



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

Thank you for downloading this transcript featuring **Jim Dimond**

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 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: Jim Diamond
Regiment: The Royal Navy – Radio Mechanic

Date transcript: 10th September 2014
Transcribe by: David Davies

Time code	What is said
01:00:00	Start of Film 1
01:00:01	In the Navy I was a Radio Mechanic which was actually a radar mechanic and I joined up in 1942 and was put on a CAM ship which was supposed to be going on a Russian convoy it would have been PQ18 but, PQ17 was so badly shot up that they had a pause and thought again and sent us to Canada on four round trips bringing back grain and our first trip was to Montreal past Quebec under the Quebec bridge and in Quebec was five or six big Swedish ships making themselves as visible as possible because the Red Cross had negotiated an agreement to relieve the famine in Greece and they were going to sail unescorted across the Atlantic and through the Mediterranean to Greece.
01:01:44	<i>I'll come back to that if I may just tell me where you from are and why did you want to join the Navy over any of the other services?</i>
	Well I certainly wasn't an army type my father had been in the Navy in fact the whole family tended to be a Navy family he was a full time naval man who joined as a boy sailor and worked his way up to being promoted to lieutenant commander on retirement and so I naturally wanted to go in the navy and I volunteered a week before I was due to be called up so I would be certain of going in the navy.
01:02:46	<i>How did you find the sort of early transition to navy life then, where are you from... where were you from?</i>
	Plymouth... I lived in Plymouth all my life
01:02:56	<i>And did you enjoy that sort of becoming from being a boy to being a boy sailor as it were?</i>
	Yes I think I was fairly happy in the navy our basic training was done at Skegness the Butlins holiday camp and ironically one of the halls on its side had a message 'our one intent is your enjoyment' which was not really the navy's idea at all and at that time we used to see.. Hampden going out over us to bomb Germany at night but, they were only two engined planes.
01:03:59	<i>Do you remember it being cold up there?</i>
	Not particularly no we couldn't go on the beach because it was all mined and there was a great big embankment to keep the sea out.

Time code	What is said
01:04:18	<i>From there then... from Skegness where did you go next?</i>
	Next I went to a civilian college at Guildford for four months which aimed to bring us up to equivalent A level electronics and then I think it was six weeks on the Isle of Man actually being introduced to the radars we would use.
01:04:59	<i>Had you ever heard of radar before you got in the navy?</i>
	I don't think I had I can't really remember
	Start of Film 2
01:05:09	<i>Tell me a bit about that radar training what did you do... how do you learn to become a radar mechanic and do you need to become a radar operator to become a mechanic?</i>
	No you do now but, they were very short of mechanics at that time and anyone that had a good education they were crying out to turn them into mechanics and well we were just shown the sets and shown how they worked it was a sort of funny experience to see the sets open and switched off and realise that when they were switched on if you touched that lead it would kill you because they were working on twenty thousand volts.
01:06:14	<i>How big were they?</i>
	The transmitters were... no the receivers were about that size but, the transmitters were quite big. They had silicone valves in them.
01:06:40	<i>Did you take to the task?</i>
	Oh yes I was very happy and I think there were three of us in Shetland and we were quite good at it. I had very little actual use of the radar on the ship because while we were in the Atlantic it was moth balled and I was only there just to look after it.
01:07:12	<i>Were you then drafted to a ship after that or was there another place?</i>
	No I went down to our depot which was Portsmouth all radar was at Portsmouth and then I was from there sent on this ship right away. She was in Glasgow getting fitted out for this Russian convoy which never took place fortunately and well that was...
01:07:54	<i>So this is where you picked up the story where you sailed to Quebec yeah... how were your sea legs?</i>
	I was very happy at sea the ship had a very comfortable roll and I was never sea sick at all I was lucky in that because my father had a lot of sea sickness when he was at sea.

Time code	What is said
01:08:26	<i>Can you tell me a about the SS Empire Eve?</i>
	Yes she was one of a series of ships her sister ship was the SS Empire Morn and there was thirty six CAM (catapult-armed merchant) ships in total eight of which was sunk including ours and as I said all the time she was in the Atlantic she didn't have the fighter onboard at all.
01:09:08	<i>But, what was your mess like and how many people were onboard and was it an empty ship when you sailed to Quebec or was taking stuff?</i>
	Yes she was in ballast going to Montreal and at that time we had six naval gunners and four army gunners on our first trip we had a BOFOR gun which had been fitted for the Russian convoy but, the army gunners had four Oerlikons they were nineteen millimeter I think and fired an explosive shell.
01:10:08	<i>On that first Atlantic crossing were you in a convoy heading west or were you literally going over there getting over there on your own?</i>
	No we were in a forty ship convoy going over there and again another forty ship coming back that time loaded with six thousand tons of grain and she was about four hundred and fifty feet long and forty five feet beam.
01:10:50	<i>And did she feel different when she was in ballast and when she was full?</i>
	Oh yes she was in ballast she rod very high in the water and in a rough sea the propeller came out of the water and made the whole ship vibrate.
	Start of Film 3
01:11:12	<i>So you've got to Montreal and this is when you saw this... did you say Montreal or Quebec?</i>
	Montreal
01:11:20	<i>In Montreal you saw these Swedish Red Cross ships did they come back with you?</i>
	No they sailed on their own. They had safe passage and they were painted white and had lights slung out to make them visible and they had the Swedish flag and the Red Cross painted on their side.
01:11:51	<i>Quite a sight?</i>
	It was and when we'd been in blacked out grey ship convoys
01:12:00	<i>When you sailed west and then back east did you encounter any Wolf Packs or any enemy action?</i>

Time code	What is said
	No we never saw anything in the Atlantic at all very occasionally one of the escorts would drop a depth charge it was just as likely they had picked up a wreck in the Atlantic as a submarine. What I think happened was that Bletchley Park had cracked the code and they routed us away from where the Wolf Packs were because sometimes we went very far to the north. It took us from a fortnight to three weeks to get to Canada depending on what the weather was like.
01:12:57	<i>And you touched on the weather there what about the big seas, the Atlantic storms did you ever get caught in any?</i>
	Yes oh yes very rough seas in winter but, as I say she was a very comfortable ship.
01:13:13	<i>What was the camaraderie like onboard?</i>
	Oh fine we didn't have anything to do with the merchant crew there was just us naval ratings and four army gunners. Originally on the first trip there was six army gunners because of the Bren Guns it might of been ten six for the Bren and four for the Oerlikons I can't remember now.
01:13:58	<i>And what were you doing onboard is the radar working at this point?</i>
	No it wasn't the aerals were demolished and the valves were taken out so I had very little to do. On one occasion the vent for the transmitter room had failed to turn in the wind and a lot of sea water came down it so I had to cover that up but, that was about all I had to do on the ship I was a passenger really.
01:14:43	<i>And how many Atlantic convoys did you do then... do you know?</i>
	I had four return ones.
01:14:51	<i>Always carrying grain or any other cargo?</i>
	Yes on our first trip we had four Sherman tanks and I think it was about eight Mustang fighters they were on deck the tanks were anchored down to angles welded on the deck and forever after we were falling over the angles and the Mustangs were in crates on top of the hold.
01:15:36	<i>And do they try and camouflage a tank on the deck?</i>
	No
01:15:41	<i>If a U-Boat sees you travelling with a tank on top you're fair game aren't you?</i>
	We were fair game anyway because we were always on the leading flank of the convoy... we were always the target ship. Especially when we had the Hurricane onboard.

Time code	What is said
01:16:01	<i>Do you know when you did the Atlantic convoys what year was that 43?</i>
	It was 42 -43 I joined her on the 25 th of July in 1942 and we were sunk on the 18 th of May 1943.
01:16:24	<i>Where did you sail... when you came back to England where did you come in?</i>
	Varies first trip Liverpool Ellesmere Port, then Glasgow, Glasgow and lastly Avonmouth
01:16:48	<i>And do you get time ashore?</i>
	Yes every time we came back to Britain we got a week's leave
	Start of Film 4
01:16:58	<i>Ok so when did you know you were not doing an Atlantic convoy and you were going somewhere else and how do you find out?</i>
	Well when we came back to Avonmouth we crossed over to Cardiff and picked up six thousand tons of coal which was intended for the Sicily landings and then moved to Milford Haven and sailed from there every time we sailed from Britain we sailed around the North of Ireland because I think the southern entry was mined and then across The Bay of Biscay well out in the Atlantic past Gibraltar and the day before we were torpedoed we changed sides with the Empire Clive which was going to Malta. So it was us that got caught by U414 which a week later was sunk with all hands by HMS Vetch
01:18:33	<i>You were sort of assembling outside of the Mediterranean then to come through past Gibraltar or were you just off of Gibraltar?</i>
	We formed the convoy north of Ireland and we were in convoy the whole time the convoy to the Mediterranean was an eighty ship convoy.
01:19:02	<i>Huge...what's it like to see a convoy how much of it can you actually see and did you have radar on this trip?</i>
	When we went to the Mediterranean we had radar but, not in the or at least it wasn't operational it was moth balled in the Atlantic.
01:19:28	<i>But, when you was assembled just before you got sunk was it operational then?</i>
	Yes
01:19:34	<i>And how different is your job onboard when you have something to do what is it you're doing on a day to day basis now that the radar is operating?</i>

Time code	What is said
	Very little as long as it was working we only kicked in when the thing went wrong. I was the only radar operator on it and how successful I would have been if it had gone wrong I don't know because I had no experience on the set I was just dumped on the ship straight from training.
01:20:16	<i>Ok so you've swapped place with the?</i>
	Empire Morn... oh the Empire Clive...
01:20:24	<i>Yeah so you've swapped place with the Empire Clive did you think at the time did you think that was a good thing or bad thing or irrelevant?</i>
	Never struck us as significant
01:20:35	<i>So just describe the day you got struck by the torpedo what do you remember of it?</i>
	It was a beautiful evening just before the watch changed and as a result one of the stokers survived because it was his turn to go up and make the tea for the others but, all the other people in the engine room were killed because the torpedo went right into the engine room I was standing on a hatch cover and was blown over by the blast and then drenched with the water by which time instinct took over and I just ran not realizing I was on the hatch cover and when I came to the edge I ended up flat on my face on the deck but, I didn't come to any real harm. One of the army gunners was badly injured because he was blown out of his turret and broke a thigh and an arm but, he recovered all right then I got up and the ship went down very gracefully on an even keel and they launched two of the ships lifeboats they couldn't launch the ones on the torpedo side because they were all wrecked. They successfully launched one on the port side and the other one they did succeed in launching but, it was still fixed to the davit when it hit the water and tipped everybody out of it one of the engineers was drowned at that stage because he came up under it and didn't know how to swim but, the one life boat that was launched that was plenty big enough to take us all. There was one fellow on the life raft who he couldn't swim and the boson dived in and brought him back and then some of us were picked up by the HMS Barfoil a big defence ship and the rest of us by an LST.
	Start of Film 5
01:23:54	<i>You say it so matter of factly I mean it sounds like you just went out and had a walk along a patio... I mean is it... you didn't get involved in launching the life boats, how did you get in a life boat... did you have to jump off the ship?</i>
	Well as the ship went down you could just step into her there was no problem about it at all.
01:24:20	<i>Amazing and did you not worry you'd be pulled down as the ship sank... did you have to move away from the ship?</i>

Time code	What is said
	No what we were more worried about was loose stuff on the ship when she went down might break loose and come off and hit us but, fortunately she still had way and she was moving forward and if anything did come up it was well clear of us.
01:24:54	<i>And so you can see the convoy steaming past you as well at this time?</i>
	Yes the LST through a climbing net over her side and we were able to climb up that they tried to get the skipper to issue us a glass of grog but, he wouldn't it would have been very welcome at that time but, that was it the crew let us sleep in their bunks.
01:25:38	<i>Where were you taken too?</i>
	Algiers... which was free French.
01:25:47	<i>Can you describe the moment... did you see the torpedo coming can you describe the moment it hit, how does it feel in a ship?</i>
	Well it was quite calm really nobody was panicking and it was more frightening really some time previously when the alarm bells went in the middle of the night and a Greek ship had lost her way in the dark and drizzle and came and bumped our side and took away one of the lifeboats and the whole ship shuddered then but, came to no harm.
01:26:49	<i>And how I mean what do you do, what were you doing sort of after you've gathered your thoughts what happens next?</i>
	We just spent about a week in HMS Hannibal a naval base in Algiers and then we were sent home on a troop ship the SS Ormonde carrying German prisoners of war from the Africa Corp and apart from the SS man that was with them we got on well with them. They had nothing against us and we had nothing against them.
01:27:39	<i>Were they free to roam the ship?</i>
	No they were kept below decks with an armed guard on them and allowed up for an hour each day to get some fresh air.
01:28:00	<i>Just describe what a CAM ship is and this trip what you were going on when you were sunk the situation with the hurricane what it was there for what it looked like?</i>
	I'm can show you a photo of it in there it had a long sort of runway on the bow and the Hurricane sat on a cradle that was powered by rockets and when the rockets were fired a guillotine came down and cut the wire when it got to the end of the runway and the ship would have turned into the wind and waited until the bow rose until the naval lieutenant to fire her off. At that stage we had seven airforce people eight navy people and four army gunners on board.

Time code	What is said
01:29:27	<i>Did you mix with the RAF and the army?</i>
	Yes
01:29:31	<i>What was the pilot like?</i>
	He was a bit off hand but, the ratings were fine we got on well with them.
01:29:47	<i>So you never got to see the Hurricane fire off the ship?</i>
	No
01:29:51	<i>Would have been exciting I'd of thought?</i>
	Yes it would of id of liked... I never even saw it fired when it was on ???? Aerodrome when it was the base for DEMS then.
	Start of Film 6
01:30:05	<i>What happens after you've basically lost your ship and you've come back to England what was next?</i>
	The next thing was that I had survivors leave and then I was drafted up to the north of Shetland to a station there which had an excellent airforce radar and what was essential 271 naval radar for surface shipping it was technically a 273 because it had different aerals.
01:30:54	<i>And what were you doing up there what was it like living up there?</i>
	Lovely enjoyed it up there the locals were very friendly with us we spent 48 hours on duty on the station and then 24 hours off duty in a rest house down in the village about three miles below the station and one of the families there on a Sunday evening when we were off duty used to invite us in and they'd supply us with drop scones and cups of tea they were very friendly.
01:31:54	<i>Which island was it... do you know which island were you on?</i>
	Unst the northern most one.
01:32:01	<i>What were you doing there then you were obviously an engineer still a radar engineer but, just describe the sort of day to day job for me then?</i>
	Very little when everything was going fine. Every morning we had the set, we had two channels on the main radar and they used the stand by channel for two hours so that we could maintain the main one the main one had continuous rotating aerals and the standby one was rotated by hand and would only turn through 360 degrees and then they had to go back again.

Time code	What is said
01:32:55	<i>Were they heavy?</i>
	Well they were quiet big they were certainly as wide as this room and about that high and when we had freezing fog there we used to have to get up on them and scrap the ice of the di poles because it was stopping the transmission they had a range of about two hundred miles and we could pick up German aircraft flying over Norway, we never picked up anything flying near us except a regular plane that went out each day sixty miles to the north of us and was supposed to be a meteorological plane but, I feel certain it was checking on where the convoys were as well and the Hurricanes that were based in Shetland couldn't catch it but, they brought up a Polish Mosquito Squadron which were the fastest fighters they had two engine ones and they shot down two of them. Of course all the Germans had to do was fly further north out of range of them but, it was an inconvenience for them.
	Start of Film 7
01:35:06	<i>And when you say it was fine until things went wrong I mean what went wrong?</i>
	Commonly when something went wrong you knew what it was because it was a regular fault there was a valve called VR40 which regularly was going wrong and all you had to do was take it out and put a new one in. they had a clever device that enabled the transmitter to operate on the same aerials as the receiver and they used spark gaps occasionally they had to be replaced but, apart from that very little the feeders for the aerials were bear feeders which passed over our bunks there were two radar mechanics on at a time and we had bunks so we could sleep at night and we had these bear feeders carrying twenty thousand volts were quite harmless if you touched them they would just burn you they wouldn't give you a shock at all it was too high a frequency.
01:36:55	<i>Were there any WRNS on the base up there?</i>
	No the only time I ever saw a Wren on a ship was when we called in at Belfast Loch and they brought the mail out to us.
01:37:11	<i>What else can you tell me about your service?</i>
	When the war was over and we were waiting to be demobbed there was a drawing office in the barracks at Fareham which was preparing servicing manuals for the radars, the new radars and anyone that had drawing office experience was working in those and we had Wrens there because they were Wren radar mechanics as well and that was a sort of very happy time down there in the barracks we had a dining room as petty officers with Wrens waiting on us. We could walk off the so called ship whenever we were off duty and we had a cabin to ourselves to sleep in. we had a room with two snooker tables in it where we had coffee after lunch very nice very civilised.

Time code	What is said
01:39:01	<i>When was that then was that 46?</i>
	That was 45 I was demobbed in August I think it was 45
01:39:13	<i>Do you remember VE-Day Victory in Europe Day do you remember the end of the war?</i>
	Oh yes
01:39:21	<i>Were you up in Shetland?</i>
	Yes a great day we spliced the main brace and we spliced the main brace on VJ-Day as well I don't know whether civilians would know what that means but, it was an extra issue of grog. I never drew my grog when I was in the navy but, we were always allowed to draw it on VE-Day when the main brace was spliced.
01:39:59	<i>Did you ever loose anyone at sea... I mean one thing I should ask I suppose obviously the Eve lost some of its crew how did you cope with that?</i>
	Well we didn't lose any of the service personnel and we hardly knew the merchant navy the... I got to know the engineers because I had to go down into the engine room to get them to switch on and off my generator for the radar and that was our only contact with them I knew the engineers who were killed of course. The second engineer and the third engineer I think it was they worked regular watches during the same watch every day from four to eight or eight to twelve or twelve to four and unlike the navy which worked odd watches though we didn't on the ship. We worked the same watches as the merchant navy people.
01:41:57	<i>And how do you reflect on the war now and what you did and what you experienced?</i>
	It was for me a very peaceful and very happy time...
01:42:10	<i>Even though you were torpedoed?</i>
	Yes that was... that wasn't at all a harrowing experience and we were made very welcome in Canada especially in St John New Brunswick.
01:42:33	End of Films