

Dick Minter 1922 – 1979

A World War 2 hero

The following account of Dick Minter's involvement in World War 2 was put together using a number of sources, as indicated.

Dick was a signalman, number C/JX.155114, on HMS Fitzroy which made 4 trips to Dunkirk between 26 May and 4 June 1940, as part of Operation "Dynamo" the evacuation of the Allied Armies from Dunkirk and neighbouring beaches. HMS Fitzroy, a Hunt-class minesweeper, carried 814 troops back to England. Dick was one of the many servicemen to receive the Distinguished Service Medal for their part in the operation. Dick's award was recorded in the London Gazette on 16 August 1940.

At some point later in the war Dick joined the crew of the S-class submarine HMS Sahib which was launched on 19 January 1942 and commissioned on 13 May 1942. After successful actions from its bases in Gibraltar and Malta Sahib operated from Algiers. On 24 April 1943, having sunk an Italian merchant vessel, Sahib was attacked with depth charges and forced to surface. The crew abandoned the submarine (which was scuttled) and all but one of the crew were rescued by Italian ships. Dick's subsequent imprisonment and escape were recorded in the "Good Morning" newspaper of 9 February 1944, a copy of which was provided to Minter Exchange by James Earley:



The London Gazette on 15 August 1944 reported that Leading Signalman Dick Minter, D.S.M., C/JX.155114 had been awarded the British Empire Medal (Military Division) 'for gallant and distinguished services'.

Dick subsequently joined the crew of the hospital ship, HMHS Ophir, a Dutch liner which had been requisitioned for Admiralty service on 8 July 1942. The ship's complement of Dutch Mercantile officers and crew was retained. The Ophir was in service as a hospital ship from 1943 until it was handed back to her owners on 8 April 1946. According to "The Royal Naval Medical Service: Administration" (at Google Books), over 12,000 patients were admitted to the ship during the whole war period.

This chapter in Dick Minter's story was provided by Laura, daughter of Royal Navy Signalman, Len Schofield.

Born 1925 and from Croydon near London, Len Schofield joined the sea cadets and then The Royal Navy at Chatham Docks in WWII. His first duties were on board HMS Malaya out from Scapa Flow as Signalman. When the ship needed repairs, he moved to HMS Valiant until almost the end of WWII.

When HMS Valiant broke her spine in dock in Ceylon, Len was assigned to a Dutch hospital ship called The Ophir and this is where he met Dick Minter. They sailed out from Ceylon - Colombo, (Sri Lanka) with a mission to bring POWs back from Singapore area.

The Captain of The Ophir was Captain Venema who called Len 'Schoffey'. The other two signalmen were 'Babe' (the newest lad) and Dick Minter. All became good friends in a very short time. Dick and Babe managed the signals during the daytime and Len took the night shift.

On board The Ophir, Captain Venema and other higher ranking officers were allowed their wives and children to join them as hostilities lessened. The Captain had three daughters, one being Jeanne Venema. So that Captain Venema could have private time with his wife, who he'd not seen for near on two/three years, he tasked Len to show one of the girls around Singapore and gave Dad cash to do so. Dad said she was a pretty lass and that his friend, Dick, fell in love with Jeanne. Dick told Dad "Len, I'm going to marry her" and it appears that, at that time, Dad was sworn to secrecy as Jeanne's father didn't know where the couple had gone and was worried. I see from family notes that they were married in Bombay (which backs up Dad's memories).

After the war, Dad got on his motorbike from Croydon, as he'd met Dick's brother (air force chap) who said Jeanne was living in Canterbury and that his brother was 'alright and don't worry'. Dad went to the address given and, sure enough, Jeanne was there and made a cup of tea for Dad, but Dick was not mentioned and, politely, Dad didn't make further enquiries.

Dad recounted this tale in the last month of his life - he was quite sad telling the tale of his lost friends. He, Babe and Dick had become a solid unit. I believe Dick had already been a POW himself in Italy, escaped and then wanted to join the war effort in getting other POWs home.....but he fell in love and good on him!

My Dad Len got the Burma Star and I've all his medals with me. He passed away peacefully of old age in June 2020. I'm very proud of Len, Babe and Dick Minter being part of bringing men, women and children back to safety.

Laura has very kindly provided some photos of her father Len Schofield, Dick Minter, Babe Lonsdale and Jeanne Venema.

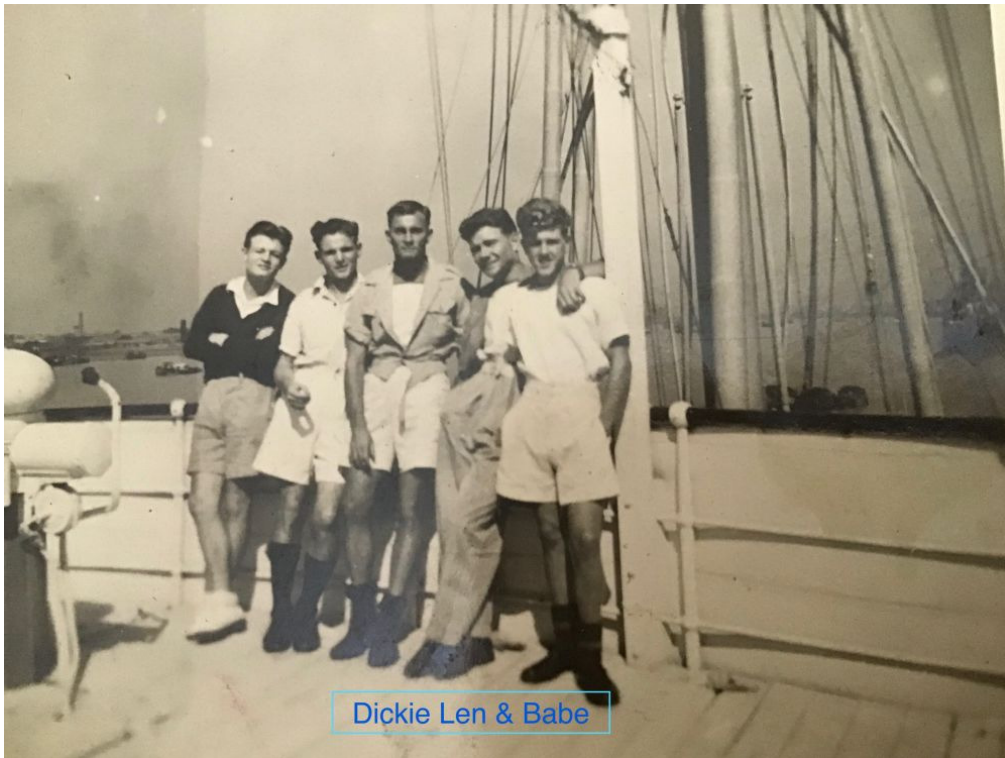


Jeanne Venema and Dick Minter



HMHS Ophir crew

highlighted are Babe Lonsdale, Dick Minter, Len Schofield



Dick Minter, Len Schofield, Babe Lonsdale



Babe Lonsdale, Len Schofield, Dick Minter



Babe Lonsdale, Len Schofield



From Len Schofield's Wartime Album