headquarters, which although still standing is now boarded up.

I was one of the lucky ones - I came through unscathed and am still here 50 years later to tell the tale. We must never forget the many young lives that were lost and so many that were wounded.

May I take this opportunity of thanking all the relatives and friends who joined Kath and I at our Golden Wedding celebration and helped make it such an enjoyable and memorable occasion. Sincere thanks for the many lovely cards, flowers and gifts we received.

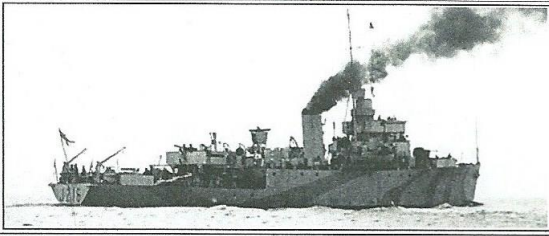
D-DAY REMEMBERED BY RAY PRIDDLE

(Known by Dad as Timmy Priddle)

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APPENDIX 7. Web page from 'Naval History'.

Naval History Homepage and Site Search



**SERVICE HISTORIES of ROYAL NAVY WARSHIPS
in WORLD WAR 2**
by Lt Cdr Geoffrey B Mason RN (Rtd) (c) 2001

**HMS LIBERTY (J 391) - Algerine-class
Fleet Minesweeper**

Edited by Gordon Smith, Naval-History.Net

HMS Espiegle, sister-ship (Navy Photos/Mark Teadham, click to enlarge) return to Contents List

ALGERINE-Class Fleet Minesweeper fitted with Turbine propulsion machinery ordered on 30th April 1942 from Harland and Wolff, Belfast. Laid down on 27th November 1943 at the same time as sister ships HARE and JEWEL this ship was launched on 22nd August 1944. The name was introduced in 1632 when given to the 44 gun ship CHARLES in 1649. It was also used later by 13 other vessels, lastly by a destroyer built by JS White at Cowes in 1913 instead of previous name ROSALIND after launch. Build of this minesweeper was completed on 18th January 1945. She had not been adopted by any civil community in UK following a successful WARSHIP WEEK campaign during 1941-42 for National Savings as her build had not been started.

Battle Honours

MARTINIQUE 1809 - HELIGOLAND 1914 - DOGGER BANK 1915 - JUTLAND 1916

Heraldic Data

Badge: On a Field Blue, Statue of Liberty in New York Harbour

Details of War Service

(for more ship information, go to [Naval History Homepage](#) and type name in Site Search)

1945

January	Contractors trials and commissioned for service with 10th Minesweeping Flotilla. (Note: The ships in this Flotilla were HM Miner sweepers COURIER, FELICITY, GOLDEN FLEECE, and SERENE which had been built in Canada.
18th	Build completion and commenced Acceptance Trials. On completion of Acceptance Trials and took passage to commence work-up for operational service at Tobermory
February	Work-up at Tobermory. Passage to Granton for minesweeping training and work-up. Carried out minesweeping training in Firth of Forth area.
March 22nd	Joined Flotilla at Granton on completion of training. Passage to Harwich with ships of Flotilla for minesweeping operations in Nore Command.
April	Deployed with Flotilla for minesweeping in southern North Sea to ensure safe passage of convoys in Nore Command including military convoys to Antwerp as well as in the Thames estuary for traffic in North Sea. (Note: During this period extensive minelaying was being carried out by enemy aircraft, surface craft. Attacks on convoys were also being carried out by midget submarines and E Boat Boats. See HOLD THE NARROW SEA by P Smith, BATTLE OF THE EAST COAST by JP Foynes and ENGAGE THE ENEMY MORE CLOSELY by C Barnett.
May	Based at Cuxhaven in continuation of North Sea mine clearance.
June	Deployed with Flotilla for mine clearance in North Sea until withdrawn for refit and preparation for foreign service.
July	Under refit.

Post War Notes

HMS LIBERTY rejoined the Flotilla on completion and took passage with them in October 1945 for duty based initially at Singapore. First deployed for mine clearance in areas near Singapore including ports in Indonesia she was later based at Hong Kong for similar duties. The ship returned to UK and arrived at Portsmouth to Pay-off and reduce to Reserve status in July 1946. Whilst Laid-up at Devonport she was put on the Sales List and sold to Belgium in 1949. After refit at Cowes, Isle of Wight this ship was renamed

APPENDIX 8. *More pictures on HMS Liberty.*



Alf Hattersley, manning a 10 inch signal lamp on HMS Liberty. Penang 1945.



Chinese steward (name not recalled). He used to be very sea sick! Hong Kong 1945.



HMS Liberty looking aft from the bridge. Sailing in the Med, October 1945. HMS Welcome sailing aft, followed by HMS Trodday (the 'Bym').



HMS Liberty looking for'd from the bridge. Sailing in the Med, October 1945.

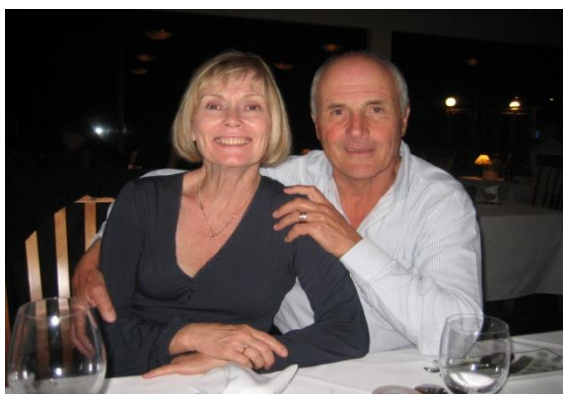
Royal Navy World War II experiences—Signalman Alfred Hattersley



Alf & Joan Hattersley, and daughter Cheryll Cole at Wells market place, Somerset — summer 2002



Lt Cdr Nick Hattersley RAN (Alf's grandson) at Nowra, NSW Australia — February 2008



Son Paul and wife Anne (parents of Nick and Vanessa) at home in Dalmeny NSW, Australia — 8 April 2012



Vanessa Hattersley (Alf's granddaughter) with Pete Talbot. In Milford Sound, New Zealand — April 2011



L-R: Stephen (Alf's youngest son), his wife Kate, Alf and Paul Hattersley — at Clevedon, 2007



Alex Thomson (Anne's father, left) and brother Frank (see p.39), at Alex's 80th birthday — Deal, Kent. 31 Aug 2002



Alf with two of his and Joan's three children [Paul and Cheryll; Stephen deceased, Joan deceased], five of his seven grandchildren [Kate, Louise, Ross, Mark and Charlotte; Nick and Vanessa absent], and six of his seven great grandchildren [Carrie, Billy and Tasha, and Yasmine, Jamie and Amelia] — together with some partners [Chris, Anne, Malcolm, Kevin, Rachel and Darren].

At Kate and Malcolm's home in Chilworth, Hants (quite near Bursledon!)—17 June 2012.

Back row, L-R: Ross Hattersley (Stephen's eldest son), Carrie Brackley (Kate & Malcolm's eldest, on Ross's shoulders), Darren (yellow T-shirt) and partner Charlotte Hattersley (Stephen's third child), Paul Brand (Joan's niece's Lynn's only son—in white T-shirt, in front of Charlotte), Louise Lu (Cheryll's second daughter) holding her youngest [left] and oldest [right] children (Amelia and Yasmine respectively), Kevin Lu (Louise's husband, in blue T-shirt), Rachel Hattersley (Mark's wife), and Mark Hattersley (Stephen's middle child). Front row, L-R: Chris Cole (Cheryll's husband), Anne Hattersley (Paul's wife), Paul Hattersley and Cheryll Cole (Alf's two surviving children), ALF HATTERSLEY, Kate Brackley (Cheryll's eldest), Billy Brackley (Kate and Malcolm's eldest child), Jamie Lu (Louise & Kevin's middle child), and Malcolm Brackley (in blue-checked sports shirt) behind Tasha Brackley (Kate & Malcolm's youngest child).



*R to L: Paul Hattersley, wife Anne, daughter Vanessa, son Nick, and Nick's wife Demelza.
Family Day at HMAS Albatross, Nowra, NSW Australia. 8 December 2008.*

Royal Navy World War II experiences—Signalman Alfred Hattersley



Alf and Joan Hattersley at their Golden Wedding dinner, In the Bristol Room, Avon Gorge Hotel, Bristol. 11 March 1994.



Stephen Hattersley, his wife Kate, and children Ross, Charlotte and Mark. At Avon Gorge Hotel. 11 March 1994.

[These two photographs are included in memory of Joan and Stephen, who both died in 2008.]



Alf and Joan at Southbourne. Summer 1994



Alf Hattersley at the Juno beach memorial, Bernieres-sur-Mer. June 1994.



House on Juno beach, opposite which Alf Hattersley landed on 6 June 1994. Cheryll & Chris Cole (pictured) took Alf to Normandy for the D-Day 50th Anniversary. June 1994.

Royal Navy World War II experiences—Signalman Alfred Hattersley



Monument at Arromanches, Normandy. Gold Beach. June 1994.



Remains of the 'Mulberry Harbour', Arromanches, Normandy. 'Gold Beach' June 1994..



*Alf Hattersley returning from his 50th D-Day Anniversary trip to Normandy. June 1994.
Two unknown children (sisters) on the ferry ('Normandie') thanked Alf for his autograph.*

Royal Navy World War II experiences—Signalman Alfred Hattersley



Stephen and Kate Hattersley, with daughter Charlotte. At The George Inn pub, Norton St Philip, Somerset, UK. 2002



*Ross Hattersley (Stephen and Kate's first son). 1997.
2nd Battalion Light Infantry. Served in Northern Ireland.*



*Mark Hattersley (Stephen & Kate's second son). 1999.
2nd Royal Tank Regiment, Royal Armoured Division.
Served in Kosovo, Germany and Canada.*