

WORLD WAR 2

HMS REDPOLE 1943 – 1945

By John Lloyd



HMS Redpole – Modified Black Swan Sloop

This is an account of the time that six Royal Naval Personnel, including my father Reg Lloyd, sailed on HMS REDPOLE together during the war years from 1943 – 1945. They served in various capacities during this time as shown below.



Leading Seaman Reg Lloyd photographed at the Red House Photo Studio Gibraltar, October 1944



Rear of photo showing the studio stamp.

Reginald Sydney Lloyd No. JX284848 of Llanelli, Carmarthenshire, was a Radar Operator with Signals Branch.

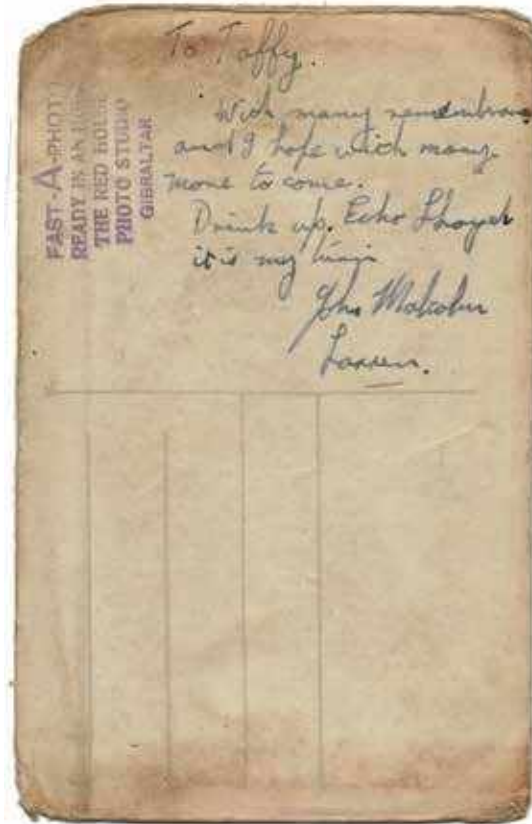
His duties included scanning for enemy ships, U Boats and aircraft, and relaying this information to the Commander in the Operations Room.

He commenced his wartime experiences in June 1941 when he served on HMS Queen of Bermuda an Armoured Merchant Cruiser, these are chronicled in Reg Lloyd Story 01 to story 04 on the Llanelli Community Heritage website: llanellich.org.uk.

His service continued on HMS Redpole from June 1943 until his discharge in December 1945, related in Reg Lloyd story 05 on the same website.



Leading Seaman John Malcolm Lorrens
photographed at the Red House Photo Studio,
Gibraltar, October 1944



Rear of photo showing Studio stamp and
a message of hope for the future to
my father Reg Lloyd

Message Reads:

"To Taffy

With many rememberings and I hope with many more to come.
Drink up Echo Lloyd it is my turn"

John Malcolm Lorrens

"Echo" Being A Term For Radar Operators

John Malcolm Lorrens, who served on HMS Redpole from 1943 to 1945.
Further details are not known.

Kenneth Edward Sparrow No. JX407916 RN of Ipswich, Suffolk who served on HMS Redpole from June 1943 to 1946. His role was in Gunnery Fire Control or in Transmitting Station and these experiences are detailed below in the article by his son Steve Sparrow.

Ernest (Jimmy) Green of Wareham, Dorset, who served on HMS Redpole from 1943 to 1946. Among his duties he operated the large anti aircraft gun, this had a detrimental effect on his hearing in later life.

Robert (Bob) Barnett No. P/X521849 of Christchurch, Dorset, who served on HMS Redpole from 1943 to 1946. He too was a Gunnery Operator.

Thomas Brien of Bishopbriggs, Scotland, who served on HMS Redpole from 1943 to 1946.

The experiences of Jimmy, Bob and Thomas are detailed below in an article published by the Staffordshire Star newspaper, who have given their kind permission for the reprinting.

Each of these stories with their factual confirmation of events that occurred establish that all six crew members named, sailed on HMS Redpole at the same time.

During these times they fought together through campaigns that included the Normandy Landings in June 1944 and the recapturing of Ramree and Cheduba Islands in Burma from the Imperial Japanese Army in January 1945. They were also involved in other wartime convoy escort and support duties during these years, before they were finally discharged to return to civvy street at the end of the war.

These episodes were the most eventful and dangerous times of their lives.



The Author John Lloyd and his dog Llewellyn

Kenneth Edward Sparrow JX407916 RN

Memories of the HMS Redpole



Ken was born 8th June 1925 in Colchester, Essex to parents Ted and Maud Sparrow. When he was two they and his sister Phyllis moved to Ipswich due to Ted's work.

In 1942 WWII was pretty bad and during that year many of Ken's mates had joined the Armed Forces, mainly the Royal Navy. He tried to join up when just 17 but was told by the Recruiting Officer he was too young. However, just before he was 17 and a half years old, they accepted him. During February 1943 he started at HMS Ganges in Shotley, Suffolk and he remembers his mother not being at all pleased with the news. No doubt she worried herself sick until his safe return from the war.

He did twelve weeks training there and recalled it as being fairly tough and all were put through their paces. At the end of his time there he felt really fit and well trained. It was good being stationed at Shotley as it was only a short bus ride away from home, unlike most of the sailors there.



Following the training he had two weeks leave before going to Chatham Barracks to await a draught to a ship. When he got to the barracks there were thousands of sailors there.

He was getting fed up and didn't think he would ever get a ship but after what seemed two

He and around two hundred others went to Glasgow by train with all of their kit. He had to do lots of new training trying out the armament.

Ken was a seaman but when at sea or at action stations his role was in gunnery fire control or in the Transmitting Station (T/S). He was one of seven round a big table and they fed information to give ranges or fuse settings for the 4 inch guns. They worked with headphones and mouth pieces and during action stations they were all shouting orders to different guns.

He would be in contact with the control officers and to the guns. They worked in what was termed as the Mad House as that was what it sounded like to those outside the room.

During the Working Up trials in Scotland they went to Tobermory on the Sound of Mull, Holy Loch, The Hebrides and Scarpa Flow.

After all the trials they set sail and went to Milford Haven, Wales to refuel and then met up with a convoy escorting it to Gibraltar where they stayed for five days before returning to the UK. They did around four trips back and forth to Gibraltar, having a spot of home time. On one trip to Gib with a convoy they were attacked for over four hours by German Focke-Wulf 200 Condor bombers. One British destroyer was bomb damaged and one merchant ship sunk.

HMS *Redpole* was firing for over four hours on and off and at the end of the day it was running low on ammunition but they topped up again after arriving in Gibraltar.



HMS Redpole – Modified Black Swan Sloop

German aircraft had machine gunned them in the water, wounding one man who died the night before their arrival. They were Americans. Redpole joined up again with the convoy and were again attacked by German bomb

They called into the Azores and also Casablanca. After seven months based at Gibraltar preparation for D-Day.

When the day arrived they escorted a large number of landing craft over to France and everywhere they looked there were ships, in fact some 4,000 could be seen.

Whilst they were just off the beach, British battleships several miles out to sea were firing their 15" guns over the top of the *Redpole*. The shells sounded like a train roaring through the air. Ken stayed onboard at the beachhead for a couple of days then came back to England. Every couple of days they went back to France escorting troop ships full of soldiers.

They did these trips from June until September. Following leave they again sailed for Gibraltar again through the Mediterranean onto Alexandria, Port Said and through the Suez Canal and Red Sea to Aden. From there they crossed the Indian Ocean to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). They were based at Colombo and did lots of escort work in the Bay of Bengal as well as anti submarine work.



One day they had to escort the battleship Queen Elizabeth over to the Ramree Islands in Burma where she bombarded the Japanese there.

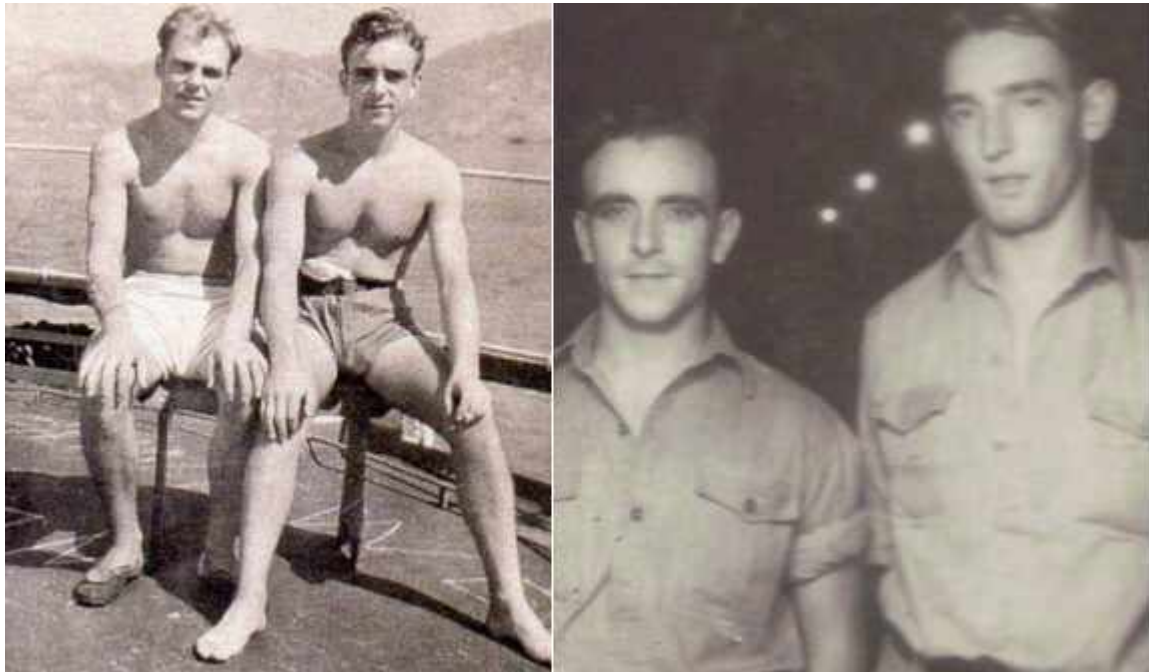
Also on their trips in the Bay of Bengal the *Redpole* went twice to Vishakhapatnam in India. After several months in Ceylon they sailed to Australia arriving at Freemantle and then onto Perth. The next day they sailed to Sydney, waiting there eight weeks to go into dry dock for a refit. After all that time there they were sent to New Zealand into a floating dock in Auckland.

Ken had two weeks leave on a farm at Maungatoroto some 70 miles north of Auckland and another two weeks in Auckland. By all accounts they were warmly welcomed by their hosts and very well looked after.



After eight weeks in New Zealand they sailed into a cyclone to Sydney. It was so rough they had to 'heave to' for two days and that meant turning the ship found facing into the wind. It was slow going but they eventually arrived in Sydney. Next they went to Manus, just off Papua New Guinea. They were known as the Fleet Train and escorted ammunition ships, supply ships and oil tankers up into the Pacific Ocean.

At this time the British Pacific Fleet and the American Fleet were shelling Japan and about once a week they rendezvous with *Redpole* to resupply. In all Ken was out at sea for some seven weeks covering 13,500 miles without stopping.



As they were heading south after that trip and were about 150 miles off Japan the Atom Bombs were dropped, though they never actually heard or saw anything. They arrived back at Manus two days after the Japanese surrendered.

After this they sailed up to Hong Kong and onto Shanghai and after a couple of months headed back to Sydney again. After a week's leave they sailed onto Brisbane spending six weeks there before sailing up past the Great Barrier Reef two days before Christmas, arriving at Darwin on Christmas Eve.



From there they sailed north again for Subic Bay in the Philippines, onto both Hong Kong and Shanghai again. Whilst in Hong Kong Ken was told he was going home and he transferred onto HMS Stalker taking six weeks to arrive in England.



HMS Stalker

After all that time away it was, by his account, 'pretty wonderful to get home'. After a couple of weeks leave he went back to Chatham Barracks. In two weeks he was demobbed out of the Royal Navy and was a civilian once again.

INTERIM TRADE CERTIFICATE*

During his service in the Royal Navy SPARROW
Kenneth JA 407416 has been employed on
 duties appertaining to the Trade of H.B.
 with the various aspects of which he was shown himself fully conversant, either through his prior experience in the Trade, or by training in the work, and employment thereon, which he has had since his entry into the Navy.

His general efficiency in carrying out such duties was _____

Satisfactory

His efficiency on discharge was _____

Satisfactory

His character during his Service was Very Good

Signed: [Signature]

Commanding Officer,

H.M.S. Porpoise

Date



(*To be issued in the absence of other documents not immediately available on the rating's discharge.)

N.S.1677/45

WL 34128 10/45 Op. 3019



Ken had three months leave before starting back again at the Co-op Bakery.



HMS *Redpole*

Type Sloop **Class** Black Swan **Laid Down** 18/05/1942 **Launched** 25/02/1943
Completed 26/06/1943 **Pennants** U69, A192 BPF, B276 BPF, F69 **Fate** Scrapped 20/11/1960

Ordered from Yarrow Shipbuilders Limited of Scotstoun, Glasgow 1940.

Displacement 1,350 tons
Length 283ft
Beam 38.5ft
Propulsion Geared turbines, two shafts
Speed 20 knots at 4,300hp (3,200kw)
Complement 192 men +1 Cat
Armament 6 x QF 4 in Mk XVI anti-aircraft guns, 12 x 20mm anti-aircraft guns

She was the fifth Royal Navy warship to carry the name dating from 1808 and previously used for a destroyer built in 1910 and sold in 1921. She had been adopted by the civil community of the Rural District of Kettering, Northamptonshire in March 1942 following a successful Warship Week National Savings campaign.

The vessel was ordered on 27th March 1941, laid down on 18th May 1942 and launched on 25th February 1943 by a Mrs Mitchell.

The build was completed on 26th June 1943. After tests and its operational commissioning in July 1943, HMS *Redpole* joined the 7th Escort Group in Greenock for the escort and support of convoys in the Atlantic. It was then in Gibraltar for convoys in the Mediterranean.

In May 1944, she was in the service of Support Force G during the assault phase of the Allied landing planned in Normandy as part of Operation Neptune.

At the end of 1944, *Redpole* was assigned to the East Indies Fleet for training when some ships were transferred to the British Pacific Fleet.

In January 1945, she joined Task Force 64 to support the landings in Burma. She provided fire support with the Bombardment Force during the landings of the British 4th and 71st Brigades in the northern part of Ramree Island during Operation Matador.

From February until July 1945 she was in Auckland, New Zealand for repairs and technical improvements. At the end of the post-refit tests, she left for Sydney, Australia for service with the British Pacific Fleet. *Redpole* moved to the Manus Forward Operating Base in the Admiralty Islands during August 1945.

Redpole returned to Royal Navy control upon arrival and deployed with the British Pacific Fleet to Hong Kong to support repatriation operations. She remained in the Pacific until her return to the United Kingdom in 1946 to be placed on the reserve at Harwich.

Three years later, the vessel was reactivated to serve as a navigation training vessel attached to HMS Dryad in Portsmouth and returned to service. Its armament was removed during a major refit, including the installation of a tripod mast and the provision of facilities for the practical training of junior officers in navigation.

On July 12, 1957, it was involved in a collision with the Gosport Ferry Vadne, killing one of the 40 passengers and seriously damaging the ferry.

In 1958, the ship was withdrawn from its training role and returned to the reserve until 1960. It was sold to BISCO on November 11, 1960 for demolition by JA White and arrived in tow at the demolition site in Saint-Davids on November 20 of the same year.

Heraldic Data

Badge: On a Field White, a *Redpole* Proper upon a branch of a tree



WWII Battle Honours

Atlantic 1943-44 Normandy 1944 Burma 1944-45



Details of World War II Service

Commands Listed For HMS *Redpole*

Lt. Cdr Ian Montague Carss, DSC, RN May 1943 to June 1944

Lt Cdr Edward John Lee, RN June 1944 to Mid 1946

1943

June

Contractors trials and commissioned for service in 7th Escort Group
Build completion and commenced Acceptance Trials

July

On completion of trials and storing took passage to Tobermory (Isle of Mull in the Scottish Inner Hebrides to commence work-up for operational service Carried out work-up at Tobermory Passage to Scapa Flow to complete work-up with ships of Home Fleet

August

On completion took passage to Greenock Joined Group based at Greenock for convoy escort and support in Atlantic

September

Detached for service at Gibraltar for convoy escort and support in Mediterranean and Atlantic

October to December

Deployment at Gibraltar. Assigned to the East Indies Fleet for training

1944

January

Nominated for return to 7th Escort Group

February

Passage to UK to rejoin Group and deployed on convoy defence in home waters

March to April

Deployed in NW Approaches and UK coastal waters for convoy defence

May

Nominated for duty with Support Force G during Assault Phase of planned allied landings in Normandy (Operation Neptune)

3rd Took part in Final Rehearsal for Neptune landings with ships of Force G

4th Took part in Exercise Fabius at Hayling Island with ships and craft of Forces G, J and G

18th Took part in defence exercise off Brighton with Forces S, G and 21st in preparation for Operation Neptune

June

Passage to Solent

Nominated for escort of Assault Convoy G5 to Gold beach head

HM Trawler Bombadier joined

5th Passage through swept channel with Convoy

6th On arrival at Lowering position detached and returned to Portsmouth to join HM Sloop Stork and

HM Escort Destroyer Eglinton in 116th Escort Group for defence of follow-up convoys

27th On termination of Operation Neptune deployed for Channel convoy escort and patrol

July

Nominated for duty in Eastern Fleet on completion of refit

5th Passage to Clyde

6th Taken in hand for refit in Clyde commercial shipyard

August

Under refit

September

On completion of post refit trials took passage for work-up Passage to join military convoy in Clyde on completion of work-up

October

1st Sailed from Clyde as part of escort for Convoy KMF35 during passage to Port Said

11th At Gibraltar and joined escort of Convoy KMS65 during passage in Mediterranean to Port Said

21st Arrived at Port Said and detached from KMS65 Canal transit and passage in Red Sea

November

Passage in Indian Ocean

6th Joined Eastern Fleet at Trincomalee (North Eastern Sri Lanka) Transferred to East Indies Fleet of formation when some Eastern Fleet ships transferred to British Pacific Fleet

December

Deployed for convoy defence. Prepared for support of planned landings in Burma

1945

January

Joined Task Force 64 for support of landings in Burma

10th and 11th Conducted A/S exercises off Colombo with HMS *Vox*

Provided gunfire support with Bombardment Force during landings by British 4th and 71st Brigade in northern part of Ramree Island (Operation Matador)

Transferred to British Pacific Fleet and took passage to Sydney

16th 17th and 18th Conducted A/S exercises off Sydney with HMS *Vox*

February

Passage in Indian Ocean

17th On arrival at Sydney required refit prior to operational service with the British Pacific Fleet

Refit arranged at Auckland, New Zealand by HM Dockyard

March

Passage to Auckland

April to June

Under refit

July

On completion of post refit trials took passage to Sydney for British Pacific Fleet service

August

Passage to forward operational base at Manus, Admiralty Islands

Post War Notes

HMS *Redpole* reverted to RN control after arrival and was deployed with the British Pacific Fleet at Hong Kong for support of repatriation operations. She remained in the Pacific until returning to UK in 1946 to Pay off into Reserve at Harwich. Three years later the ship was brought forward for duty as a Navigation Training Ship attached to HMS *Dryad* at Portsmouth and re-commissioned.

Her armament was removed during an extensive refit including fitting of a tripod mast and providing facilities for practical instruction of Junior officers in navigation. On 12th July 1957 she was involved in a collision with the Gosport Ferry *Vadne* causing one fatality and badly damaged the Ferry.

In 1958 the ship was withdrawn from her training role to Pay Off and was remained in Reserve until 1960. She was sold to BISCO on 11th November 1960 for demolition by J A White and arrived in tow at the breaker's yard at St Davids on 20th November that year.

Parliamentary Questions re: Gosport Ferry Collision 01 Aug. 1957

Dr Bennett asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty the findings of the Board's inquiry into the collision between HMS *Redpole* and the Gosport ferry *Vadne* and if he will publish these findings as soon as he receives the report.

Mr Soames A Naval Board of Inquiry is held to enable the Admiralty to consider whether any disciplinary action is required and whether there are any steps that can usefully be taken to prevent a recurrence of the accident. It cannot determine the question of legal liability, particularly when other interests are involved; and to announce the findings of such boards might prejudice the legal proceedings.



Leading seaman Reg Lloyd (right) and Dave Fuller aboard HMS Queen of Bermuda in the south Atlantic during WW2. The white Ensign can be seen flying in the background.



The White Ensign, a symbol of the ship's Nationality being proudly shown on HMS Queen of Bermuda in the south Atlantic during WW2

NOTE: the above photo to the left is unfortunately not showing the flag which is quite understandable after 70 years or so, it is however showing well on the right most photo.

These photographs are part of the private collection of memorabilia belonging to John Lloyd. His late father Reg saved these during his service in the Royal Navy during WW2.