

THE CAREER OF LT. CDR. CROUCH

Lieutenant-Commander Cecil Bernard Crouch, D.S.O., R.N., will always be remembered in submarine annals as "Crouch of the Thunderbolt." He was appointed commanding officer of the salvaged THETIS when she was renamed the THUNDERBOLT and commissioned in September 1940, and he held that command continuously until she was lost.

On his first patrol in December 1940 Lieutenant-Commander Crouch changed the luck of the THETIS by a brilliant attack in which he sank a U-boat, and for this achievement he was awarded the D.S.O., to which a Bar was added last April (1942).

The THUNDERBOLT began her career in the Mediterranean in August 1941, and in a succession of patrols is known to have sunk many enemy supply ships, armed auxiliary craft and minesweepers. The THUNDERBOLT also probably added a second U-boat to her "bag".

Lieutenant-Commander Crouch was responsible for one of the most remarkable submarine rescues of the present war. Forty-three men, and a dog, who were survivors of a British merchantmen which had been sunk by a U-boat, were embarked in the THUNDERBOLT in less than half-an-hour.

The submarine had already been carrying 16 passengers, so that, with the survivors from the merchantmen, she arrived at Gibraltar three and a half days later with 111 persons on board. The normal complement of the submarine on that passage was 52 officers and men, yet the commanding officer of the flotilla was able to report that Lieutenant-Commander Crouch had succeeded in organising his overcrowded submarine so that she lost very little of her operational efficiency.

Lieutenant-Commander Crouch was a submarine officer with seven years' experience of the Branch when the present war began. He was 33 years of age, and his reserved and unassuming manner belied the daring and determination which he repeatedly showed as one of the outstanding submarine commanding officers of the war.