

ANSELL, ARTHUR

RANK: MARINE

DECORATIONS:

YEARS OF SERVICE:

SHIPS: HMS NELSON

OPERATIONAL SERVICE: WWII, MEDITERRANEAN, D-DAY

UNITS:

Born in 1922. Qualified as a gent's hairdresser in 1940. Failed to join the Merchant Navy or RN so instead joined the Royal Marines. Lengthy training at Eastney. During heavy bombing assisted in the Portsmouth city with burials and clearing rubble. Draft to HMS Nelson in Rosyth Dockyard being repaired. A most unpleasant time but improved when they arrived in Scapa in January 1942. He spent rest of war in HMS Nelson. Described in detail life on board. Used his skills as a barber to cut hair at 6d a time. But all changed when they escorted a convoy to Sierra Leone. Very hot humid and dirty. Then returned home via Gib. Back to Scapa. Saw US carrier Wasp arrive with Douglas Fairbanks aboard. Then to Gib as part of Op Pedestal, a huge task force to resupply Malta. He saw HMS Eagle sink very rapidly but later spent three days locked down in the main magazines. A feeling of prolonged fear as they could hear the battles raging above them yet knew their chance of escape if hit would be minimal.

Sadly the recording stops there so fails to cover epic events such as landings at Salerno, VIPs taking passage, D Day NGS Support, scraping the bottom off I.O.W, lengthy refit in Philadelphia, mutiny of RMs Ships Detachment on return to Pompey, and then Arthur's time as a barber. However, Arthur did write his memoirs "From boy to bootneck" (which is available from Amazon).

The second oral history recording is about his time as 25 years as RMA secretary at Hansworth. He was responsible for running lots of functions.