

NOT FOR PUBLICATION, BROADCAST, OR USE ON

CLUB TAPES BEFORE 0030 ON WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3

REVIEW OF THE WAR AT SEA

HEAVY TASKS DISCHARGED WITH SATISFACTION

EMPIRE AND ALLIES WORLD VIGIL

Today is the second anniversary of the outbreak of war. The twelve months now elapsed have done little to lighten the massive burden of the Navy's tasks and responsibilities. Sea power is not merely made up in warships; but also in the merchantmen which it is part of the Navy's duty to protect. Without those convoys passing to and fro across the Atlantic with food, munitions and materials, the British war effort could not continue. The Navy, the Royal Air Force and a largely mechanised Army all depend upon imported fuel for their mobility. Without the merchantmen, and warships to protect them in transit, no expeditionary force could be sent abroad.

NO EASY TASK

The most certain means of protection is to seek out and destroy the enemy which threatens our safety. But this is not easily done when the bulk of the damage is inflicted by U-boats and aircraft, and, to a lesser degree, by surface raiders, working from bases in the 2,000 miles of Atlantic coast now in German occupation. Anything in the nature of a close blockade of the ports in that coast is immediately ruled out by the menace from the air and by U-boats.

ENEMY AVOID ACTION

This war is not so much a war of fleets and squadrons working together, as of small squadrons and even isolated ships operating over huge areas against an enemy which is always elusive. The only area where anything approaching a fleet action has been fought is in the Mediterranean. And there, on the various occasions when contact has been made, the Italian fleet has usually sought safety in flight.

WORLD-WIDE SEARCH.

And so the third year of the war starts where the first year ended, with the Navy and its many auxiliaries active round the coasts of Britain, in the North and South Atlantic, in both basins of the Mediterranean, in the Indian Ocean and Pacific in search of enemy surface raiders. The only area where the burden has lightened is in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, where the situation has been eased by the British occupation of Eritrea and Italian Somaliland.

Memorable Actions/

### MEMORABLE ACTIONS

The high-lights of the Navy's work at sea during the year were the Battle of Cape Matapan, on March 28, and the sinking of the "Bismarck" on May 27. Another action which will pass down to history was that of the armed merchant cruiser "Jervis Bay", Captain E.S.F. Fegen, which on November 5, 1940, when in charge of a convoy in the Atlantic, unhesitatingly engaged an enemy raider supposed to be a German pocket battleship. By her gallant action she enabled all but four of the convoy of 38 ships to escape. Outranged, crippled, on fire, and constantly hit by heavy salvos, the "Jervis Bay" held the enemy's fire for nearly an hour before foundering. Sixty-five of her survivors were rescued. Captain Fegen was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross, the fourth naval V.C. of this war.

### THE FLEET AIR ARM

On the night of November 11-12 aircraft from the "Illustrious" and "Eagle" added to the proud record of the Fleet Air Arm by inflicting a crippling blow upon the Italian Fleet at Taranto. The attack was carried out with torpedoes in bright moonlight, and in the face of strong anti-aircraft defences and a balloon barrage. But the work of the Fleet Air Arm throughout the year has been brilliant. Off the Norwegian coast, in the English Channel and the Mediterranean they have destroyed or damaged numbers of enemy warships and auxiliaries, have brought down numerous enemy aircraft, besides attacking enemy harbours and aerodromes and providing aerial cover for the Fleet on its many expeditions to sea.

### MATAPAN

At the Battle of Cape Matapan, aircraft from the "Formidable" torpedoed an Italian battleship and reduced her speed. Other vessels had to be detailed to screen her, with the result that Sir Andrew Cunningham's slower battleships were able to come up after dark and to sink three cruisers and three destroyers at point-blank range. It is possible that an additional cruiser was sunk also.

### BISMARCK

Again, during the chase of the "Bismarck", aircraft from the "Victorious" secured a hit with a torpedo on the evening of May 24, which reduced the German battleship's speed. Later, on the evening of May 26, aircraft from the often "sunk" "Ark Royal" coming up from the southward pressed home another attack. One torpedo hit the "Bismarck" amidships, and another on the starboard quarter, damaging the rudder and propellers and forcing the "Bismarck" to turn two complete circles, besides again reducing her speed.

The "Bismarck" and "Prinz Eugen" had first been located in a Norwegian fjord by Sunderlands of the R.A.F. At a time when she had been lost for 31½ agonizing hours in thick weather the "Bismarck" was again found by a Catalina flying boat. The Admiralty was quick to acknowledge the part played by the R.A.F. in the success of the operation. In a signal congratulating the Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet, their Lordships also said - "there can be no doubt that had it not been for the gallantry, skill and devotion to duty of the Fleet Air Arm in both "Victorious" and "Ark Royal" our object might not have been achieved."

### THE LOFOTEN RAID

The Lofoten Raid on March 4, resulted in the sinking of eleven enemy vessels, and the destruction of fish oil plants valuable to the Germans for the manufacture of glycerine for explosives. Ten Quislings and 215 German prisoners were brought back to England, together with a considerable number of Norwegian patriots anxious to fight in the Allied cause. Though little opposition was encountered and our forces sustained no casualties, this sudden descent on an enemy-occupied coast had an excellent moral effect and affords another example of the successful use of sea power and its versatility.

/The Navy in Libya.

### THE NAVY IN LIBYA, GREECE AND CRETE

The enemy dive-bombers inflicted heavy losses upon His Majesty's ships operating in the restricted waters round Greece and Crete during the withdrawal of troops. But events of the past year have proved that even in the Mediterranean, well supplied with enemy aerodromes, aircraft have been unable to prevent a fleet with adequate aerial protection from carrying on its normal function at sea.

In their usual terse phraseology a long series of Admiralty communiques described the unremitting and arduous co-operation of the Navy with the Army during the campaign in Libya. Apart from many bombardments from the sea and bombing by naval aircraft, the Navy was largely responsible for supplying the troops with stores, water and provisions, and for the evacuation of thousands of Italian prisoners-of-war.

The more recent work of the Royal and Merchant Navies in evacuating troops from Greece and Crete in the face of intense air attacks is still fresh in the public memory. Admiral Cunningham issued a message to the officers and men of the Merchant Navy expressing his appreciation and admiration for their work in Greece - "There was no faltering, and the determined way in which ships fought back against the aircraft attacks with their defensive armament was magnificent. We of the Royal Navy and the officers and men of the Imperial Forces realise the extent of the service rendered and of the debt owed to the Merchant Navy for their devoted work during these past weeks."

In these two operations the Navy suffered the loss of two cruisers, one anti-aircraft cruiser and eight destroyers.

So much for the more spectacular work of the Navy which has been made known to the public. What is not ordinarily realised is its everyday, humdrum task which continues all the time, winter and summer, fair weather and foul.

### THE COMMON TASK

The fact of cruisers spending 300 days out of the year at sea or steaming 102,000 miles in that period conveys little to the imagination, but it means an average of some twenty-five days a month at sea and a great strain on the personnel. An ex-United States destroyer steamed 12,883 miles on convoy duty between January and May; another destroyer 100,000 miles since the outbreak of war; an escort vessel 52,630 miles in 222 days at sea; a corvette 21,240 miles in 108 days, and so on. These long periods at sea put a heavy strain on engines and boilers, particularly in the smaller ships and the older ones. The fact that they are kept running reflects the greatest credit on the officers and men of the engineering department.

### SUBMARINE WARFARE

Our submarines, like the destroyers and other small craft, have given outstanding service. Their successes against enemy warships and supply ships, all duly announced, need hardly be enumerated. Submarines have ranged far afield since this war started, from the tempestuous south to the frozen north. In the early days of the war one of them, which was away from her base for sixty-six days, travelled as far as Prince Edward and Crozet Islands, which lie roughly 1,000 miles to the south-eastward of the Cape of Good Hope in that region popularly known as the "Roaring Forties". It was bitterly cold, with fierce weather and heavy seas. She sighted icebergs drifting up from the Antarctic.

Other ships of the Navy of which little is heard are the minesweepers, whose work all round the British Isles and elsewhere is dangerous and exacting.

### DOMINION NAVIES

No record of the year's work of the Royal Navy would be complete without mentioning the ships of the Royal Australian, Royal Canadian and Royal Indian Navies, and those of the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy. They have served in every theatre of war with British vessels, as men from every Dominion and Colony are serving in large numbers in British ships. The Dominions have greatly increased their naval forces, and Australia, Canada and India have embarked upon large ship-building programmes, including numbers of corvettes which have proved to be so useful for convoy work.

### NAVAL PERSONNEL

Because of the huge expansion of the Navy, particularly in the Merchant vessels and fishing craft taken over for war purposes, the strength of the personnel continues to increase. New training establishments have been started in many places in the British Isles, and the men joining are keen and full of enthusiasm. The Navy has insufficient vacancies for all the men who wish to join. Those that do succeed in their ambition are most highly spoken of by their officers as excellent material. All candidates for appointments as temporary officers must first enter and serve as bluejackets. Thereafter they are selected and specially trained before promotion to Sub-Lieutenant, R.N.V.R. Large numbers of those who joined as seamen are now serving as officers.

### YOUNG AND OLD

Though the average age of the men in the Navy lies somewhere in the 'twenties', there are many pensioners and reservists serving afloat who are of much riper years. A stoker pensioner aged 49 serving in a battleship had his son of 22 in the same mess. The oldest man in a cruiser was a pensioner cook of 59, the youngest a Royal Marine bugler of 15.

In the Patrol Service, there are nearly 400 men between 45 and 55 years old, and twenty-seven over 60. There is one veteran of 66, and another of 70.

### THE ALLIED NAVIES

The warships of our allies continue to give wholehearted service in co-operation with the Royal Navy. Training establishments have been set up for the instruction of the many officers and men joining the various Allied Navies, while apart from the warships belonging to the various Navies, the Admiralty have handed over vessels which are now manned by Allied personnel.

Attention must also be drawn to the valuable work of the merchant ships of the Allies now serving in the common cause.

Little detail can be given of the many activities of the warships. It is best to summarise a few of the outstanding incidents of the year, in the order in which the respective countries entered the war.

Poland. The Polish destroyer "Piorun" was the first destroyer to sight the "Bismarck" on the night of May 26. She closed the enemy and came under heavy fire, herself returning it. Captain (now Rear Admiral) Vian, who was in charge of the destroyers on this occasion, afterwards signalled to the "Piorun" - "I hope you will be with me next time I go into action." The Polish captain replied - "We are proud to have been in your company, and it will be the greatest honour for us to be in action under your command against the 'Tirpitz'."

In May, on the anniversary of the Polish Constitution, the Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleet, in a message to the Polish Admiralty, conveyed - "the Fleet's high appreciation of the services which the Polish Navy is rendering to our common cause." He also mentioned the efficiency and splendid spirit of the Polish officers and men, and his pleasure at having - "some of your fine young officers . . . serving in my flagship, and in other ships in company."

/Free France

Free France. Among many other ships, the submarines "Rubis" and "Minerve" have done valuable work in co-operation with British flotillas. The captain of the first-named was decorated with the D.S.O. It has been announced that French fighter pilots and anti-aircraft batteries brought down several German aircraft, while the French battleship "Courbet" beat off air attacks.

Norway. It is known that the Norwegian naval forces now include destroyers, motor torpedo-boats and vessels of the whale-catcher type.

Four of the ex-American destroyers were handed over to the Norwegian Navy and are now manned by Norwegians. On the night of April 11/12 one of these vessels successfully raided and destroyed a fish-oil factory near Hammerfest.

It was earlier announced that a Norwegian gunboat had visited Greenland and Jan Mayen Island to put a stop to the broadcasting of weather forecasts to Germany.

The Netherlands. The bulk of the Royal Netherlands Navy, which includes all types of warships from cruisers to submarines and patrol craft, is giving valuable service in the Dutch East Indies, where small ships are also being built.

Dutch vessels are also active in the West Indies, where in December last the "Van Kinsbergen" captured the German steamer "Thein".

During the past twelve months Dutch cruisers also assisted in convoy work in the Atlantic, while submarines, minelayers, and minesweepers co-operated in British home waters. Aircraft of the Dutch Fleet Air Arm are also working round the British Isles and elsewhere.

It was announced on August 16 that a Dutch submarine had sunk an enemy supply ship and a sailing vessel in the Mediterranean. This brought the total enemy tonnage sunk by Dutch submarines in this area to the respectable figure of 26,000 tons.

Greece. Little has been made public of the work of the Greek Fleet since the Italian invasion of Greece, beyond the fact that Greek destroyers and submarines gave a very good account of themselves. When Germany overran Greece, the Navy suffered some losses; but a number of extremely useful and modern vessels arrived safely at Alexandria to work with the British Fleet.

One incident may be mentioned. On April 23 a Greek destroyer was heavily attacked by enemy aircraft. One of the 50 bombs dropped hit the bridge, killing two officers and 20 men, and mortally wounding the captain. Fifty other men were wounded. The Captain refused to be moved, saying it was his duty not to abandon his ship. Wounded seamen also refused to be taken away, shouting - "Let us die! To the guns! Long live Greece!" The ship sank a few minutes later, carrying many of her brave crew with her.

U.S.S.R. No details can be given of the work of the Soviet Fleets in the Baltic and Black Sea. According to the communiqués up to and including August 15, the Russians claimed to have sunk 14 enemy submarines, 10 destroyers, 3 patrol boats, 2 monitors, 2 cutters, 4 motor-torpedo-boats, 1 trawler and at least 30 transports.

#### REINFORCEMENT FROM AMERICA

The transfer last autumn of forty-four ex-United States destroyers to the British Navy and six to the Canadian Navy came at a time when destroyers were sorely needed for convoy and other duties. Speaking on July 24, the First Lord of the Admiralty said that in June 1940, just after Dunkirk, 70 destroyers were in dock. These ex-American ships have performed most useful service. It was recently announced that one of them, the "Broadway", with another destroyer and a corvette, was responsible for the destruction of an enemy submarine.

Ten ex-United States coastguard cutters have been transferred to the  
/Royal Navy

Royal Navy during the year. Well-armed vessels of about 2,000 tons, they have excellent sea-keeping qualities. They have been renamed after British coastguard stations - "Banff", "Culver", "Fishguard", "Gorleston", "Hartland", "Landguard", "Lulworth", "Sennen", "Totland" and "Walney".

#### NAVAL BUILDING

No mention can be made of the numbers of ships that have been added to the Navy during the past twelve months. However, among the new vessels whose names have appeared in Admiralty communiques are the battle-ships "King George V" and "Prince of Wales", and the aircraft carriers "Formidable" and "Victorious". In his speech of July 24 the First Lord remarked that he was encouraged by the strength of the Navy. We had obtained, he said, a production of naval ships, heavy and light, which would more than replace what was lost in 1940.

#### THE MERCHANT NAVY

Sea Power, as has been said, depends not only upon warships; but upon merchant ships as well. In spite of our heavy losses and the fury of the enemy's attack, the Merchant Navy carries on with undaunted courage and skill. Its men are patient, stout-hearted and almost incredibly brave. Men whose ships have been torpedoed or bombed, not once but several times, men who perhaps have been forced to make arduous open boat voyages in heavy weather in peril of their lives, have not hesitated in going to sea again.

The tale of merchant ship losses up till the end of June from the beginning of the war has already been made public. They are:-

British:	1,078 ships	4,605,132 tons
Allied:	334 "	1,498,047 "
Neutral:	326 "	1,014,943 "
Total:	1,738 ships	7,118,122 "

#### SHIPBUILDING

No figures can be given of the merchant ship tonnage built or building in Britain or the Dominions since the outbreak of war, or of what tonnage has been transferred to us from other countries. Help from the United States has been freely given in many directions to ease the burden of our losses, and speaking in London in July Mr. Harry Hopkins referred to the huge building programme launched by the United States "to bring the goods into the United Kingdom and into every theatre in the world where the democracies are fighting Hitler." He mentioned, inter alia, that the deadweight tonnage figure for this year would be about 1,000,000 with 6,000,000 for 1942, and substantially more for 1943.

#### WAR ON ENEMY SHIPPING

Here it may not be out of place to point out that up till August 16 no less than 4,007,000 tons of German, Italian and other shipping useful to the enemy had been captured, scuttled or sunk since the outbreak of war. These losses continue to be inflicted, largely by the unceasing activity of our submarines and aircraft; but also by the activity of our cruisers further afield. However, hunting down isolated ships in the wide ocean is a very different task from that of the U-boats and aircraft operating in the comparatively restricted areas used by our convoys.

Because of the widespread damage and dislocation inflicted upon the German transport system by the Royal Air Force, the enemy is being forced to rely more and more upon coastal convoys in the North Sea and along the shore of France. Among these ships, as in the Mediterranean on the line of communication to Libya, the enemy's losses have been heavy.

/Satisfaction

SATISFACTION AND THANKFULNESS

On this second anniversary of the outbreak of war the situation at sea cannot be viewed with complacency. Nor is there any cause for despondency or pessimism. Taking the war at sea as a whole, and considering the huge burden borne by the Royal and Merchant Navies throughout the seven seas, the situation can be regarded with quiet satisfaction and thankfulness. Consider, for instance, the stupendous task and the number of merchantmen and warships involved in reinforcing and supplying the Army in the Middle East over the 13,000 mile route round the Cape of Good Hope.

INCREASING STRENGTH

Our strength in all arms is increasing daily, as the help from America and the Dominions becomes more and more potent. But we cannot relax our own effort. We want ships and more ships, warships as well as merchantmen, which brings in the work of the builders and repairers, the engineers, the dockers and those thousands throughout Britain and the Empire who contribute their vital share to the maintenance of British Sea Power.

THE MEN THAT COUNT

War at sea, like everything else, has developed enormously in the last twenty-five years. Now, more than ever before, it is a supreme test not only of ships; but much more of those who man them. Both the Navy and the Merchant Navy have become more and more mechanised, as the brutality and destructiveness of war have been enhanced by science. Machines may simplify; but in the end wars are still won by human endurance, skill and fortitude.

It is the men who count, and the spirit of our seamen is unconquerable. Interdependent and indivisible, undismayed, inflexible and determined, the Royal and the Merchant Navies ----  
CARRY ON.

---

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION