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DESTROYER'S BUSY YEAR

Victor in a dozen clashes with the enemy, the destroyer, H.M.S. PETARD, in one year of hard fighting and constant work has :

Sunk two enemy submarines;
Helped to sink an Italian ammunition ship;
Helped to sink an Italian destroyer;
Successfully towed stern first a damaged cruiser;
Shot down an enemy aircraft;
Rescued many British airmen;
Towed to safety a Walrus unable to take off;
Captured 30 enemy soldiers, and
Steamed more than 75,000 miles.

That impressive record is for her first year's service, a year of fighting and triumph since she was commissioned at Newcastle in June last year. It is a gallant record for "a great little ship", and for the brave men who are her company.

Since last June she has steamed another 10,000 miles, making a total of 85,000 to date.

For the action against one of her victims, an Italian submarine, her former Commanding Officer, Lt. Cdr. Mark Thornton, D.S.C., R.N., was awarded the D.S.O., and her First Lieutenant, Lt. D.A. Dunbar-Nasmith, R.N., of Rothes, Murrayshire, was awarded the D.S.C. Lieutenant Dunbar-Nasmith is the son of Admiral Sir Martin Dunbar-Nasmith, V.C., K.C.B., the famous submarine commander who won the Victoria Cross in the last war.

Two of the PETARD'S crew were awarded the D.S.M. They are Yeoman of Signals R. Chapman, of Bognor Regis, and Leading Seaman T. Tipping, of Chesterfield.

The PETARD was in company with the Greek destroyer QUEEN OLGA which has since been lost, when they sighted an Italian submarine on the surface.

"We had been to Benghazi, where we met a heavy air raid, and were on our way to Malta when we saw the enemy," said Lt. Dunbar-Nasmith. "The submarine dived immediately and both QUEEN OLGA and ourselves dropped patterns of depth charges. Then, suddenly, the 'sub' popped to the surface again and at once we both opened fire and scored hits. She was pretty badly shot up, in addition to which we rammed her!

"It was quite exciting while the action lasted, especially as our victim fired two torpedoes at us. They did no damage but we were very annoyed to find that, through the ramming, our spirits and beer were damaged. We had in a pretty good stock and lost quite a lot of it through that submarine."

That submarine was sunk last December. Earlier the PETARD had sunk a German submarine.

"It was in October last year and six of us, all destroyers, were in the hunt that went on for 16 hours," said Lt. Robert de Pass, R.N., of Glen Carse, Perthshire.

"An aircraft had first spotted the enemy and had dropped charges but without damaging the U-boat. All the ships in the hunt carried out a number of attacks, and it was while we were making the last attacks at night that we brought her to the surface. We got our searchlight on her. She manned her gun and we opened fire and shells smashed into her. The crew soon leaped into the water and she sank quickly. We picked up some survivors."

/One amusing

"One amusing incident", added the coxswain, "took place when we found one of the Jerries we'd picked up, a very big fellow, giving a hand at hoisting the boat! He was pleased to be on board and had stopped forward in the darkness to join the ratings at the lines, but we had to hustle him off that to join the rest of the prisoners."

In convoys from the Eastern Mediterranean to Malta the *PETARD* one day picked up six British airmen whose aircraft had come down.

"On the first convoy to Malta from this direction", said Lieut. Commander (E) B.R. Faunthorpe, R.N., of Westward Ho, "the cruiser H.M.S. *ARETHUSA* was damaged and we took her in tow. While we were towing her we were attacked several times by enemy aircraft, but we beat them off. She had been damaged by a raider which had sneaked in and there was a fire raging in her but they got it out.

"The weather became very bad and, because of her damage, she had to proceed stern first. Being so rough it was a hell of a job to get alongside and get a line on board but we managed it and towed her back to Alexandria."

The next big success of the *PETARD* was the attack on an Italian ammunition ship and a small destroyer.

"It happened on May 6 this year when we were in company with the *NUBIAN* and the *PALADIN*," explained Lieut. G.G. Connell, R.N.V.R., of Hull, Yorkshire. "We were patrolling between Pantellaria and the Tunisian coast at night. It was 11 o'clock on a pitch black night when the *NUBIAN* sighted the enemy. She opened fire at once on the ammunition ship and set her on fire. We followed suit and so did *PALADIN* and we all hit her.

"We also fired star shells to light up the destroyer. She never had a chance. We all fired and just couldn't help hitting her. We even pumped short range weapons' fire into her and she sank.

"On the way back we found some survivors and picked up four, but left the rest to an Italian hospital ship which we directed to the scene of the engagement."

The Gunnery Instructor in the *PETARD*, C.P.O. Gunner's Mate F.L. Blandford, of Monkseaton, Northumberland, described the *NUBIAN*'s first salvo against the destroyer as "the best shot I've ever seen".

"We lit up the target", he said, "and the *NUBIAN* fired first. Her salvo hit the destroyer's bridge and carried it away. It was a magnificent shot. I've never seen one like it before.

The *PETARD* was commissioned at Newcastle, where she was built last June, and the captain promised to send back to the men who built her a souvenir of her first 'kill'. That promise was kept. A German life jacket from the first submarine sunk by the *PETARD* was sent to Vickers Armstrong.

"During the Tunisian campaign we did patrols between Cape Bon and Pantellaria", said the Torpedo Gunner, Mr. John Allan MacAllan, R.N., of Cobham, Surrey. "During these patrols we found several boatloads of Germans and Italians, trying to escape. I think we got about 30 in all.

"Then we took part in two night bombardments of Pantellaria, the first, I believe, of the campaign, and we also did the first real daylight bombardment of the island in company of the cruiser *LENELORD* and others. Afterwards we operated from Bizerta, doing anti-submarine patrols.

"We did many patrols around Pantellaria before it fell and, in fact, felt rather cheated that we weren't there when it surrendered. We would have been but that we found and took in tow a *Walrus*. She had come down to pick up some men and then couldn't take off again. We towed her to harbour."

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On one patrol the PETARD picked up a German airman who wore the Iron Cross. Two days after Pantelleria fell, she was escorting a merchant ship when fighter bombers attacked and dropped bombs near her.

"When we got back to Bizerta", said Sub Lt. H.W. Phillips, R.N.V.R., an Oxford Undergraduate, "we were lying in the entrance to the harbour on a bright moonlit night when three Ju. 88s dived at us. The first two missed with their bombs, but the third straddled us fore and aft, and did quite a lot of damage. We had two wounded and had to go back to Malta for repairs."

The PETARD went from Malta to Gibraltar.

"We were sent out into the Atlantic to meet Read-Admiral Vian's invasion fleet," stated Midshipman A.F. Rowland, R.C.N., the only Canadian on board. He comes from Westmount, Montreal, Quebec. "We didn't know at the time, of course, that it was the invasion fleet. We went back to Algiers and returned to Malta with Force H. We picked up some more German survivors and then had the honour to take General Eisenhower and others to Sicily. General Eisenhower was very popular on board with everyone, and I think most of the crew have his signature on something, even money notes."

In the Sicilian campaign the PETARD acted with other destroyers screening big ships.

"Our first bombardment was in daylight," explained Midshipman P.T. Wood, S.A.N.F. (V). Like the other midshipman he comes from a Dominion. His home is at Durban, South Africa.

"We were with the WARSPITE on that occasion," he continued, "and we shelled Catania. Later we bombarded Crotona at night. It was the first bombardment of the Italian mainland in the Sicilian campaign."

Although there was retaliatory fire, the PETARD was not hit, but later, when on patrols and sweeps from Augusta, she got straddled in one engagement with shore batteries. She was not damaged.

Both officers and men in this fighting destroyer hope that the rest of the war will bring them as much action and success against the enemy as they enjoyed in their notable first year's service.

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