



Gibraltar: Challenge, Change & Continuity

The Friends of Gibraltar Oral History Project (1930 to 1970)

Bush, Sydney Nigel (Ser 206 / IWM 013300R01)

Object description

British seaman served aboard HMS Witch in GB coastal waters, 1939-1940; officer commanded ML 134 in Mediterranean, 1941-1943

Content description

REEL 1 Period with Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve in GB, 1938-1939: applying to join RNVR, 1938; conditions in Devonport Barracks, 1939. Aspects of period with HMS Witch in GB coastal waters, 1939-1940: convoy escort duties; attitude to service on board ship. Period of officer training in GB, 1940- 1941: officer training at HMS King Alfred, Hove, 1940; posting to ML 115 and subsequent fire on board. Recollections of operations as officer with ML 134, 3rd Minelaying Flotilla in Mediterranean, 1941-1942: preparing for Mediterranean service at Hamble, 4/1941; convoy to Gibraltar, 4/1941; anti-submarine work; disappearance of Allied ships off Moroccan coast; Italian tanker in Algieras that acted as base for one-man torpedoes; social life in Gibraltar; pro-British attitude of Gibraltarians; modification of Minelayers for duties in Malta; fate of ML 126 and ML 130 in Malta. REEL 2 Continues: internment of minelayers by Vichy French. Recollections of Operation Harpoon, 6/1942: flotilla's joining of Operation Harpoon convoy from Gibraltar to Malta, 6/1942; problems with tow ropes to merchant ship Orare; smoke screen precautions against Italian fleet; losses to merchant ships; stopping of convoy when Kujawiak mined; rescue of Polish survivors of Kujawiak; reaction to sight of ships sunk in Grand Harbour on arrival in Malta. Recollections of operations with ML 134 from Malta, 1942: minesweeping duties of Maltese coast; escorting remains of Operation Pedestal convoy, 8/1942; sight of tanker Ohio entering Grand Harbour; ration situation in Malta; party given for Maltese children, 25/12/1942; attempt to get Vichy French submarines to surrender, 11/1942; escorting HMS Aphis on mission to bombard Mareth Line, 3/1943; sight of German Air Force raid on Tripoli. REEL 3 Continues: German Air Force use of circling torpedoes off Tripoli, 3/1943; execution of HMS Aphis's bombarding of Mareth Line; attitude of Maltese under siege; question of sympathy for Italians on part of Maltese; life aboard minelayer and his attitude to commanding one; flight out off Malta to Gibraltar, 4/1943; interception of Silva Plana by HMS Adventure in Bay of Biscay, 4/1943

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