



## **Gibraltar: Challenge, Change & Continuity**

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

### **Skeats, John Goldup (Ser 208 / IWM 018007R02)**

#### Object description

British seaman trained at HMS St Vincent in GB, 1933-1934; served aboard HMS Revenge in Mediterranean, 1935-1936; served aboard and HMS Blanche during Spanish Civil War, 1936-1938 ; trained as telegraphist air gunner with Fleet Air Arm in GB, 1938-1939; served with 818 Sqdn, Fleet Air Arm aboard HMS Furious during Norwegian campaign, 1940

#### Content description

REEL 1 Background in Willesden, London and Aylesbury, Bucks, 1917-1933: family and education. Reasons for joining Royal Navy, 1933. Period of basic training at HMS Vincent, 1933-1934: nature of discipline; crushing to death of boy chained to garden roller; question of unnecessary harsh and humiliating discipline. Period as boy seaman aboard HMS Revenge in Mediterranean, 1935-1936: drafting to ship, 1935; treatment of boy seamen; incident of Italian liner Ausonia catching fire in Alexandria harbour during Abyssinian crisis; distribution of waste food to Maltese; state of health of sailors aboard ship; question of HMS Hood being known as 'The TB ship'; rule forbidding approaches by sailors to officers. REEL 2 Continues: Question of relations between officers and men in Royal Navy. Memories of an Invergordon mutineer whose services were dispensed with by Royal Navy. Transfer to HMS Wild Swan, 1936. Recollections of period with HMS Blanche during Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939: patrolling off Spanish coast; rescue of survivors from Spanish ship, Canarais; appearance of Spanish Jaime Primero at Gibraltar after crew mutiny; participation in secret mission at Cartagena; prior recollection of role as director sight-setter aboard HMS Wild Swan; duties and role as writer; story of how he nearly set ship on fire during action stations. Period of air gunner training with Fleet Air Arm in GB, 1938-1939: preference for being air gunner than naval officer; start of mainly technical training at RNAS Worthy Down, 1938; flying training at RNAS Eastleigh; memories of Ralph Richardson and Laurence Olivier. REEL 3 Continues: flying training with Fairey Sharks, Ospreys and Swordfishes and Blackburn Skuas; work of telegraphist air gunners in open cockpit biplanes; flight in dustbin on Handley Page Heyford from RNAS Aldergrove; use of railway stations to navigate by. Reaction to declaration of Second World War, 3/9/1939. Question of how tradition of gunboat diplomacy determined national attitudes, 3/9/1939. Joining 818 Sqdn, aboard HMS Furious, 12/1939. Recollections of

operations with 818 Sqdn from HMS Furious, Norway, 4/1940: operation against German cruiser at Trondheim; diversion of attack towards German destroyers after cruiser could not be found; reception for returning telegraphist air gunners; attack on Narvik, 4/1940 including: German defences, wounding in leg. REEL 4 Continues: attack on Narvik, 4/1940 shooting up of Fairey Swordfish during attack, crash landing on HMS Furious and lucky escape from shooting accident. Question of medical treatment received. Effects of knee replacement in 1994. Attitude to having served in Royal Navy in Second World War. Question of failure to provide proper rations in sick bay. Aspects of life aboard naval craft including extra pay received by Fleet Air Arm aircrew.

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