



**Copyright - Legasee under licence [2011]. Except as provided by the Copyright Act 1968, no part of this document may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted or published in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the publisher.**

**For details please contact: [info@legasee.org.uk](mailto:info@legasee.org.uk)**

Thank you for downloading this transcript featuring **Ernest Kellaway**

Before you read it we'd like to make you aware of our copyright terms and conditions.

#### Copyright license

Legasee grants to you a worldwide non-exclusive royalty-free revocable license to:

- view this document and the material associated with this Veteran on a computer or mobile device;
- copy and store this document and the material associated with this Veteran on your computer and in your web browser cache memory; and
- print pages from this transcript for your own [personal and non-commercial] use.

Legasee does not grant you any other rights in relation to this website or the material on this website. In other words, all other rights are reserved.

For the avoidance of doubt, you must not adapt, edit, change, transform, publish, republish, distribute, redistribute, broadcast, rebroadcast or show or play in public this document or the material associated with this Veteran (in any form or media) without Legasee's prior written permission.

#### Enforcement of our copyright

Legasee takes the protection of its copyright very seriously.

If we discover that you have used our copyright materials in contravention of the Copyright Act 1968, we will bring legal proceedings against you seeking monetary damages and an injunction to stop you using those materials. You could also be ordered to pay legal costs.

If you become aware of any use of Legasee's copyright materials that contravenes or may contravene the Copyright Act 1968, please report this by email to [info@legasee.org.uk](mailto:info@legasee.org.uk) or by post to Legasee Ltd, 27 Government Row, Enfield Lock, Middlesex, EN3 6JN.

For more details visit our Terms & Conditions at: <http://www.legasee.org.uk/terms-and-conditions/>

Name: Ernest Kellaway  
Regiment: The Royal Navy

Date transcript: 12/09/2011  
Transcribe by: David Davies

Timecode	What said
01:00:00	<b>Start of Film 1</b>
01:00:01	My name is Ernest Kellaway always known as Alec I am ninety three years old and I served in the Navy from February 36 until April 48.
01:00:16	<b><i>Why did you decide you wanted to join the Navy?</i></b>
01:00:19	I don't know... I just wanted to
01:00:24	<b><i>In 1936 was there any sense that you needed to be joining was there any...?</i></b>
01:00:29	Oh no I had a job and I just wanted to join the Navy, which was a very good thing worked out very well.
01:00:38	<b><i>Tell me a bit about the process that you went through and where you first went?</i></b>
01:00:43	I applied through the application to the Navy and then I had to go up to Southampton to the recruiting office there I had an educational exam then they took us to lunch and in the afternoon we had a medical. At the end of the medical those who were accepted were told so and the others were sent home and we were kept behind told us that we would be sent for on a certain day which was actually the 10 <sup>th</sup> Feb 1936. Went into barracks there you had eight weeks what they call field training which is all parade work, rifles and everything like that you get used to, then after the eight weeks you then go to your engineering place which was the stokers department and did your eight weeks mechanical training and after that eight weeks you became eligible for being sent around the ships but I had to wait until September before I got sent to H.M.S Hood.
01:02:12	<b><i>So what was it like for you as an eighteen years old to walk up the gangplank on something like H.M.S Hood?</i></b>
01:02:20	I had been on the Hood two years previously on a visitors day when she was open to the public I had been aboard her but it was strange knowing I was going aboard there to live for a certain amount of time and that's the only difference and I stayed on there for three years and two months left her just after the war in November as the war started
01:02:50	<b><i>What were your memories of the Hood?</i></b>

Timecode	What said
01:02:52	Well they were great because... we didn't do much visiting because at that time there was the Spanish wars on, civil war and we were doing what they call none intervention patrols. The Spanish royalists and the rebels with their ships were interfering with merchant ships so we were doing patrols to make certain that they didn't have a go at us. We did have a bit of an argument at one time we had to go to... we were sent on emergency from Gibraltar to go up to Bilbao, at Bilbao there was a chap... merchant navy chap there Potato Jones was trying to run into Bilbao with his cargo and there was a Spanish battleship there trying to stop him so there was the Hood and us up and down either way and in the end Potato Jones got to where he wanted to.
01:04:07	<b><i>Who was Potato Jones?</i></b>
01:04:09	He was a merchant captain on a merchant ship and he was running a potato that's why they called him Potato Jones.
01:04:18	<b><i>What was your day to day roll on the Hood at the time?</i></b>
01:04:21	When I went aboard the Hood she was just commissioning, she just been in for a small refit and she was commissioning so she took a load of people aboard I would say probably about twelve hundred people aboard it at one time and there was so many second class stokers, which is was one of them and normally when you're a second class stoker you go aboard and you do all the boiler room work, the double bottom tanks that's the oil tanks and everything they need cleaning and you did all those jobs first but there was so many of us second class stokers that I went in the engine room and from then I was there for a little while then I got working with the Chief ERA of the engine room and then when he got sent home because he was coming up to his twenty two years I got my auxiliary watch keeping certificate.
01:05:28	That's a certificate you have to get by being able to look after all the auxiliary machinery like the dynamos and your evaporators there were... we had reciprocating dynamos, we had turbo dynamos, we had diesel dynamos you had to learn all about these and at the end of that time which would take roughly about six months you got your auxiliary watch keeping certificate your name was then sent to Portsmouth barracks and that entered you into the mechanical training establishment which put you through for advancement. Well after a while I managed to get onto the Captains motorboat as a stoker on his motorboat which was a very good job and I stayed there until I left the Hood in November very good job
01:06:30	<b><i>Just going back a little bit obviously when you joined the Hood she was you know out and about and showing muscle if you like, showing British muscle...</i></b>

Timecode	What said
01:06:47	Yeah when we went aboard we... I would say approximately three or four weeks we were getting prepared for going out. We went out to Mediterranean for three years.
	<b>Start of Film 2</b>
01:06:58	<b><i>What do you recall of the outbreak of war and how did the atmosphere on the ship change?</i></b>
01:07:04	Well there something I could never understand nobody seemed to worry about it. I'll give you an instance in 1938 the Munich Crisis when Chamberlin came back waving this piece of paper now in the Mediterranean we had American ships, German ships, Italian ships all on doing this none intervention now the I don't know whether it was the Bismarck or the Graf Spee all of a sudden she disappeared from the Mediterranean well then they sent the Hood out to see because the crisis was there and anything could have happened and for several days we were more or less shadowing her so if the war had started we would have been right in top of her because in those days you could do that you didn't have radar or anything but you could do it by radio signals.
01:08:12	Well then the crisis was called off we go back into Gibraltar and a little later I don't know if it was Deutschland or the Graf Spee one of them pocket battleships came back into Gibraltar and we were unfortunate that when we tying up on the mooring in Gibraltar a wire parted and killed two of our crew one marine and one seaman. And then we held a football match and the proceeds from the football match went to the dependants and that match was between the German ship and the Hood and a few days earlier we would have been trying to blow each other out of the water and yet three days later we were playing a game of football and actually we beat them three nil.
01:09:10	<b>Did you play?</b>  No..  <b>So that was just after the outbreak of war?</b>
01:09:14	That was 1938 crisis... <b>ok...</b> which was a very memorial time with that... with Chamberlin with his piece of paper... piece in our time which didn't work out. Well from then on we carried on with our time in the Mediterranean we came home in January 39 and they had to do some repair work on her and I would say probably about September we set sail from Pompey just before the war started.
01:09:57	<b><i>Did you have an inkling was there a sense that war was about too break?</i></b>

Timecode	What said
01:10:00	Well yeah because you know you had this propaganda going around you know from the press and that and everybody was getting trained up... about three days before the Hood... before the war started the Hood went to sea to do a full... what they call a full calibre gun shoot training so when they did that we used to leave motorboats in because they should have been back the same night but she didn't come back for three days and we was stranded in Scapa Flow but we managed to get some food from the salvage people who were salvaging the ships from world war one and then we went aboard the Iron Duke for a couple of days until the Hood come back in and then we went out to whatever we did do you know.
01:11:03	Just before I left we unfortunately got bombed they split a few plates on the ship side but nothing disastrous
01:11:17	<b><i>Was that aerial bombardment?</i></b> Yeah... <b><i>Where were you, were you below decks at that point?</i></b>
01:11:22	Oh yeah I would be below decks most time, most of my time in the Navy whenever you were In action was mostly below deck the only time I wasn't below deck was when I was on the motor launches and I had a dual purpose job then but that should come later, but then we came back into Scapa and they said to me you go to go into barracks and do your mechanical training course and I left her then... I don't think I saw her ever again until... well I didn't see her but I heard about her being sunk
01:12:10	<b><i>How did you feel when you heard that having spent three good years on her?</i></b>
01:12:13	Well it's something that's very awkward to describe really because you have this feeling you now of such a lovely ship like that and so many crew that you know... but I had mates that were left on there that went down with her so you know you had this feeling about it because that was the first time really that death had come to us in that way
01:12:48	<b><i>I mean it's an amazing stroke of fortune isn't it that you were sent off just before she set sail for that?</i></b>
01:12:54	Well no I left her in November 40 and she didn't get sunk until May 41 I'd left my second ship then H.M.S Cossack I joined her in April 41 and left her in April 41 because I got rated up and there was one to many of the rates so they sent me off.
01:13:20	<b><i>But what happened after you done the mechanical coarse and I mean what were you learning on that, why was that a good move for you?</i></b>

Timecode	What said
01:13:27	It was a good move because it was your ladder to promotion as PO your name got in there and then you did your training so I went to sea in the Cossack as a stoker I hadn't been there very long and I got made up leading stoker I left her as leading stoker and went to my next boat and I was on there and I was made a PO so a mechanical course was a great asset to me
	<b>Start of Film 3</b>
01:14:00	<b><i>What was it like going to Cossack and how did that compare and what were your thoughts about the Cossack?</i></b>
01:14:06	Well the Cossack... I picked the Cossack up she'd come back from The Second Battle Of Narvik and she'd been hit about four times by German shells and she was in a bad way, she had quite a few killed on there and fortunately for me she went into dock in Southampton for repairs and I lived in Eastleigh which is very good for me but that was a good point about it but there is a difference because you come down from a thousand four hundred crew to about a hundred and eighty the whole amount of them will be about a hundred and eighty so it was a different atmosphere all over because your more integrated because there were chaps on the hood that I never even knew the Nobby Clark was a stoker with me on the Hood, I didn't even know him he was there at the same time as me, I never knew him I never met him until I joined the Hood association but destroyers to me were the main thing in those days, to be on a destroyer, it was great.
01:15:26	<b><i>Why did you have that sense of satisfaction?</i></b>
01:15:29	I think the thing is you mingled with lots of people, when you're on the Hood the most people you mingled with were stokers but on the Cossack was:- you had stokers you had seaman, you had telegraphists and god knows what and you more or less met them individually whereas on the Hood you wouldn't meet them at all
01:15:58	<b><i>Where did you go with the Cossack?</i></b>
01:15:59	Well we were on Atlantic convoys, we did do three of the Tribal boats from Rosyth which our captain was the senior man, we attacked a German convoy over at Ebro light in Norway an action that took about twenty odd minutes and the convoy and its two escorts were gone lost three boats very superior boats they were.
01:16:38	<b><i>What do you remember of that action?</i></b>

Timecode	What said
01:16:39	Nothing much... most of my time when there was action on destroyers and the Hood I was always down below. On the Cossack you worked in three watches so if you were on watch you were in the engine room, if action stations were done you'd try and change over you'd come out the engine room and you went down the forehead boiler room to man the compressors and longest of watch you went to the steering gear in the tiller flat where you had dual system if anything went wrong you changed over from one system to another and I had just been relieved by leading stoker Woods and he'd gone to the phone ( pair of earphones like you) picked them up like that... contacted the bridge leading stoker Woods just relieved leading stoker Kellaway and a bit of shrapnel came through the ships side and he was a very big hefty chap and it split is arm right down to the bone there as it came through the side, so that could have been me but it wasn't it was stoker Woods.
01:18:10	<b><i>Did he survive?</i></b>
01:18:11	Oh yes he survived yes...
01:18:13	<b><i>Is there any sense that you were in a battle even below decks... as far below deck as you were?</i></b>
01:18:19	The only thing I remember while on the destroyers and that. When I was on the launchers and that it was a different matter. When I was in the tiller flat the after twin 47 was above me and you could hear them firing and doing what they had to do, which you know you were down there on your own you locked in... more or less locked in because they watertight compartments so your doors locked not locked it's clipped but that was a feeling you know you heard the guns going off that a... you know what's happening.
01:19:03	<b><i>I noticed from your notes that one of the sort of big, almost continual issues that you had to deal with were the mountainous seas... oh defiantly were there any that you recall any particular events?</i></b>



Timecode	What said
01:19:20	One special one, which was Christmas Day, which would have been 1940 we had been ordered out from Scapa on some mission or other and when we got outside it was a blinder the seas were mountainous and somebody sent down to the mess stores are ready so you had a galvanised tin about that size, about that wide, about that deep which you went up and got your tea, sugar and tins of milk. Well I went up and got these because we had all new stokers called up for the war and you know some of them were real seasick. Well I came down and as I got down the ladder me first foot on the ladder she was bouncing a lot at the time and I said to the lads below, I said steady me which normally the other chaps that knew the job would have got hold of my backside ease me down and all of a sudden the ship went up and down I was thrown up and this metal container comes down the side of my nose and split it down there had to go into sick bay and have it stitched up. That was a moment... momentous moment.
01:20:52	<b><i>Did you ever get seasick or did you have good sea legs?</i></b>
01:20:56	I had very good seasick but the very funny thing is about it is when I was waiting for my commission first commission on the Hood you fell in outside the regulating office and the ???? came out there and chopped you off you there, you there , you there somewhere else and he came to us two chaps and he said go and get your overalls and go round to the lorry park and they'll take you down the docks you've got to take a destroyer to sea for the day. So we get down the docks I think the boat was the Ambuscade she was doing torpedo runs for the torpedo school so I go aboard there and I got straight thee and had to go down the boiler room and I was down there until twelve o'clock and I came up and by that... just after that about two o'clock the destroyer came back into harbour and we went back into Pompey ok so get in the mess were in about six o'clock mealed up so I helped we all mucked in and served it out and that I'm sat down at the table and this is honest, sat down at a table like that there's a long table holds about eight or nine each side and I was sat down there and that table come up to me like that... that's the only time I had any feeling about the sea... seasick in the barracks you wouldn't believe it would you. Yeah just sat down there and that (demonstrates table up and down) but in my mind it did.
	<b>Start of Film 4</b>
01:22:43	I had just been rated up to leading stoker and they had one too many so they sent me back to barracks and when I got back to barracks I was drafted too motor launches these were very versatile boats they could be used for torpedo boats, submarine chasers, used for secret service dropping spies everywhere, they weighed about sixty four ton, they had a crew of about two officers and about ten men and I got drafted to them. Well when the Hood was sunk I was in Esher doing a high speed engine course for these boats at a place called there Railton Cars and if you go back in history Railtons were racing cars.



Timecode	What said
01:23:44	<p><b>Did you say Esher?</b></p> <p>Esher</p> <p><b>In Surrey?</b></p>
01:23:49	<p>Yeah they had this big place where they designed engines for cars and that Railton Cars and that's when I heard about the Hood. Well I left there went back to barracks and the next thing is I'm on my way up to Fort William and we had to do a fortnights course on these motor launches where we were more or less given instruction on everybody's job so if any of the crew got injured up top someone else could step in like a seaman could nip down below, I couldn't nip up and do some of their job and from there we went down to Brixham, yeah about ten of us and from Brixham we went up to Appledore North Devon and we picked up a ML 279 and when we saw her on the slips there, she'd just been finished off she had a copper bottom we told us we were going abroad somewhere.</p>
01:25:01	<p>So we took her up West Africa and we were running up and down the coast there Bathurst, Freetown, Takoradi one trip we did to Liberia which was the original place where the Negros went when they were liberated we stayed there for about ten days well I had two boats there because I got made a PO and I went then in charge of the engine department on 209</p>
01:25:45	<p><b><i>What was it like to have gone from you know something as big as the Hood to the Cossack to a such a small crew I mean you know how did you adapt and how were you put with the crew?</i></b></p>
01:25:56	<p>The thing is that you when you were in barracks or a large ship everything was done for you in the line of cooking and catering and that as soon as you went aboard a destroyer you prepared the food and the cook cooked it for you, quite a difference and then when you went aboard these small boats you had to rely on one of your mates to be able to cook if not you were in a bad way for meals.</p>
01:26:33	<p>We did a when we left the shipyard from Plymouth we went up to Londonderry and from Londonderry it took us nearly seven days to get to Gibraltar there was four of us boats and two flower class boats they were bigger than us and they were are escorts to Gibraltar</p>
01:27:05	<p><b><i>What was it like crossing the Bay of Biscay in something that big?</i></b></p>

Timecode	What said
01:27:09	We could only use one engine, we didn't carry enough fuel to go all the way normally a day trip to... from England to Gibraltar three days but because you had to do a detour to evade the German forces it took near enough seven days. Well we had one thousand four hundred and fifty gallon of petrol tanks in our main tanks and they put five tanks on deck with five hundred gallons in each and as you went through the normal tank you drained the others into the main tanks so you had these five just ordinary steel tanks on deck with five hundred gallons of fuel in them
01:28:11	<b><i>Did you... I take it that you didn't encounter any Germans or anything because I mean that sort of boat your pretty much a sitting duck aren't you?</i></b>
01:28:19	Oh you are... the only thing you got in your favour that your very small in the water which is quite a good thing you know.
	<b>Start of Film 5</b>
01:28:30	<b><i>A young man from Eastleigh you've travelled a little bit but you've never been to Africa what was it like going to North Africa for the first time... what do you recall of Africa?</i></b>
01:28:40	I went to North Africa actually when I was on the Hood my first trip abroad from the Hood was in Tangiers and then we went round to Oran and various places so we got... but when we went to Bathurst and Freetown it was so primitive there you know they had little tin huts anything was chucked up somewhere they could live you know.
01:29:12	<b><i>Ok and then so when you were down there you went to 279 just talk through a bit about that please?</i></b>
01:29:17	Well I had been rated PO and our skipper came aboard one day and he said I got a job for you if you'll take it will you take over engine staff at 279 there mechanic wants to go ashore I said that's ok with me you know gave me an extra shilling a day which was quite a lot of money then I was only on about seven shillings a week, seven shillings a day at that time so that gave me another shilling another... no one and sixpence, one and sixpence charge money. When I went aboard 279 we did several trips up and down the coast there. What we normally did we just took one ship that one ship kept in close to the coast and we kept on the outside of it and we did submarine sweeps all the time you know.

Timecode	What said
01:30:22	Well then I got called back to barracks, but before I got into Pompey barracks they sent us to Portland to the small ships base and the engineer said he said you are not going to barracks I need you for boats here and he kept us there and I got drafted to ML 100 which was one of the first MLs built the only difference was she was more or less a flat bottom boat and she had three engines where the other boats only had two and she was a minelayer so we used to carry these mines, six mines we used to carry like a torpedo shape mine we just dropped them over the side get to a specific point and lay them and we used to drop them, well I managed all there time I did about ten trips with them. Well sometimes we used to go up River that's when we carried the pimple mines we carried eight of those so we'd go up the river and on the way out we'd lay our mines so we weren't being worried about anybody chasing us because they'd run into our mines.
01:31:52	<b><i>Do you ever remember even in Africa as well any particular incident where there was any kind of contact or memorable moments?</i></b>
01:32:01	No there was nothing... nothing special at all there our biggest problem was that we had engine troubles break down of engine, which was a hell of a job. We had one problem there when we used to go along side these big tankers for fuel well when the tanker was empty it used to fill up with water, its tanks up with water then go down to South Africa way pump all the water out and fill up with fuel, would be oil fuel, petrol and various things well then we found we were getting this... we were steaming along one day and all of a sudden the engine cut out and what was happening we still had water in our petrol, which was quite a big job because once your engine stopped you changed over to your auxiliary filter started the other engine up but then you had to get the other engine prepared and if you can think of standing on top of an aircraft type of engine because you got six cylinders either side and you've got a manifold that runs through the middle of it about that long with three carburettors underneath it and you got to stand on top of this engine and take this off hell of a job it was, but it was a good job very interesting.
01:33:35	<b><i>And this is out at sea is it?</i></b> Yeah... <b><i>So the boats tossing about in the surf?</i></b>

Timecode	What said
01:33:39	Yeah... when you're going down the African Coast the sea is coming in that way all the time so your boat is more or less doing that... it's not doing that... it's doing that (indicates the way the ship is moving) so you just fancy standing on top of this engine one foot on either set of pistons or the covers of the pistons and taking this manifold off because you got to get the carburettors out to drain the water out but another problem we had was that the engine room... the engine oil that we was getting out there was very weak and if you didn't watch out, the system was at the top of the cam shaft each end you had two little oil pumps... petrol pumps and they were a vein type of motor which if you remember the Wankel engine as it goes around so these two pieces come in and out causes suction and discharge they were fitted on the end of cam shafts now they ran at ten pound per square inch and the oil pressure ran at forty pound per square inch but with the oil being a poor quality that it had no body and the petrol would leak from the pump along the cam shaft and go down in the sump of the engine and if you didn't watch it but to long you had say you got that much of oil there... you had about that much on with water and that
01:35:21	and ML 301 she actually blew up and they put that down to the fact she got water in and the engine more or less stalled and started and blew up and they lost the boat... the boat was lost because there only made of wood you only had to have a slightest fire there... they were dangerous but on ML100 I had a good job there because I had a leading stoker and two stokers well they used to man the engine room and I had to do whatever the skipper wanted if I wanted down the engine room I went down there and had a look at those things but I would lay a smoke screen we had a chemical... I forget the name of it but on the stern of the ML we had this like a little drum about that size about that round and you had an air vessel up by the bridge so you went down and opened up the valve on the cylinder then opened up the air pressure blew this chemical out and as soon as it hit the water you got a big smoke screen and we were always laying a smoke screen because of the German E-Boats we were in roughly a thousand yards of E-Boats, we could picked them up at a thousand yards with our radar but if they got inside that thousand yards we didn't know where they were you had to rely on visibility people being able to look at them and pick them out.
01:37:06	<b><i>Climate wise and that whole lifestyle of being on one of something like 109s and what have you to then go and see the Skate I mean that must have been a bit of a come down?</i></b>

Timecode	What said
01:37:20	Well with the MLs and that it was very good because you only had twelve crew two officers so you mixed well you learnt about each other's job. I had a stoker Jimmy James who came from Salisbury he was a better telegraphist than the telegraphist was the telegraphist on small boats he used to be more or less look after the two officers, the officers fed off the same food as us it was his job to make certain they got their food, keep their cabin clear. Everybody worked together I used to work with the skipper and he used to get me on the bridge and have me take noon day sights so if anything went wrong I could always navigate the boat
01:38:21	<b><i>Were you disappointed to leave the MLs?</i></b>
01:38:24	Yes I was really because they were great you know because you were so friendly it was just like you and I talking together there's twelve of you there which was ML100 there was only four in engine department but then you had your gunners you had your ASDIC rating you had a telegraphist you know very friendly and the officers were... they were not naval trained they were civilians who had university degrees probably amateur yachtsmen they were all well to do people my skipper Booth on my first boat Dennis Booth he was the son of Booth Brothers Shipping Line he was a good skipper very nice, very nice it was a totally different life altogether
01:39:32	So then I came off there and went to the Skate well your back then to naval routine well I managed to stay on her until she had to be scraped then I picked up H.M.S Loch Tarbert
01:39:47	<b><i>What year was that?</i></b>
01:39:50	I can't quite remember the date of that but it was before VE Day that was what forty five wasn't it so I would say late 44
	<b>Start of Film 6</b>
01:40:14	<b><i>Where did you go after the...?</i></b>
01:40:16	Well after that I got... the Navy said these Po's are gonna come back
01:40:22	<b><i>What year is this by the way?</i></b>
01:40:24	I left the ML's September 43 I got back into barracks I had about a week's leave I went back of leave and I was sent up to Hull to pick up H.M.S Skate she was 1916 she weighed about nine hundred tons she was one of the smallest destroyers we had she was built for North Sea work but they had converted her into an escort vessel they'd taken her torpedo tubes out and a couple of guns then fitted her up with depth charges so we could do escort duties.

Timecode	What said
01:41:17	Well the first job we did was we went round to Loch Ewe and we did two Arctic convoys from there and then we were doing running between Londonderry and Iceland taking military stuff up like... you had this I think it was Empress of Canada she took all the Canadians up there and of course we had Canadian troops in Iceland during the war in case there was any invasion well we were... we came back into Londonderry and we were told we had to go down to Plymouth well on the way down we passed through... we were in London we were going over by Scotland and as we got near one of the Lochs we were told we had to go in there and do an exercise with submarines, they were training new captains for submarines so they had three of us boats and we were running down the loch quite a speed and we were the last one and this submarine had to come up astern of us and use its sounding gear to find out where we was and it had to come up astern of us instead of that it came up right up under our props so we then had to, we damaged her conning tower and everything
01:43:04	so two boats were more or less out of action so they then sent us round to Barrow for docking it was a lame duck escorting a lame duck the submarine went into one dock and we went in the other and we had to have two new shafts, two new props
01:43:30	<b><i>Did your captain get into trouble for that?</i></b>
01:43:31	No... well I don't know that, it wouldn't be him it would be the training commander on the submarine
01:43:40	<b><i>I just want to go back a little bit actually Alec... what was it like having you know spent a year or so whatever that was down in North Africa having not been in England for a while to come back and find Britain in 43 when you were on leave do you recollect that... what was it... was it a different place?</i></b>
01:44:01	It was defiantly a different place because my wife and I we managed to get up to London for a couple of days I had seen the bombing in Pompey and that and Plymouth but when I got to London it was devastating to see the amount of damage that had been done by the bombs and that.
01:44:25	<b><i>Did you see any Battle of Britain while you were in London at that point?</i></b>



Timecode	What said
01:44:28	No... I was on leave from the Cossack that's it we got to go back again now. I was on leave from the Cossack and I was going back on a Sunday evening when the first planes bombed London and we got as far as Clapham Junction as trains were stopped we were taken off, put on buses and taken round to King's Cross where we needed to because the Cossack was in dry dock in Edinburgh so we had to go to King's Cross we were then put in air raid shelters and that because there was bombing going on but we just mingled in with the crowd you know and they didn't seem to worry about it... they must of worried about it but they didn't show it you know there was no panic or anything like that
01:45:25	<b><i>Another thing I was just curious to hear you were married at this point you know how was it being away from your wife for such long periods of time?</i></b>
01:45:33	Well I was... really when you look at it I was very fortunate when it came to leave I finished my mechanical training then I got married well the first boat I picked up was the Cossack and she was in dock for a couple of months because she'd been so heavily hit by the German shells so I had a couple of months there and then we went to sea and you went to sea in any weather you know if the weather was bad in normal times they say well we won't do this exercise we don't want to damage the ship but you had to go to sea so a destroyer used to take a lot of hammering and that meant she had to keep going in dry dock so when she got in dry dock you might be in there for a fortnight so you got leave for each watch, week for each watch and this went on all the time even when I was on the Skate we had this because if you read my story of the Skate it's a wonder she stay afloat
	<b>Start of Film 7</b>
01:46:42	<b><i>What ship were you on and what were your recollections of D-Day?</i></b>
01:46:45	I was on the Skate at D-Day and as I say we went out the day before we then had to abandon that exercise we went back to Plymouth we fuelled up and everything and we didn't go to sea on D-Day but we went too sea the next day. When we got over the coast there Normandy Coast there was a Canadian plane that got shot down and were trying to pick the crew up and as soon as we got near them there rowing away in their dingy until we could make them understand we were British very funny thing that was... yeah...
01:47:37	<b><i>What was your recollection were you on deck at all on D-Day did you get to see anything?</i></b>
01:47:41	No... most of my time was always down below... ... you see you would be at action stations until you left the area so I would either be down the a... well my action station was forehead damage control or on watch in the boiler room

Timecode	What said
01:48:05	<b><i>What happened to the Skate just after D-Day you split the side or something?</i></b>
01:48:08	Yes we went out to the Atlantic to relieve these Americans that had brought this convoy over and we brought them in and I'm on watch down the aft boiler room and I'm just doing a walk around to see everything's alright and I got behind the fans that were supplying air to the boilers and I got cold water on my neck and I thought cold water in a boiler room impossible and when I looked up there was a very thin spray of water coming through the ships side like that you couldn't see the gash but there was a thin spray of water coming through so I rang up the engine room and told the engineer in charge there they sent somebody over to have a look we then went into Plymouth and no not to Plymouth sorry... into Falmouth they put a concrete patch over that, they built a frame filled it up with concrete that stopped the leak
01:49:15	We then went round to Devonport and as we were going in through the boom they signalled us to say your degaussing gear is not working it was a good job there were no magnetic mines about. What had happened water had come over that and got into this motor and it wasn't working properly so we then went alongside a cruiser there The Black Prince and we tied up alongside her and as we tied up one of our steam pipes burst and of course were chucking out black smoke then everywhere and this skipper comes along you ought to of heard what he said about this because we were making the Black Prince black
01:50:06	<b><i>Was the split a consequence of activity on D-Day?</i></b>
01:50:11	It's what they said it was crystallisation of the steel so they then towed us up to... into the dock itself and by the time we got there we had raised steam again and we went along side this tug, there was a tug there and she just had a refit and she had brand new paint and everything and my steam injector that had never worked before worked and it pulled all this oil out, dirty oil water out of the bilges and straight over the ship never seen anything like it. So then they moved us round somewhere else in the end they said to us sorry everybody's got to leave the ship she's going to be scraped and that's when I picked up the Loch Tarbert then
01:51:09	<b><i>Were you sad to leave the Skate?</i></b>
01:51:11	Yes she was a nice boat I had some good mates on there that's the main thing... very good mates
01:51:18	<b><i>With the Skate after you had the incident with the sub on a couple of the Arctic convoys wasn't there fires that nearly sank the ship and stuff... wasn't there incidents of fire and other incidents?</i></b>

Timecode	What said
01:51:31	Oh yeah... we had fires on the Skate... which we had... if there was a thing that went wrong it went wrong on the Skate she was so old she should have been scraped when they took the guns out and the torpedo tubes they had to put ballast in the ship so in the boiler rooms underneath the boilers they put in these big cast iron ingots about that long about that shape about that long but they never cleaned the bilges out so as soon as we got to sea the oil that was in the bilges floated on any water that was there and there was about that much difference between the bottom of a boiler now you're looking at a boiler that's the size of this room and underneath that which is quite an area you got these ingots there and this oil that's floating across and the heat from the boilers set them alight we had fires there which we had to see to, we had problems with the fresh water where she was so weak that the oil was running into the fresh water tanks and the water was running into the oil tanks it got to a state there once that our two senior PO's asked permission to see the captain and they brought it up about the state of the ship and they put us in dock in Londonderry for a couple of days or so and tried to do something about it... tanks but it didn't work we still had that problem water in the oil and oil in the water always had this problem.
01:53:39	As soon as we were free we used to come in from having a convoy into from the Atlantic the American ones we used to pick them up and bring them into Portsmouth area and we go in fuel up store up and we'd be back out again straight away you know.
01:54:00	<b><i>That's a point actually we haven't touched upon that... what do you recollect about the convoys... and the Arctic convoy was to Iceland yeah and obviously the Atlantic was to Canada or America but you never did the Russian convoys or anything like that?</i></b>
01:54:17	I did two Russian convoys but not all the way the Skate was so small that she never had the fuel she only... I think she carried about four hundred ton of fuel she was very good she was very fast boat she could do thirty six knots you think that she weighed nine hundred ton and thirty six knots she could do.
01:54:45	<b><i>What was it like being onboard when she was doing that were you ever on deck when she did that sort of speed?</i></b>
01:54:49	No... mostly if she was doing that speed I'd be down the boiler room.
01:54:55	<b><i>That's a very quick boat isn't it?</i></b>
01:54:57	Yeah... when you look at the Cossack the Cossack was a thousand eight hundred ton well the Skate was nine hundred ton
01:55:11	<b><i>And so yeah just what's your recollection of any of the convoys that you did and the sight you know what you saw in these convoys?</i></b>

Timecode	What said
01:55:17	Well the thing was that...
01:55:20	<b><i>Were you ever worried about U-Boats as well?</i></b>
01:55:22	Well we had that we always had U-Boat trouble you know when you came off watch and you went to your hammock for sleep and that you were already ready so you got straight out if the alarms went you didn't have to dress or anything you were already dressed for that, but you know you get an alarm go off and everybody would dash to their respective stations and then they be dropping depth charges or whatever you had against them
01:56:02	<b><i>Did you ever see a U-Boat?</i></b>
01:56:05	Not until after the war... no not after no... not until VE Day and we had to go and round them up in the Atlantic and bring them in what was left of them because by that time the German U-Boats were in a very bad state they had lost seven hundred boats
	<b>Start of Film 8</b>
01:56:29	<b><i>Ok so after the Skate what happened next?</i></b>
01:56:33	Well then I went up to Ayr and Troon and picked up a brand new frigate H.M.S Loch Tarbert we commissioned her we went round took her round to Tobermory were they had an admiral there who was still specific training for escort vessels and then we joined the Atlantic convoys again and we were in Liverpool coming from sea we were in Liverpool when VE Day came now the Loch Tarbert was a brand new ship she was prefabricated pieces were built everywhere and then shipped up to Troon and then they built put it down the dock and welded them together but we had a problem with her that we always had the port engine always run a bearing and these bearings were quite big there about that wide and that size you know were the shaft went through because they were reciprocating engines, they weren't turbines like the other ships were these were reciprocating and we always ran bearings no matter how we turned soon as we turned as soon as we got up to a certain speed we ran a bearing
01:58:02	<b><i>What does ran a bearing mean?</i></b>

Timecode	What said
01:58:04	Well it's when the metal goes inside the bearing you got... there white metal lined and the friction and that... that used to go in the bearing then which slap so it's like well you can fancy it couldn't you... every time we got back in harbour people came aboard our people mixed with them we done the bearings putting in new linings and various gods no what and we kept this up for... till we got to Malta we left Liverpool and we got to Gibraltar and the bearings had gone again we got round to Malta bearings had gone again and this Maltese engineer came aboard he was going to do the repairs and he's having a good look around and he said that engines out of line you got your pistons... your pistons the engine I suppose was about from the window to about here and nearly as high reciprocating engine and the piston were each were a separate piston and what had happened they hadn't been lined up properly so every time we went to sea and you started doing a little bit of speed so you got this trouble and it took that Maltese chap to realise that problem was there we never run a bearing after that.
01:59:49	<b><i>What was it... Malta was after VE Day was it?</i></b>
01:59:54	Yeah we were on our way out to the Far East then.
01:59:58	<b><i>What was... what do you remember of VE Day?</i></b>
02:00:00	VE Day well we were in Liverpool at that time and it was hell to play in the evening one thing that a... really I don't think you should record this actually the British soldiers were having a go at the Yankee soldiers they were as soon as they got some beer in them they were fighting like hell which was sad but everybody was so happy you know everybody was cheerful and that
02:00:37	<b><i>Can you remember how you felt?</i></b>
02:00:38	Oh felt well you know because that part of the war had finished and we hadn't been a... about a day later we were outside rounding up these German U-Boats bringing them in
02:00:53	<b><i>What was your recollection of seeing a U-Boat for the first time... it must have been a bizarre sight I mean you know?</i></b>
02:00:59	Well the thing is with a U-Boat your used to your own submarines yourself there was no effect on you that way except they were painted in German colours because we operated in the Med before the war with submarines we had a big flotilla of submarines at that time so submarines were part and parcel part of everyday life really
02:01:27	<b><i>Did you meet any of the... you know the German crew?</i></b>
02:01:32	No some of our chaps did because they had to go as boarding party you know.

Timecode	What said
02:01:40	<p><b><i>So you stayed on after the war?</i></b></p> <p>Yeah from...</p> <p><b><i>Was that all part of your plan because you joined before the war?</i></b></p>
02:01:49	<p>Well I had twelve years to do I'd signed on for twelve years but on the Loch Tarbert when we were in Liverpool after VE Day one day we went out for and exercise with one of the monitors that's these heavy gun... they carry two heavy guns fifteen inch guns and there good for going up rivers and we had to go out and do an exercise with her and we crewed up in Gibraltar then we crewed up in Malta then we crewed up in Alexandra and then we were out in the Far East then we were operating from Trincomalee which was then Ceylon and the day the Japanese chucked in we were outside with the fleet cos we were an escort vessel, we were outside with the fleet they were going to invade Singapore, but that day the Japs chucked in so that was ok. So we had more celebrations</p>
02:03:00	<p>And then after that we went down we were called in an emergency to go too Indonesia because the Indonesians were fighting the Dutch so we had to go down there and see to it and we took a I think it was Ghurkha regiment down with us because these rebels had taken over the airport and everything and we were down there for several days the Ghurkhas went out did their job they got the airport back and while we were tied up alongside the jetty in Surabaya we were continually getting shelled by mortars but fortunately none of them hit us at all</p>
02:03:51	<p><b><i>Do you remember Indonesia?</i></b></p>
02:03:54	<p>Not a lot but I was the chief stokers handyman I was his upper deck stoker PO, what they called them and anything that happened I had to do he would say to me we got this to do and that and one day these mortars came over about two hundred yards from us and they landed in a pile of raw rubber and they set this rubber on fire and I was sent out with a crowd of blokes to put the fire out well we had... there was no means there we couldn't get any water and that so all we did was went round this pile of rubber and dug this earth up and chucked it on the top and when we left about four days later it was still smouldering but it wasn't burning Yeah the Indonesians were having a go at the Dutch they didn't want the Dutch back.</p>



Timecode	What said
02:05:01	I had to go in the dockyard one day I forget it was... <b><i>is this Surabaya?</i></b> This was in Surabaya and when I came back to the ship there was crowds and crowds of women and kids around the boat and they were the women from the local village and what had happened when the Japs arrived there they took the men away and put them in camps for work and left the women in the village and they said you look after us and you'll be alright so you had young Japanese children and that and all these women and that and they came down the boat for safety well we had to provide them with food well the skipper had a bath so our chaps got round they scrubbed this bath out they got a steam jet put it in the bath and filled it up with tins of veg and that and made a big stew for these people and the two cooks baked bread and that so we catered for them for about three days and then a landing craft came in from Singapore and took them all away
02:06:28	<b><i>That must have been a special experience for you?</i></b>
02:06:32	Yeah... it was to see all... when I come back walking along there gets inside the ship there all these women and that. There were Dutch, Indonesian mixed race and that and a lot of the women there had small Japanese babies well they had no option if they didn't toe the line they got no food
	<b>Start of Film 9</b>
02:07:00	<b><i>What was your feeling towards inverted commas the enemy by this point?</i></b>
02:07:05	Well it's very funny you know when you look at things you got to go back to the Munich Crisis there we were two ships which would if the crisis had come into war we would have been fighting each other two days later we were playing football with them. There's a friendship in the sea that you don't get with the Army of the Air Force there's such a comradeship between all nations at sea. I would say you sink a ship like the Bismarck, when the Bismarck went down there was a lot of men in the water I think the Dorsetshire I think sunk her they went around picking up survivors until they got a submarine scare and then they just vanished and that's why they lost so many of the crew there, they actually had a crew over two thousand and only two hundred were saved (actual figures 2,200 men, only 114 survived) she was a massive ship
02:08:22	<b><i>Was she bigger than the Hood?</i></b>
02:08:23	Yes she was bigger than the Hood and... I don't know what her actual tonnage was but she was bigger than the Hood. The Hood weighed forty four thousand tons so I would say the Bismarck must have been around sixty thousand tons
02:08:44	<b><i>So after Loch Tarbert were you back to the UK then?</i></b>

Timecode	What said
02:08:55	We finished out the Far East then after a while we with the state of our boat, they were built for long journeys out to the Far East using the experience the Americans were had to during the war we used their experience we built the ship and you carried a lot of fuel and then when the fuel was being used up you had ballast tanks which you filled with salt water well one day I had to go aft they wanted the ballast tank I couldn't get the valve to open I managed to get in the tank itself had somebody come along I went down with a face mask on with a long hose up into the fresh air and couldn't free the valve at all so that meant to say that tank was useless then so that's the first thing that went wrong.
02:10:00	No ballast tanks and we were doing a harbour duties and they had one dynamo running, we had no auxiliary dynamo we had just two steam dynamos so you always had to have steam in the ship and this steam dynamo which was a reciprocating engine something went wrong with the electrical side and the governor went on the steam side and the two of them working against each other they snapped that shaft off... that shaft was about that round and it sheared it off so we were down then to one dynamo so after a while they said well get her back to England scrap her, which they did do and she was only what... eighteen month old and she was useless
02:10:58	So then I come back to England I was sent back to barracks and a little while later I got a draft chit to H.M.S Concord she was a new... she was a war destroyer being finished off she was one of the last it had been built in Woolston in Southampton which did me very well living in Eastleigh and then we went out to the Far East not much trouble there we had... we were more or less stopping drug runners and various things and we went up the Yangtze and on the way back from the Yangtze we went to Hong Kong and I was fuelling the forehead tanks and an officer sent for me and he said or a message came you got to see the officer so and so I got to him he said I'd like you to pack your bags and that go over to the cox aid you got a steamer back to England, and I said well what if I want to sign on he said you'll have to do that when you get there so I steamed the cox aid back out to England from then on I had my leave and left the Navy.
02:12:26	<b><i>How was that... how was that leaving the Navy after all that time?</i></b>
02:12:31	Well it was awkward but I had a young family and I thought I'd sooner have time with them than being around at sea I couldn't get any higher than I was I got... I was a chief at the time
02:12:50	<b><i>Did it take some adapting?</i></b>
02:12:54	Well not really because I had... I was on leave from the 27 <sup>th</sup> of December until about the 12 <sup>th</sup> of April I was on leave they owed me so much leave

Timecode	What said
02:13:10	<b><i>What was it like though you know it's almost ten years you dabbled in England but it's been a long time since you lived in England how different was it?</i></b>
02:13:21	Well I think the thing that helped me was the fact I had the wife and the children my mother and stepfather lived locally you know and I just blended in with them. My whole nature is I can blend in with anybody even today I you know I'm getting about I look after the club here and various things if anybody needs help I'm there and I'm the second oldest chap here... second oldest person here
02:13:58	<b><i>You don't strike me as a man with high stress levels?</i></b>  No...  <b><i>That's what you need to be on a boat isn't it... Lord West was saying that to us actually that you don't what big personalities necessarily you want people that are you know... fly below the radar get on with everybody?</i></b>
02:14:19	You got to be able to adapt yourself and when you get on ships and that you got a different thing altogether it's a different life from one ship to the other it's totally different because the attitude of the people. The Hood was an exceptionally happy ship there's no doubt about it she was a great ship we were on her at the wrong time Spanish war we never went past Greece when we were out there our run was between Greece and Gibraltar we managed to get home for the coronation 1937 then we went back to the Med
02:15:13	<b>End of Films</b>