The Radio Officers' Association
Marine, Aeronautical and Coast Station Radio Officers

Remembering D-Day

D-DAY

THE 80th ANNIVERSARY

On this the 80th Anniversary of D-Day we remember the sacrifice of those who gave their lives. We should also remember the key role that was played by the Merchant Navy not only on D-Day itself but in the days and weeks that followed. Many hundreds of MN vessels travelled back and forth across the Channel carrying men, machines and supplies to support the invasion and the subsequent Normandy campaign.

At this distance in time there are few memories from the radio officers on the MN ships involved but we have managed to find a few stories from the QSO Archive which we are sending out to members and posting on the ROA website.

We have managed to convert two of the messages to a more readable modern format but for some reason we cannot convert the third. We have attached it anyway (stories attachment links are below - click to view).

Harold Froggatt
Ron Watkins
W N Blacklock

How we sailed to Normandy

By **W N Blacklock**

A state of perpetual waiting will always bring about some form of tension, usually a mental one, which increases rather than decreases as the days turn into weeks, but men accustomed to the sea and its ways either get used to it and find ways of combating it or else begin looking for shore posts. Nevertheless, to spend eighteen days at anchor only a few miles from the hub of the universe, to be without mail from home, and to be completely isolated from the shore is enough to try the wits of even a born sailor.

It was under these circumstances that the crew of the ***British Princess,*** oldest ship of the British Tanker Company, found themselves before the opening of the present operations in Normandy. They had signed articles, quite voluntarily, for it was over-subscribed, to take part in future plans the Government might make in connection with the second front; they knew their ship to be loaded with water, ready to take it anywhere, and they were just waiting patiently for some mystical body, high up in the realms of gold braid and red tape, to say the word. We had in fact sailed from Tilbury and were anchored off Sheerness, in the Thames.

JUNE 6th 1944

At last the great day dawned – the Liberation of Europe had begun. All eyes strained to see the long lines of tank landing craft, troop ships, motor transports, ammunition ships, coasters and many others as they got under way and steamed out to sea, tended by myriads of small naval minesweepers and escort vessels. All day long the orderly procession continued, with sirens blowing and little boats weaving their way in and out directing the traffic, and by nightfall, all that was left to occupy the vast anchorage was a small bunch of foreign-looking coasters and the ever patient ***British Princess.***

QUICK WORK

Probably most of the crew were just a little disappointed at not being included in the armada and had visions of more weeks of boredom lying at anchor. But these fears happily proved to be unfounded. As often happens in wartime, things developed with a rush, once the initial impetus had been given. Within a matter of three or four hours the situation changed from one of foreboding to one of latent expectancy. In that short time a conference was held on a seaside pier to settle final arrangements; orders were distributed and a naval commodore and his staff, comprising three visual signallers and an additional radio officer were installed aboard. ***British Princess*** had been chosen to lead the remaining coasters and tugs to the assault area.

Just as the bell was ringing for tea on D+1 the anchor was hove up into the hawse pipe and she got under way and steamed very sedately out of the River Thames. To any observers at the time she must have provide a humorous sight, to be compared with a hen and her chickens. Further than the eye could see these proud little ships chugged along in two wavy lines at a very sedate speed of four knots behind the 7,000 ton tanker which, incidentally, was the only sizeable target among them.

PAINFUL PROGRESS

Accustomed as she was to being driven at a greater speed, to the British Princess the present speed was positively painful, and it was only with difficulty that she would steer at all. On one side a lean destroyer was keeping

perfect station, guns pointed high aloft, and apparently on its toes and ready for instant action. On the other side a small motor launch bobbed up and down in the slight swell; she was acting as traffic policeman, getting orders from the Commodore and replying over her loudhailer.

On the following day darkness gave way to glorious sunshine, and a blue crystal clear sky proclaimed the arrival of summer. The convoy, still proceeding at four knots, jogged along merrily at peace with the world. A heat haze was rising from the water limiting the visibility, when the fighter cover, consisting of two Spitfires, appeared. Round and round they circled from one end of the convoy to the other, flying nose to tail and apparently enjoying themselves. Nevertheless it must have been a boring task for them, and probably they were just itching to rush off and look for a scrap. But to the men below they were a pleasant sight inspiring confidence.

Towards noon the ***British Princess*** and her brood arrived at their rendezvous, and about thirty more vessels loomed up ahead, manoeuvring into opposition, and tagged on the end of the convoy. Shortly afterwards the two leading ships of the columns altered course eight points to port and steered due south towards the beachheads. The light breeze of the morning had freshened, and as it came on the beam the little ships began to roll drunkenly. For this momentous occasion they were loaded ow in the water, and one after another the seas poured over their decks, and spray rose high in the air.

On they went keeping rigidly to the buoys laid by the minesweepers marking the swept channel. These buoys, for some quite unknown reason, were not in a straight line, and as it followed them, the convoy giving the appearance of a long snake winding its way in and out between rocks. A few destroyers and corvettes were making their way back from the assault area at full speed, seemingly in a hurry to escort more3 supplies over the battle front. Occasionally a line of minesweepers, sailing abreast and flying large red danger flags, would pass in the opposite direction.

MIGHTY FLEET

And so once again darkness fell. No-one it seemed had taken any particular notice of this important little procession. Not even an enemy reconnaissance plane had been near, and it certainly seemed as though Jerry was more than truly occupied elsewhere.

At the first light of dawn on D+3 the engine was put dead slow, the soft murmuring of the water against the ship’s side could no longer be heard, and there was an almost complete silence. Stretching to the horizon on each side were ships, thousands of them, and beyond them, straight ahead, the French coast loomed up out of the early morning mist. British Princess, no longer interested in her following was tentatively nosing about looking for an opening where she could slide in and hide herself amongst this seething mass of shipping. Even here everything seemed to be proceeding in a perfectly orderly fashion, and there was no noise. The only warlike sounds came from British battleships further along the coast, loosing off rounds at the enemy defences ashore.

Probably never before have so many ships gathered together in such a small area, ranging from rowing boats to large passenger ships acting as troopers; five cruisers were in sight, anchored fairly close to the beach, battleships visible only by the flash when their guns opened fire, and hundreds of destroyers and escorts, weaving out stem to stern in long lines. All were sporting balloons as an added protection against possible

enemy air attack. In the distance could be heard the continuous rumble of anti-aircraft fire over the front lines, but the bursts could not be seen with the naked eye.

WELCOME WATER

To facilitate communications, each ship displayed two placards, one on either side, indicating the name, number, destination and cargo. The ***British Princess*** had instructions to anchor in a designated area, and as she picked her way slowly to the appointed spot, signal lamps flashed in all directions creating an apparent chaos in an otherwise orderly calm.

With so much activity, it was quite impossible to see the marker buoys, and the ***British Princess*** found her anchorage more by guesswork than by navigation. Nevertheless even before the cable was on the bottom, several trawlers had spotted the canvas screens on the flying bridge bearing the words "Fresh Water", and it was only after the greatest effort that they were persuaded to hang off until the ship was properly moored. Many of them had been out three whole days already without a refill of water and they were very thirsty.

All day they kept on coming, streams of them: trawlers, motor minesweepers, salvage tugs, infantry landing craft, flak barges and many other interesting types. At times there were as many as sixteen tied up alongside together, and now, instead of looking like a hen and her chickens the ***British Princess*** must have resembled a sow suckling a fresh litter.

And we of the crew? Though rushed off our feet we had the sense of having accomplished something, and of being an infinitely small though important cog in a vast piece of machinery. Men of the ***British Princess*** would not have exchanged their lot for "all the tea in China".

(This account was written by the author soon after the war. The following was added at a later date.)

British Princess remained on station, anchored in the GOLD section off the beaches of Arramanches right through from June to October, caring for the little ships. Once or twice we returned to Southampton to top up with fresh water. But we never in fact got ashore. Finally when the winter gales set in, in earnest, and we had lost our third and last anchor, we had to come home. Looking through my Discharge Book again, I see that we signed off the ***British Princess*** in Dock Street, London, on 25 Nov 1944, so we may have been on the beaches longer than I had thought. My previous ship to the ***British Princess*** had been another tanker, ***Empire Gold***, carrying aviation spirit. We signed off her in | Plymouth on 1 May 44. She was later sunk in the Atlantic on 18 Apr 1945.

Apart from the first week or so when we were plagued with desultory air attacks, it had been a very smooth operation at GOLD beach. We had a front row view of the air attacks on Caen and it was most exciting. I had the job of controlling the little boats coming alongside with a loud hailer and an Aldis lamp. I loved every minute of it!

The only sadness I have now is that if you study all the books written about the Normandy landings, and there are dozens of them, nowhere do you find any mention of the Merchant Navy, though in fat 884 Merchant Ships took part. The operation could not have been launched without them. But because the Merchant Navy was not one of the Fighting Forces, it was not worth a mention.

In the Battle of the Atlantic alone the Merchant Navy lost 30,000 men drowned. In fact their percentage losses were higher than any of the Armed Services.

Sixty two years with Samuel Morse

By **Harold Froggatt**

The date was March 1940 – I was 14 years old and I had caught the bug for radio from Practical Wireless. which used to be known as 'CAMS COMIC.'
I had built my first crystal set and, lo and behold, was getting signals without the expense of a battery. My next project was a twin valve receiver that covered the medium wave plus trawler band. This band was where I heard my first Morse signals and I made it my goal to sort these dots and dashes out. I got a Boy Scouts book and learnt the meaning of the code and then found out the Morse was

coming from ships and coast stations.
Things took a turn for the better as in the summer I joined the local A. T.C. (Air Training Corps). We had an old WW1 telegraphist who, seeing that about ten of us lads of 15 and 16 were interested, got a Morse class going, supplied with oscillator and keys by the RAF. He introduced an added gimmick of giving sixpence to anyone with an all-correct result at each session. In a while we could all master 20 w.p.m. and loved the competition. Also we got an issue of new Aldis lamps from the RAF and our senior man was very thrilled when the local Home Guard requested our participation in their exercises on Sunday mornings, our Aldis lamps being a great improvement on their old lamps with their small lens.

By early 1943 the oldest of us was called up and of course the lad went for aircrew, but on his first leave we were shocked to hear he was looking after the Officers' billiard room, and a cleaner too. He was colour blind and not fit for aircrew, which made us all think again.
Meanwhile, I was employed by a local textile firm as a weaver and was going through the trade to a better post, when I saw an ad in the local Manchester Paper for the Marconi Radio School in Mosley Street. I was 17 years old at this time, and went to see the two Principals, Mr Tomlinson and Mr Wood. I arrived there at the half way stage in the course and everyone had just got up to the required speed of 20 w.p.m. I told them I could copy at this speed and after a test they said I could join the same course, held in the evening for half fees - so the A.T.C. had helped me in many ways. I went in the evening, did studies on the Theory part of the exam, and passed out a few months later with my special certificate to go to sea 'as Radio Officer.'

On 30th December 1943 | joined my first ship at Liverpool, signing on the ***Empire Cormorant***, the first ship I had ever seen. The security man on the dock gate said, 'Oh! You want the ARK. A funny thing to say, I thought, but when I saw this 1918 model with a huge bull nosed bow and a top speed of 7 knots, managed by Common Bros., I found out that his remarks were befitting for this vessel!

The two R/Os had a twin cabin perched on the side of the engine room, with two bunks, a wash bowl with no hot water and no drainage, one dressing table with two drawers for each man, and a sort of wardrobe. Oh dear, what had this officer come into? The radio room was on the bridge level and contained a 3-valve receiver with plug in coils and a switch for 500 kc/s. The transmitter was a 381, I think, which covered the medium wave bands only. There were the other usual fittings such as charging boards etc., and a big battery cupboard, which I was told, was my cup of tea to look after.

The Chief Radio Officer and 2nd R/O were already on board and in a short time we were off to join a slow convoy.

Our destination was Lisbon, with a full load of parcels and aid for prisoners of war which was subsequently to go to Switzerland. I learned that this ship had been waiting a while for a slow convoy, so all were happy that we were on our way, but after a few days out we had a rudder and steering gear problem and we had to return to Greenock for repairs. This steering gear caused havoc to my sleep because of the noise from the chain drive, which was in tubes welded to the side of our cabin, to the donkey engine steering gear.

After eight days we managed a new slow convoy and I found out later that we had missed a lot of trouble caused by the German air force in the Biscay area when our former convoy had got a mauling. At last we left the convoy, made for the coast of Portugal and entered the river Tagus. We made contact with our agents who informed us that there was no berth for us and we had to tie up to another ship at a buoy. When we got there we found our partner - a German cargo ship! We got the usual visit from the Embassy people who warned us about enemy agents in the bars and clubs etc., and also to look out for agents putting limpet mines on our hull at night-time. We were to find more out about this later.

We had a good trip ashore and the city was so beautiful, after all the blackout and rationing at home. it was good to see the shops full of things we had missed at home, though we got confused with the trams which all had a trailer. I think we got on at the front and out at the rear!

We left Lisbon and made our way to Gibraltar via the three-mile limit just in case! On arrival we had our hull checked, and all was in order. We then went up the Spanish coast to Burriana, a very small port, to load oranges. We had to wait a few days for our turn to go into harbour as we were loading from lighters - a very long job. We were not allowed ashore so life was very dull indeed. Then it was back to Gibraltar for a slow convoy home to Cardiff, and for me a week's leave. I brought home a sack of oranges, a very rare fruit in the UK at that time.

Leave over, and it was back to Cardiff for a new ship. I was sent to the ***Empire Tana***, another old ship, and did a record trip of 14 days from Cardiff to Loch Ewe. We anchored up there for a few days then sailed to Southampton Roads to await orders. While there, we got a visit from the Marconi Co., and had to strip parts of the radio room of gear then return to the East Ham depot to await the Morse call from the office desk.

On the 11th of May 1944 we got the call to join the ***Empire Falstaff*** which was loading in the West India dock. She was loading a full signals regiment, and also some massive Scammel trucks with big wire drums on the chassis. We found these were tank recovery trucks, and seeing all this going on we could see why we had been asked to sign special paper work re any out of normal duties! Many slings of new motor cycles were being loaded, which was of interest to me, being a motor cyclist at home, but I did not like the way they were being handled. After many days we moved to a new dock to load a deck cargo of more army trucks. We then moved further down river to anchor, and at this point we had another visit from the agents from whom we learned that our previous ship had been booked as a block ship for the Mulberry harbour in Normandy.

We then joined a convoy for the Isle of Wight where we anchored, and embarked personnel from a Signals Regiment, including a signalman from my next village, Disley. All these men were deeply upset at being put down the holds. We left after a few days and joined a convoy with many escorts. Our

destination was Arromanches beachhead, where we arrived on D Day + 3.

The racket and noise was out of this world, with aircraft attacking the ships, plus the big guns of the battleships, all of which left one in a daze. However, the Pioneer Corps unloaded the cargo into LCTs, and we were pleased to get away for another return trip. We made 3 more trips, and on our final trip saw the 1000 bomber raid on Caen where our lads were stuck. The sky was black with aircraft, a sight never to be forgotten. Another thing that always sticks in my mind was when we were ordered to keep engines going slow astern at all times while we were at anchor, to combat the one man subs that were putting limpet mines on ships hulls. Our propellers were churning up bodies of our troops who were floating around the ships.

We were all pleased to leave the beachhead for the last time and return to London. I had a good Chief R/O, who did not go home on leave, being un-married, and he sent me home on unofficial leave. Ten days later he sent me a telegram to return. I'd had the luxury of leave with his blessing, he was a good man by the name of Clatworthy, from Long Easton in Derbyshire. (I wonder if any readers sailed with him?) Anyway, on 15th August 1944, thanks to my Chief ! was back on articles again, and back on board in London I found the ship had moved berths. We had loaded 2000 tons of slag to keep us down a bit and we were awaiting a 10 knot convoy to Canada where we were going to load timber at Montreal.

We had a rough trip, gales for half the time; I was as sick as a dog and prayed for the gales to cease. I never thought I would ever be able to look down the next ship's funnel and then look up under her hull at a big flailing prop, with the engines racing like mad. This went on day after day, but the bad part was at night. At odd times I went on the bridge wing with the 3rd Mate on the 12-4 watch, and I could not see the ship in front for ages: that miniature blue light was like a needle in the haystack. We lost seven ships in one night. The convoy scattered in the gale and we were lost, until just a few of us got together again days later. Extra lookouts were put on the bow and monkey island and these were frozen stiff in no time. However, the U- boats had been lying low out of the weather, and after the seas had calmed down, we got into the St. Lawrence, after twenty days out from London.

Going up the river, we got to Quebec and what a sight greeted us: the Chateau Frontenac, all aglow with bunting and flags of all nations, and lit up at night like a Christmas tree. We found out it was the Big Four meeting with Stalin, Churchill, Roosevelt, and Canada's Mackenzie King. This is the sight I always think of when I have a chat on the air with a station in Quebec City. We pressed on to Montreal where we very quickly loaded timber, then down river to Halifax for a deck cargo of pit props, which we lost coming home in more bad weather.

We came in to Manchester, which was great for me, because I was soon on the train at London Road station and 45 minutes later I was home. My father had a visit to the ship in Salford, and his trip into the engine room thrilled him to bits; he was always talking about it later. This time I had a lot of leave due so with sad memories signed off the ***Empire Falstaff***. I was fortunate in obtaining a photograph of her coming into Liverpool Bay loaded with our timber cargo.

After my leave, on 23' November 1944, I got a call from Newcastle on Tyne to join the ***Cape Breton,*** an old ship but nice accommodation and a first for me - an emergency radio room aft with a spark TX too We had a pleasant trip to New York where we loaded army

supplies and ammo, and came home to London with no problems at all. I signed off for a few days leave, and on 5" April I reported to East Ham, for my second visit, to hear the news of my next trip via the Morse key in the office. I had to join the ***mv Daghestan***, a former CAM ship I was told, but a nice clean motorship. At last I was away from the coal dust etc., and I found we had a big trip ahead of us. We left for New York in ballast for a nice trip over the pond, and then we were loaded with US army supplies. I never knew the Yanks drank so much malted milk. We had all sorts of supplies, engines for jeeps, new jeeps, tyres, ammo, motor oils, tents, and a great number of typewriters. They must have had a big office staff!

We then got a convoy to the Med, and on to Port Said, which I never thought I would be able to smell so far away. We bunkered at Aden, then sailed to Bombay to unload some of our cargo. My boss, Ernie Rignall, was a man of the world and said to me - 'Do what I tell you!' We set off to a warehouse he knew to buy carpets. He said he had a big order book for these back home in Bury, so I did as I was told and we arrived back at the ship with five big carpets, including one for the skipper.

After ten days in Bombay we left for Trincomalee, to unload a great lot of tyres and jeeps. This is where I got frightened to death whilst swimming over the side. A shark had got in through the net and got hold of the leg of a Scottish sailor. We all made for the buoys, but in my fright I dug my feet onto the buoy to find it was full of barnacles which ripped my feet open.

We then left for Buenos Aires for a cargo of animal skins and hen corn, but when we arrived we could not go ashore. There was a riot on, some problem with President Peron. Anyway in a few days the shooting had stopped and peace was declared, and we started to load. I got taken out by some Scottish residents to play golf, which I had played since I was a boy caddie. I had a lovely time and this was one of the highlights of the trip.
We had to make our way then alone to catch a convoy from Baltimore, but on the way got invaded by many hundreds of rats out of these damn skins, so our orders were changed to Durban for fumigation. We arrived in lovely Durban, where we were put in a hotel for two days. Then back to the ship, and a further week's wait to get a convoy home to Antwerp for unloading. What a mess the RAF had made of that place. We unloaded, and went on to London where I signed off for the last time and resigned on the third of January 1946.

The ***Daghestan*** was a nice ship, although it had problems at times, having pranged a tug in Bombay harbour and crashed into the dry dock at Barry. The engineers said this was a thing with Doxford engines when going from ahead to reverse, although I never found out whether this was true. I would be pleased to hear from anyone who sailed in her when she was a CAM ship, and I would like to know her end after | left.

I returned to promotion in the cotton trade (a big mistake), then after twenty years I left to join the Post Office as a postman, after being on a waiting list for this job. I spent the next twenty-five happy years with great pals, and a career with nice residents in our small town. I also delivered to the rural Peak District and learned the art of dog fighting, although some of the farmers said I had ruined their dogs with kindness and biscuits!
I still pound the brass as a radio amateur having had my ticket since 1951, and I'm on my 23rd logbook with 58,000 contacts, mostly C.W. I also serve as a Morse examiner for the DTI to try to put a little bit back into the best hobby in the World - THANKS TO SAMUEL MORSE!

Memories of D–Day

By **Ron Watkins**

Our ship the ***Empire Rhodes*** or MT262 (Military Transport 62) as we were called for this assignment arrived at Juno Beach on D plus 1 with 600 troops and their equipment which we unloaded on to landing craft. After unloading we returned to London for another load, these trips were much less eventful than we expected, but there was enough activity to keep us on our toes.

On the night of 11th or 12th June 1944 we were moving through the docks heading for the Thames when the sirens sounded and we pulled along the dock wall and tied up. We thought this rather unusual until we were told that the pilot had refused to take us into the locks in case we were hit and would seal off the entrance to the river.

The gunfire was very intense but I turned in about 10pm and fell asleep until around 6am. The guns were firing again but when I checked with the 2nd mate, he told me that they had been at it all night. At that moment there was a strange roar outside and the troops were cheering and then there was a hell of an explosion. When I arrived on the boat deck one of the army officers told me that an aircraft had been shot down and had crashed on the other side of the dock apparently with bombs still on board, because this had caused so much damage. It had completely destroyed a large warehouse and blown the roofs off many other buildings.

I went back to my cabin, had a shave, and went out on deck, at this moment the gunfire started to get really noisy and you could hear rocket fire from the nearby anti-aircraft batteries which indicated that the aircraft were nearly overhead. At that moment I decided it was time to put my helmet on! As I was stepping back out on deck there was a blinding flash and I was blown back into the passage way and knocked out for a short while, probably in actual fact just for a second or two. Then I heard someone shout fire, or so I thought, but it was 'watch out for fire.
Out on deck there was a mess, vehicles were upended or on their side and there was a strong smell of gasoline, but fortunately no fire.

There were a couple of injured soldiers and the two Royal Observer Corps aircraft spotters had been killed.
I don't remember which of the Royal Docks we were in but I do remember that we tied alongside a wooden jetty with cranes and a waterway between it and the granite dock wall. There were many killed on the dockside and it the warehouse being used by RN personnel including many WRNS. There was a lot of corrugated iron sheeting wrapped around our masts and one gun platform.

This was cleared away and we were on our way. The damaged trucks must have been dumped overboard during the crossing because they were there when we left London but not on board when we arrived at the beaches. We were also told that day that it was not conventional aircraft that were bombing but the first of the V1 flying bombs that had been paying us a visit.

We did not always unload at the same beach, we also went to Sword and Gold, but Sword was closed for a while when it came under fire from long range enemy guns, but those positions must have been taken or

bombed because it was re-opened before our next trip. I believe that the troops we dropped off at Sword were Canadian. We were at the beach head when the infamous storm hit, it was chaos; many ships were dragging their anchors and were constantly sounding their sirens to warn others. It was a heck of a mess. We had landing craft alongside and a Rhino barge broke its forward line and pounded our hull for many hours. As it was impossible for anyone to board and repair the line, we just sat there and took it.

We found out later that it had swung around under our stern and damaged our prop by bending one blade and gouging another.

It was also quite a mess on board, out of the 600 troops probably 599.5 of them were seasick. One of four officers that were crawling on their knees along the passageway, gave me his opinion of the Bloody Sea, the Bloody Ships and the Bloody Fact that he had not joined the ..... Army to go to ..... sea! It was funny in a way, but they were in really bad shape. Their only enemy at that time was the sea and they wanted to get off it and on to solid land.

We continued the cross channel ferry service until 27th July and then docked at Newcastle and paid off. The whole Normandy experience, the V1s and V2s in London, being inshore of the ***Warspite*** while she was firing into Caen and the massive Lancaster attack on the same town, will never be repeated in my lifetime and I am very proud to have been part of it.

I think that the ***Empire Rhodes*** was a very lucky ship. Before the invasion I had sailed on her to New York, loaded there, through the Med to Egypt. Discharged cargo, bunkered at Aden, sailed to Lourenco Marques on 24th December 1943, just missing a long range U-boat attack on a northbound Liberty ship which we had passed while southbound and exchanged Christmas greetings with only a few hours before.

We pulled into Durban for radio repairs and sailed for Buenos Aires. Broke down in the South Atlantic, and drifted for a few days while the engineers removed the centre connecting rod from the triple expansion steam. When this was completed we proceeded at the roaring speed of 5 knots. We had quite a problem making headway up the River Plate but we finally arrived. Better late than never.

While sailing alone we had to contact GBR (Rugby) at 0000 hours every night, giving our position 24 hours ahead of our present location (to confuse the enemy). Yeah, I bet we did!

We left BA for Freetown to join a convoy to the UK, unfortunately they were leaving when we arrived. The Captain had just enough time to get our orders but no time for any supplies or water.
We made it home OK but out of water, fags and very short of food. We also stank to High Heaven as we had a partial cargo of animal skins! We felt pretty safe as no U-boat would want to come within 20 miles of us, so the convoy benefited as well.

Willie (Williamson) had asked Ron some questions on code words used during the Overlord operation, and Ron remembers the following, DRIFTWOOD, JETSAM and FLOTSAM. These were alerts for mines planted by the enemy, so that tide changes would float them into the concentrations of shipping, for mini-submarines in the area, or detection of E-boat activity. Which was which unfortunately at this distance in time remains a mystery.