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Name: Albert Malin
Regiment: The Royal Navy

Date transcript:
Transcribe by:

Time code	What is said
01:00:00	Start of Film 1a
01:00:01	Albert Malin and I was Able Seaman... Seaman Torpedoman when I left the Navy.
01:00:09	<i>Albert why did you join the Navy?</i>
01:00:13	As a young lad living in Birmingham in a large family, I used to read a great deal my favorite books were sea stories. My father was a soldier in the first world war and I didn't think I'd be cut out to be a soldier and I thought to myself rather than be marching about I'd rather be on a ship, even at a young age I realised I wanted to be a sailor.
01:00:51	<i>What was life like for you at that period of time and the situation in making decisions like that?</i>
01:00:57	It was very hard I was born in 1926 so the late twenties and we were going through the depression in the twenties and thirties I was one of eight children and the family lived in very poor circumstances and the thought of being able to be independent in life was a wonderful thing to me.
01:01:29	<i>What do you remember of Birmingham during the war?</i>
01:01:33	Birmingham during the war when the war broke out Sunday September the 3 rd my 13 th birthday I started my teenage years the day the war broke out in no time at all I was involved because the school closed down a boys school... most of the teachers were called up into the forces and as thirteen years old we were used as patients in ARP training and helping ARP putting sandbags about at that young age and then of cause out of the lull at the beginning of the war become the bombing and then we were involved in the bombing. By the time I was fourteen years of age the war being on a year I was working in a factory in the centre of Birmingham in a woodwork factory of all things and there even during the bombing I was engaged on fire watching. I shudder now to think I used to do fire watching and tend to incendiary bombs on the roof of a factory packed with timber from top to bottom. Fortunately only one quarter of the factory was hit with a bomb and we were able to deal with it without any fire.

Time code	What is said
01:03:11	<i>What do you remember of the Birmingham blitz?</i>
01:03:16	I think mostly is the broken glass and the water from the fire hoses and this continual smell acrid smell of burning all the time and people wandering about everybody seemed to be going about to nowhere and my girlfriend at the time the house was hit by a bomb and she was buried alive in an Anderson shelter for two days and she was rescued and house had nowhere to live and her family moved close to where I live we've been married seventy years.
01:04:04	Well when the war was continuing... as a young man as a teenager a lot of it was adventure until the actual bombing started and then I began to think this is for real and everybody hated the Germans a buildup of hate and everything and as I say I was fire watching I actually see the bombers circling the city and the bombs falling out of the sky from the aircraft and I couldn't understand.... I used to think they seemed so close why isn't there anybody shooting at them why is there anybody firing... I don't know I was only a boy watching that, but I felt grown up my teenage I was already a man by the time the air raids had started.
01:05:11	My next step was after Dunkirk the country was on its knees there was the Home Guard my father was in the army my brothers and sisters were all evacuated I was living just with my mother and another one brother and we were making the best we could of the war and I joined the Home Guard I was only fifteen at the time and I was in the 21 st Battalion C Company Royal Warwickshire Home Guard and it was a serious business the men I worked with or the men I was serving with there we ex first world war soldiers they knew what was going on and I really enjoyed working with them... treated me as a grown up and by the time fifteen sixteen I could strip a Bren gun blind folded I'd been on weapons training I could use anti-tank PIAT guns, I could use hang grenades, charge them. I had my own 303 Lee Enfield Rifle and when I had the bayonet fixed it was taller than I was, but I was so proud to serve in the Home Guard.
01:06:38	<i>Amazing how old were you when you held the Lee Enfield?</i>
01:06:41	I was fifteen... fifteen years of age and I was quite good at it, I really enjoyed using these weapons and I enjoyed going away on the weekend training and we used to train with the regular army and I think the eighteen months or so I was in the Home Guard made me grow up even more. When I joined as a boy seaman I knew all about it and was trained to handle weapons.
01:07:21	<i>You talked about earlier that you wanted to do the Navy, but you'd done the Home Guard you'd done the marching, you've done all that sort of thing you still felt Navy for me?</i>

Time code	What is said
01:07:32	I still wanted to be a sailor...
01:07:36	<i>And how did that... tell me about that process when you signed up etc and what happened next?</i>
01:07:43	Well I was living as I say with my mother and they were having a hard time with food and such line and so I told her I wanted to go into the forces and she tried to dissuade me... I wasn't very happy at the woodwork factory I felt I wanted to do something more so I went to the recruiting office and explained that I wanted to join the Navy and I knew if I volunteered I could go into the service that I wanted if I was called up I'd have no choice I could either be the coal mines, the Army, the RAF or anything, but I wanted to be a sailor so I volunteered when I was sixteen and they gave me all the papers to take home for my parents to sign, which my mother did and after about six weeks I had my call up papers to report to HMS Collingwood, Portsmouth.
01:08:52	<i>So you were a Pompey Rating?</i>
01:08:53	I was a Pompey Rating and I attended the recruiting office with my papers quite a little crowd of us ushered onto a train on our way to Portsmouth now the amazing thing is I wanted to be a sailor I'd never seen the sea, I'd never had a holiday outside of Birmingham I'd never been outside the city limits and to me was a huge wonderful adventure and looking back I wasn't afraid and everything was an adventure to me my biggest disappointment was when we arrived at Collingwood and it was a barracks rows and rows of Nissan huts wooden huts and I thought I was going straight to a ship, however they made us quite welcome with a huge bottle of stew with a rice pudding I thought if this is the Navy I'm all for it.
	Start of Film 1B
01:09:57	<i>So you've arrived at Collingwood, your surrounded some of whom have volunteered to be in the Navy so of you haven't talk a bit about those early days what do you recall?</i>

Time code	What is said
01:10:11	The first thing I thoroughly enjoyed was the issue of my kit it was the first time in my life that I had a complete matching suit because we'd had very hard times as kids growing up and we had no supplies behind us when the war started so I was so proud of having brand new clothing issued and when I dressed up and put it on... I didn't even know how to put the collar on my top and we was call helping each other all us young men in the hut and we formed a great camaraderie between us all, we all clicked together and we were very fortunate that we were allocated to a certain hut. Hut eighteen main top and the petty officer in charge of us and ex world war sailor he was like a father to us he was a real gentleman he treated us all well and explained everything to us and then of course we went through twelve weeks of training
01:11:33	Boat pulling and weapon training and look out duties and such like in one class we were having the officer that was giving the lecture mentioned something inn one class we were attending the officer in charge mentioned something about the sea and asked me a question and I said 'I never seen the sea' he said 'you're sitting there in a sailors suit and now you're telling me you've never see the sea' I said 'I have never seen the sea' anybody else who hadn't seen the sea there was one man from Dudley who put his hand up and he had everybody roaring with laughter 'no need to laugh he said we'll go see the sea tomorrow' so he ordered a huge lorry and we all took sandwiches with us and off we went to Southsea and that was the first time I seen the sea... stood on the beach and Southsea looking across to the Isle of white and I thought this is absolutely incredible and I was thoroughly happy.
01:12:52	<i>You talked about pride and the love of the sea etc where you aware at this time there was other port divisions?</i>
01:13:05	Yes I realised there were different divisions I'd heard of Chatham and Devonport, but they were mystery places to me because as I say I never travelled and ok I'd gone from Birmingham to Portsmouth and that was my world at that time.
01:13:29	<i>So you've seen the sea...</i>
01:13:32	Yes...
01:13:33	<i>When did you see your ship and was the Oxlip your first ship?</i>

Time code	What is said
01:13:37	No I finished the training at boys training, we were given seven days leave and I strutted around Birmingham in my uniform proud as punch with my girlfriend on my arm Ruby and then after the seven days leave I returned to Collingwood and then we were uplifted and send to Royal Naval Barracks Portsmouth and everybody was dispersed. Some of the men were allocated ships straight away from the training.... From Collingwood, but I was sent to the barracks and when I arrived in the barracks it was another new world and there I had to use my hammock for the first time there were no beds that was great fun getting in and out the hammock for the first time, but I found it very comfortable and I was living in RNB each day we would report on the parade ground do our duties until I received a draft not in the mess to report to the seaman registry office then I was sent away from the barracks to the beach between Gosport and Lee-on-the Solent to a little Nissan hut and I was told there that I had to use the telephone and take instructions when the phone rang to call in different landing craft this was leading up to D-Day in June 1944 now... June 1944.
	Start of Film 1C
01:15:26	I was involved in loading crafts with tanks, RAF equipment, soldiers .Bit by bit the landing craft were loaded up on anchoring out in the Solent until between the beach at Lee on Solent and the Isle of Wight. The Solent was absolutely full of landing craft, Mulberry concrete fittings ready for the harbour. And all this time throughout the day every hour or so V1s would come in up over from France coming up the Solent and exploding in the sea. Every hour or so this happened.
01:16:16	I did this job until one morning, I was sleeping in this little hut, and then one morning I come out the hut- NOTHING- the Solent was empty and I thought and there's something else missing no V1s, no flying bombs everything was quite and I thought well what do I do now? I thought the best thing I can do is just wait and so I lived in that little hut. Fortunately I'd got loads of rations in the hut. I stayed in the hut for about 3 days. Until one day an officer came passed in the car and said, "Who are you and what are you doing here?" And I explained it all to him. "Pack your kit" he said "back to barracks." And so I was back to RNB.
01:17:16	<i>When you were in this hut were you with soul responsibility for it?</i>
01:17:21	Yes
01:17:22	<i>And do you have any memories of that loading process that pre- D-day thing that you had a sense of what was happening?</i>

Time code	What is said
01:17:28	Oh! Yes, yes I realized that they were preparing for the invasion and I was very interested in all the system. I'd have a telephone call from an unknown Wren who would say "Call in landing craft XXX" whatever the number was and I had a man working with me, a signaller and he used to go out with his Aldis lamp, flash the lamp out into the bay and that particular landing craft would come lower the ramps and then from the main road would come the lorries or tanks or men and load on and move off. Then I'd ring back to this unknown wren and tell her it was all clear and she'd give me another number and that's how it went on. We were just loading them all. But it amazed me really because I saw a, I'm sure people have heard of it, a tank swimming- and the landing craft instead of coming close to the beach was about a 100yards off and lowered the ramps and the tank came up the road, down the beach into the water and I thought it's surely going to sink but no it was just a few inches above the water it was, with a head poked up and it swam out into the river and climbed up on to the landing craft. An incredible thing. I saw tanks with flail chains on the front, bridges over the top and I was so interested in all the various things, the amazing thing about it everybody was going about it, there was no hustle, no shouting no, not a lot of noise everybody was so calm and collected about it. One of the soldiers said to me "I think we're going to France" he said "I've been paid in French money" and he showed me this French money and everything was interesting. Loading was going on day and night all the time.
01:19:42	<i>And how long were you there can you remember?</i>
01:19:44	I was there for about two weeks before the morning that I woke up and found that everything had gone. That was the 6th June
01:19:54	<i>You didn't know, you knew you were just loading and you didn't know they were going?</i>
01:19:58	No, I didn't know what time or when they were going I had no information about that they just disappeared
01:20:05	<i>Amazing to be privileged to see that...</i>
01:20:08	Yes
01:20:09	<i>Do you ever reflect now so many of those people that went and never came back?</i>
01:20:15	I do. I wondered about them. I've got photographs of the loading, two photographs of the loading and with me there speaking to one of the officers on the bridge and the ships and the boats crew all gathered together with them all happy and smiling. I didn't know, I can't remember the numbers of the boats or the crafts or anything but I often look at them and think I wonder if they're still alive. If they are, they're little old men like myself I suppose.

Time code	What is said
01:20:54	<i>When you say you were looking into the Solent, when you say there were loads of boats can you describe that scene?</i>
01:21:02	Well between Lee on Solent and the Isle of Wight quite a wide area of the Solent and all the boats the crafts, the landing crafts and there were large and small but I suppose all in their own proper positions in lines, there were no big ships no destroyers or cruisers. Everything were invasion equipment, that's what it was all evasion equipment. Down the centre of the pack were these huge concrete what seemed like empty concrete boats because at the time I didn't realize what they were but they were part of the Mulberry harbour to be towed across and connected all up together to make a harbour over in France. But I didn't know, of course I didn't know what they were. All I knew was what the equipment was that was going on to the landing crafts.
01:22:13	<i>That's a pretty big introduction to war even if you're not under attack...</i>
01:22:20	Well except for the V1s we were, it was just normal loading.
01:22:26	<i>When they were coming over did you have to do anything?</i>
01:22:30	No! there was nothing we could do really, they used to appear from France chug, chug, chug, chug along and of course as everybody knows they, when the fuel ran out the thing dropped down and blew up whatever it hit I think most of them ended up in the Solent. But nobody was firing guns at them, nobody bothered about them they let them pass overhead, they didn't bother to or didn't seem to bother I don't know why I'm not a, I wasn't an officer or a ????? There must have been a reason why they withheld the fire from them.
	Start of Film 2
01:23:14	So when did you see, you went back to...

Time code	What is said
01:23:17	<p>I went back to barracks and there I was for about 2 weeks again just normal routine in the barracks getting up in the morning, on parade, doing a few jobs and then I and then when I went back from my lunch one day to the mess that I was in there was the draft chit for me to report to the Seaman's Registration Office. I went down to the office and they gave me travel documents and all the information that I needed, all my papers and told me that I had been allocated to HMS Oxlip 'Flower' Class Corvette which was berthed at Albert Docks Greenock, Scotland. I went back to the mess and the chappie in charge and the leading seaman in charge said, looked at me chit and me details he said "Son you're going on the death convoys" he said "you've got to be prepared to die on these" and it frightened me to death and I said I don't even know where Greenock is. He said "When you go out the barracks go to London, turn right and keep going until you get to Glasgow and ask again" and that was all the information that, I didn't even know. In the navy you don't march about in platoons and groups like some, you're an individual. So, packed my hammock, kit bag went down to the gate and a lorry took me to the Portsmouth railway station and somebody told me the train to catch and then I asked and asked and found my way to Greenock.</p>
01:25:17	<i>Amazing...</i>
01:25:21	<p>When I got to Greenock I got off the train and I walked up the high street dragging me kit bag and me hammock over the shoulder and asked somebody where the dockyard. "There it is over there," the man on the gate to the dockyard I said to him I've come to join HMS Oxlip. He said "There it is son over there"- 'Where?' "There!" and I couldn't believe it this small boat tied up, it was raining and miserable and she was rusty, dripping with wet, the guard rails were all twisted and bent. I made my way over there and a sailor who was standing at the gang plank with a big long overcoat on looked me up and down and he said "We've been waiting for you I'll get the officer in charge to allocate you to your mess" and there I was.</p> <p>I joined Oxlip and down below through this corridor through all the hanging rain coats and souwesters and things, stench of diesel, everywhere was ringing wet into this mess right for'ad, right at the front of this ship and this little table which held eight about eight of us or ten of us and that's where I was allocated to. Number one seamen's mess HMS Oxlip.</p>
01:27:01	<i>So your first impressions were not of what a beautiful ship?</i>

Time code	What is said
01:27:05	No! I was rather a little bit taken aback, everything was filthy, running with water, it was pouring with rain and I did feel a little bit miserable. But some of the men soon put me to right and told me you know you'll be alright you know and explained all about how to go about things and they were a good team, they were great. And of course I slept there, put my hammock up and I thought well I'll settle down to this. However, about 3 or 4 days later the other half of the ship who had been on leave all came back and suddenly the for'ad mess deck was absolutely crowded and when the night time came ready to sling your hammock of course the hammock position that I'd been using belonged to one of the men who'd been on leave and all the hammock hooks were taken. My first week I slept sitting on a bench with me head in me arms on the mess table. I had nowhere to put my hammock, it was that crowded. The ship was crowded because they needed more men for the different armaments on the ship. There were 92 men on the ship, 92 on this small ship.
	Start of Film 3
01:28:39	<i>When you sailed to Iceland then were you ever on action stations was there any incident?</i>
01:28:44	No.
01:28:45	<i>And were you sailing alone?</i>
01:28:46	We were alone and we didn't have any incidents at all on that first leg, in fact everything was quite quiet and normal going through the process and I had no fear at the time and at the time I was really enjoying the lookouts, the workmanship of the ship and learning things that I had got to do all the time. I had one big incident, which was exciting. I know people talk about the dangers and the horrors of war but there are times which are separate and amazing and one of them was ;I was in my position of lookout suddenly I saw a bright light in the sky I dropped my binoculars to look at it with my bare eyes first because it didn't seem like an electric light and it grew bigger and bigger and it shot across the sky and it turned blue, pink and shimmered and shook and the whole sky was full of colours and I looked up in amazement everything was bright, full of colours, the ship was all glowing and a few seconds later everything was silent and it shimmered away, just died down and one of the officers on the bridge said "Have you seen that before Malin?" and I said no. He said "You're looking at the Aurora Borealis – the Northern Lights," he said 'you'll be seeing a lot of those" he said, "but don't get too excited we don't like them they show up the convoy" he said "but enjoy them while you can" and I've never ever seen such an amazing thing in my life and it went on and on throughout the night absolutely incredible and it's a thing that absolutely stuck in my mind the first time I saw the Northern Lights. It was a reward for having to go to Iceland.

Time code	What is said
01:31:10	<i>So eventually you meet up with this American convoy and then you're off.</i>
01:31:17	Yes, we're off – we didn't
01:31:20	<i>Which convoy was this did you know?</i>
01:31:22	RA 63, I'm sure it was RA 63. I like the name RA 63 because it was my wife and I, our initials Ruby and Albert. It was RA63. And also the number I was allocated in the navy was a very lucky number 6333696, nobody could have had a luckier number than that and I thought with a number like that I've got no fear. So we met up with the convoy and after a few hours in the daylight we could just see a ship in the distance because being a Corvette anti-submarine our job was the outskirts of the convoy. We didn't, we weren't in amongst the other ships we were skirting the convoy dropping back at times to see if there was any stragglers or anything like that and to keep our eye on the starboard side of the convoy against u-boats and enemy aircrafts. Now we were really on a war footing and the Corvette is like a sheep dog really it just goes round and round the convoy ushering ships along or picking up survivors or doing odd jobs round the convoy. But, as I say we didn't see a lot of the big ships at the time we were way out on the one side of the convoy.
01:33:24	<i>You mentioned you were on the starboard side?</i>
01:33:26	Yes.
01:33:28	<i>Is that when you doing RA you were on the starboard side and when you did a return leg you were on the inside going across and on the way back you were on the outside?</i>
01:33:37	Yes, that's right. Now, we're going to the convoy and we were going and occasionally we'd have action stations, the bells would ring and I'd dash down to my action station which was as I said on the depth charges and we would probably drop a depth charge here and there we could hear the ping of the asdic ping, ping, ping all the time and we took our orders from the bridge they told us what depth, the machinery was there, what depth, how many depth charges to drop and this is what we did. Whether there was submarines there at the time I don't know we were just told, when and how to drop them.
01:34:23	<i>You mention about- just explain the process of priming a depth charge. I wouldn't know how to do it. What do you do, what does it look like?</i>

Time code	What is said
01:34:31	<p>The depth charge is like a big oil drum but of course it's steel casing and it's packed with amatol explosives. Inside the depth charge is a tube, and a hollow tube and with a primer to explode the depth charge itself, and to operate it on the outside is a sort of brass clock. We have a key for each depth charge, you put the key in, turn the key to the depth required 50 foot, 70 foot whatever and then pull the key out, put it in your pocket, and then wait for the bell to ring from the bridge 'ring', pull the handle and the depth charge rolls off the back of the ship into the sea. Now, when you've set the charge you've opened an aperture on the tube and the seawater flows in at a certain speed. If it's a near surface depth charge the aperture is larger so the sea gets in quicker. Once the tube is full of seawater the pressure sets off the primer, which explodes the depth charge. BANG and away she goes. This was all explained to me by a Smudger while we're there telling me how they are and they roll off by their own weight but on each side of the ship port and starboard side of the ship there are other depth charges which are flung out from the ship by what they used to call the Y gun and it's like that because it's shaped like a letter Y with a depth charge on the top full of explosive which blew the depth charge way out into the sea on the side of the ship, so you could drop them either from the rear manually or throw them out from the sides of the ship. We don't see u- boats, they see you it's a secret war.</p>
01:36:50	<p>It's not like looking the enemy in the eye, it wasn't like the air raids in Birmingham where we could see the aircraft and see them dropping them everything is secretive and stealth. We're listening, they're listening and we're wondering where they are and they're following us and they've probably seen us and so really you just don't know what's happening. I did think a couple of times when the depth charges had been dropped of the men down below, I really did even though they were Germans. I thought what a terrible place to be in a big tin can down below under there, people dropping explosives on top of you. But it didn't frighten me or worry me I just I took it as matter of fact. The other thing is as far as action stations were concerned if we were attacked by aircraft I had a different action station and that was down in the depths of the ship loading the shells onto a conveyor to go up to the for'ad to the guns on the upper deck and I didn't like that. I always thought to myself I don't mind any action we go through whatever we do so long as I'm in the open and on the upper deck. I didn't like being down below during action stations.</p>
	Start of Film 4
01:38:32	<i>Obviously u-boats were one threat and then you had the Stukas diving at you?</i>
01:38:38	That's right

Time code	What is said
01:38:39	<i>On the journey east did you ever see any?</i>
01:38:43	Yes we were, we knew we were observed, we had aircraft, we had German aircraft circling the convoy out of reach of the anti-aircraft guns and we knew that they knew where we were. And the aircraft had very little distance to come because we were going up the coast of Norway and round the top of Norway and Finland and the Germans had all the aircraft quite close and they used to take off from Norway and harass the convoy with the aircraft.
01:39:40	<i>But as far as you're concerned you didn't...</i>
01:39:23	We didn't have a great deal to do because we were so far away from the actual pack of ships, we were further out. And then as we went further north, no need to tell you this about the cold, it got colder and colder and we didn't have really a lot of cold weather equipment, clothing of sorts and I always thought how strange it was all the time I was on the ship nobody dressed as sailors only the officers would have their hats and their reefer jackets on and uniform. But the men wore all sorts of things any old overcoats, some even in army overcoats and any old woollen thing anything to keep warm and as we went further and further north it become really bitter cold and the seas become heavy and then by this time I'd recovered from the sea sickness so I was able to go through. But strangely enough I found it very exhilarating at the time probably being what 17 and I found it great you know really exhilarating to be in a storm. But the ship being open bridge and just a small ship if we hit a wave it crashed across the focsle bashed up against the bridge poured over the top of us, tons of icy cold green water and despite wearing hoods and anoraks over the top of you it seeped through, down your neck and run down inside you, your boots were full of water and you were absolutely wringing wet and cold so we only did short shifts on the bridge just an hour and then down and we'd sit round the funnel of the ship when we were off look out we'd sit with our backs to the funnel to keep warm , you know we could feel the warmth of the engines all the time it was a constant thud, thud, thud, thud the engines all the time.

Time code	What is said
01:41:54	Except one day it went quiet.... quiet, hello everybody gathered round what's happened? Up on the upper deck the engine had broken down and I stood on the upper deck there and from the bridge flash, flash, flash of the Aldis lamp sending signals to the convoy we'd broken down and apparently we had the message "Goodbye Oxlip all the best we'll see if we can help you" and the convoy sailed away and we were left alone and the skipper gathered us and spoke to us all over the speaker we're in a bit of a fix men we have a break down in the engine room we'll do our best to repair it. I want everybody to be as quiet as possible, no banging about the noise will be heard underwater by u-boats- so we've got to take it steady and now and again you could hear a clank or a thump from the engine room as they were trying to repair it and so we were there we were all set up to action stations and I was sitting down between racks of depth charges with Smudge and Yarning somehow the chef, the cook, on the ship managed to do some cocoa and we were drinking hot mugs of cocoa.
01:43:33	All day went past, all night and the next day we were still there wallowing about no power, no electric, no water, just swishing about and then suddenly on the horizon a quick flash, flash from Aldis lamps and racing towards us were two destroyers HMS Zephyr and HMS Zealous, creaming there way through the seas they came they were an amazing sight three times bigger than we are and the one ship tied up alongside us and the other one circled round and round about a mile distance from us to keep cover from the u-boats and they come back with their engineers and parts and their engineer came over on board the ship while they were doing that they refuelled our ship give us some oil, a case of oranges, some food, sandwiches and after a few hours we were okay the ship was finished and Zephyr and Zealous off they went cheering away, all mad all ripe old comments about unreliability of Corvettes and away they went and our engines started up again and we made our way back along back to Poliarno, north Russia – it was a great adventure that was frightening all the time we didn't know if there was a u-boat about we were a sitting duck but we got away with that one.
01:45:21	<i>Most ships work well when they're traversing forwards, how was it to be sat in the Barents with no power, literally rolling what was the movement like?</i>

Time code	What is said
01:45:37	Well, with a corvette they've got no keel, they're round bottomed so every slightest movement she rolls and so they roll and they pitch and yaw and it is always constant movement and it's a movement I suppose we get used to indeed when I used to go ashore I was more unsteady ashore for a couple of hours than I was on the ship. But, in rough seas a corvette was well known for its rolling. Indeed we had a rough storm once and I was on the bridge lookout and she rolled over so far this one time I could have put my hand out and touched the surface of the sea and she stuck there and I was hanging on like grim death and think my god she's never going to pull herself back again and eventually she'd roll back again and pitched up again and even the experienced men on the ship said they'd never known her roll over so far before she very nearly turned to. Fortunately we'd got no ice on the upper deck otherwise the weight would have tilted her that bit further but as storms go we had the worst, we had terrific storms.
	Start of Film 5
01:47:10	Okay, shall I tell you then we finally get to the Kola Inlet and our ship ties up at a place called Poliarno, which is a Russian submarine base. While we are there for a couple of days we managed to get bathed and good food and clean the ship up a bit and tidy up and our sister ship Bluebell tied up alongside us and we had the Bluebell crew come over and join us on our ship and we had what is known as a 'Sods Opera' everybody singing bawdy songs and a tot of rum here and there and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. The Russians were very bemused by all this, standing watching us and for two days we can relax, couple of days there relax and then eventually we'd got to set sail for the return journey.
01:48:12	<i>What was your recall of the Russians, what did you see of the Russians, what was it like to be in northern Russia?</i>

Time code	What is said
01:48:23	<p>When I got to Poliarno and saw the Russians the first thing that impressed me was how scruffy they were. They did wear long red coats with gold epaulettes on and fur hats and they had rifles with bayonets always fixed, they looked swarthy and dark, they looked as if they'd never had a wash they were friendly enough but a little bit half afraid to be too friendly probably politics entered it. But they never come on the ship and we used to go on the jetty and talk give them little bits of soap or a biscuit sort of thing which they gratefully received and I was a great admirer of them because I realized that Stalingrad was going on and Leningrad and how they were fighting really hard and I was a great admirer of the Russians. We're coming out in the bay now what we do all the small ships, the corvettes and the frigates line up and make a sweep out to the bay to dropping depth charges here and there to scare off the u-boats or to finish off acoustic torpedoes that just go for the noise. But on the way on this sweep a u-boat surfaced in front of the sweep and one of the other ships, I don't know which corvette it was, opened fire just a short burst and the men on the u-boat all put their hands up in the air and I looked across and it was the first time I had seen a u-boat on the surface, all black and sleek on the top and they all started jumping off the u-boat and trying to swim towards the British ships and the u-boat rolled over and sank, she'd obviously been damaged by depth charges before we began the sweep and I do know now that out of the 48 men only one of them survived all the others died of the cold.</p>
01:51:00	<i>What was it like seeing a u-boat?</i>
01:51:05	<p>I was quite thrilled really and it seemed unreal the u-boat standing there just for a few moments and nobody on our ship seemed to take any notice. No body cheered or shouted as you see in films or anything like that we just carried on plodding our way dropping an occasional depth charge and it was an event that went on and was finished. The one survivor whose name was Herbert Klockner and I know that now because he wrote a letter to me years and years after the war.</p>
01:51:46	<i>When you see all these people in the water, I mean how far away are you?</i>
01:51:50	<p>Oh! We were about half a mile away and we keep to our station and no body races towards them, everybody keeps to their station. Had a, if I suppose if one of the other boats had took up speed and raced to them they could have saved a few but they got their orders to do and they stayed station, they can't move this is a rule of war at sea. It's sad; but it's the proper thing to do.</p>
01:52:23	<i>So once you've done this sweep you're out into the sea?</i>

Time code	What is said
01:52:29	Once we'd done the sweep we split in two one half goes left and the other right and then the merchant ships which are gathered up in the Kola Bay behind us steam their way out as fast as they can and form up into convoys lines and while they are doing this we carry on moving all around them hoping to push the u-boats further away from the convoy or to sink them.
	Start of Film 6
01:52:58	<i>And you were, when is the Bluebell hit in relation to this period of time?</i>
01:53:05	Now, then we gather the convoy together and were under way and we were and everything was apparently quite quiet we were still at action stations when suddenly we could hear occasionally depth charges in the distance and then suddenly Bluebell was struck by a torpedo, she blew up instantly, she didn't hole and sink gradually, she blew up completely and one man survived all the other men 91 men all died.
01:53:49	<i>How far was Bluebell from you at this point?</i>
01:53:51	At this point we were about 2 or 3 miles away.
01:53:55	<i>You saw the explosion?</i>
01:53:59	Yes, I heard it and saw it in the distance. The officer in charge on the bridge leaned over and said "Keep a sharp look out Bluebell's gone." just those few words "Bluebell's gone". It didn't seem right, nobody talked about it afterwards. I didn't hear anybody passing any remarks or anything. But when we got back to Greenock her berth was empty it was so sad
01:54:30	<i>You'd had that party with them a few days before?</i>
01:54:34	We'd had a jolly good party with all the men the night before, this was on the 17th February 1945 and it was about 3.30 in the afternoon it's imprinted on my mind I think of them every day, every day.
01:54:56	<i>This is very much the beginning of the return leg isn't it?</i>
01:55:00	Yes
01:55:01	<i>And it wasn't a straight forward run back?</i>
01:55:04	No on the way back we were harassed again by bombers and U-boats from the Norwegian coast and indeed we lost quite a number of ships Sylla HMS Sylla , and there were merchant ships , I'm not sure exactly I think we lost 3 or 4 huge American ships.

Time code	What is said
01:55:27	<i>When you were seeing all of this going on around you, was there any time when the Stukas came to Oxlip?</i>
01:55:35	Not us personally, not us individually probably because we were so far away from the actually convoy, they were after the merchant ships and also we were so tiny they probably didn't think it was worth wasting their time on us or perhaps the Germans hadn't got the confidence of being able to hit us from a distance we were that small. They were after the bigger ships, but they were very often driven off, they wasn't always successful, they were driven off with anti-aircraft fire any way and we had a carrier with us.
01:56:12	<i>Which Carrier do you know?</i>
01:56:14	I don't know but I do know that it was used in the festival of Britain, that the carrier that was with us was used in the festival of Britain- I don't know the name I've forgotten the name.
01:56:35	<i>Are there any other moments on that return leg?</i>
01:56:40	We did have our scares from u-boats attacking but they didn't actually attack Oxlip. Until we were well away from the Russian area we couldn't relax , somehow or other I did feel that after about 3 or 4 days we were out of reach of these u-boats. And it seemed it was an uneventful journey then back until we saw the huge rock, Ailsa Craig, the entrance of the Clyde and we knew then we were home and a sad home coming because we'd lost all our friends.
01:57:31	<i>Did you get treated specially having completed you were with seaman who had completed done more than one or two convoys, once you'd done one a return leg are you treated any differently by your fellow sailors?</i>
01:57:46	Well, you're a veteran, you know it was a sort of brotherhood particularly amongst Arctic convoy sailors, but not, but no, we had no special treatment. We did at, in 1945 at the end of the war we were given a speech everybody was a shore in a big hanger and we was given a speech by a politician who said "I remember telling us that all you men are hero's and you're going back to barracks and you will all be given ships and allocated to places which were far better than you've already done." Well, he would say that there couldn't be anywhere worse could there? So, everybody cheered him for his comments and that but we had no special treatment other than that we were the same as everybody else
01:58:46	<i>Did you do another convoy?</i>
01:58:47	I did 3 convoys altogether. Yes 3 convoys
01:58:53	<i>What was it about the other convoys then?</i>

Time code	What is said
01:58:54	They were more or less ditto, ditto the same routine, the hardest part was the Kola going in and out to Poliarno and really and truly the first one was the most impressive especially with the loss of Bluebell and at the end of the war actually on VE day May 8th 1945 that was the exact day that we got back to Greenock, we tied up on that day. Churchill was giving his speech as I was dressed up in my little sailor suit with me little suit case ready to go on 7days leave
01:59:42	<i>What was the party like?</i>
01:59:44	I went ashore and made me way to Glasgow and St. George's Square Glasgow was a huge writhing mass and I was kissed 10 million times, till I caught the train at 10 o'clock at night back to Birmingham
02:00:11	End of Films