

HMS RELENTLESS

By Sam185

1940's COMMISSIONS



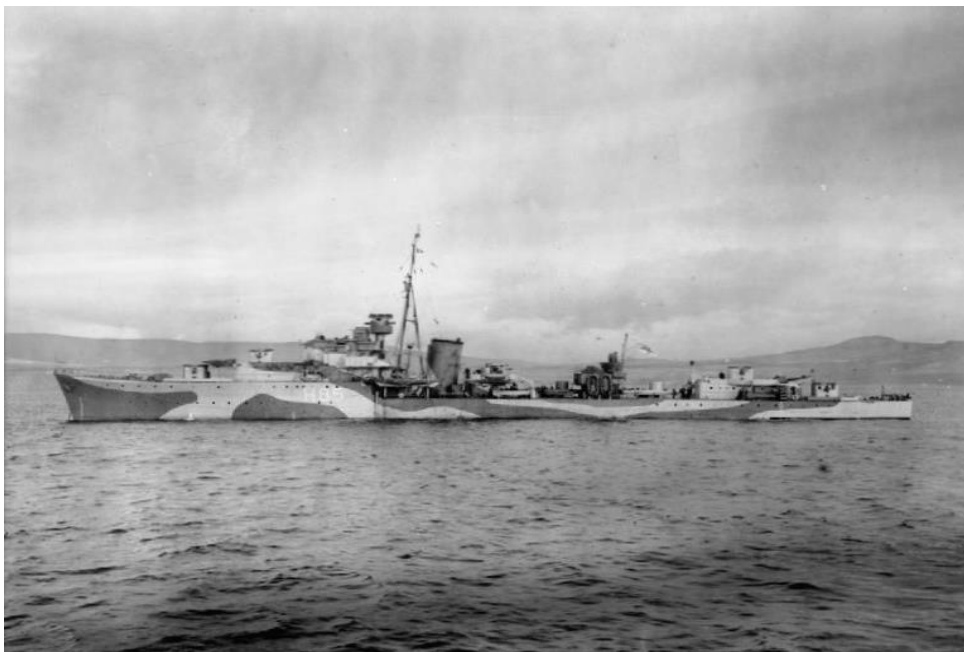
HMS RELENTLESS - at speed - 1944

WW2 COMMISSIONS - 1942

HMS RELENTLESS was a Rotherham-Class ('R' Class) destroyer initially ordered as part of the 4th Emergency Flotilla from Fairfield Shipbuilders in Govan in May 1940.

Shortly after ordering, work was transferred to John Brown of Clydebank but construction work was delayed because of higher priority being given to the repair of ships damaged in operations in Norway and from the Dunkirk evacuation.

Eventually laid down on 20th June 1941 and launched on 15th July 1942, RELENTLESS (*Lt Cdr R A Fell*) underwent Contractor's sea trials during November of 1942 before being accepted into service and was commissioned into the 11th Destroyer Flotilla on November 30th 1942.



HMS RELENTLESS - as built - December 1942

The following day, 1st December, RELENTLESS left Greenock for Tobermory to carry out 7 days of Anti-Submarine practices. On the 9th, she left Tobermory for Scapa Flow and on arrival on the 10th, commenced Work Up for her first commission.

RELENTLESS' Work Up period lasted throughout Christmas and New Year until on the 6th January she left Scapa and arrived in Liverpool on the 7th to prepare for Foreign Service.

WW2 COMMISSIONS – 1943

OFFICERS February 1943

Captain	Lt Cdr R A Fell
1st Lt	Lt BC Longbottom
Engineer Officer	Lt (E) EC Jenkinson
Doctor	Surg Lt TGS Murray RNVR
Gunner (T)	AB Clarke
Navigating Officer	Lt AF Dickson RNR
	Lt RC Griffiths SANF(V)
	S/Lt RP Dannreuther
	S/Lt SH Handley RNVR
	Mid BFD Van Niekerk SANF(V)

Nominated for convoy escort duty, RELENTLESS left Liverpool for the Clyde and on the 23rd January and joined the 29-ship Convoy WS26/KMF8. Other escorts included the armed merchant cruisers CANTON and CILICIA and the destroyer QUADRANT as Ocean Escort for passage to Freetown.

Twenty of the ships comprised the WS26 element and were bound for Freetown in British West Africa (*now Sierra Leone*). The other nine ships of KMF8 were bound for the Mediterranean. The KMF element was detached at 1600Z on 29th January in position 36° 17'N 08° 23'W.

On arrival in Freetown on 6th February, RELENTLESS was detached from the convoy and sailed to Lagos (*Nigeria*), arriving there on the 10th to have a new asdic dome fitted. On the 14th, the ship rejoined WS26 for its passage from Freetown to Durban and on arrival on the 25th, was detached to join a military convoy (*probably CN10, DB10 or DC11*).

On 1st March RELENTLESS once again joined WS26 together with the destroyers BLACKMORE and CATTERICK, the Indian minesweeper CARNATIC and Local Escort for passage in the Indian Ocean. During this time the convoy was covered by the cruisers CERES and BIRMINGHAM. On the 4th, RELENTLESS was detached from WS26 to reinforce Convoy DN21 with the destroyer QUIBERON. It was during this period that the convoy came under attack by U160 and 3 ships were torpedoed. Two ships sank and the other, the SHEAF CROWN, was towed into East London.

In April, because of the increase in U-Boat activity in the South Atlantic, RELENTLESS and RACEHORSE were deployed for convoy defence. On the 5th April, after refuelling at Pointe Noire (*Belgian Congo, now the Democratic Republic of Congo*) they joined the cruiser KENYA and the destroyers QUADRANT and REDOUBT to reinforce the Ocean Escort of military convoy WS28 during its passage from Freetown to Capetown and subsequently, with the QUADRANT and REDOUBT, on to Durban.

RELENTLESS returned to Freetown early in May to escort military convoy WS29C to Capetown and on the 22nd, together with the cruiser NEWCASTLE and destroyers LEWES, RACEHORSE and ROTHERHAM, escorted convoy WS29F from Capetown to Durban.

On 26th May, RELENTLESS was detached from WS29F with the RACEHORSE and ROTHERHAM and in June deployed for convoy defence and interception patrols in the Indian Ocean.

On 15th June, ROTHERHAM and RELENTLESS sailed north from Durban to provide anti-submarine escort for RESOLUTION as far as 20 South (Beira) and on the 18th they swapped over the escort to RACEHORSE and NAPIER for the onward journey to Kilindini (*Mombasa*) and took over escort of REVENGE back south to Durban where they arrived on the 20th.

RELENTLESS joined the cruisers SUFFOLK and NEWCASTLE and the destroyers NIZAM and RACEHORSE on 24th June for Operation PLAYER, the search for the German U-Boat supply tanker CHARLOTTE SCHLIEMANN (*see OPERATION "CANNED"*). The German ship was reported to be on passage in the Indian Ocean after replenishing 5 U-Boats south of Mauritius on the 22nd. However, the search was abandoned after no sighting was made of the German ship and SUFFOLK and RELENTLESS were ordered to Port Louis in Mauritius to refuel where they arrived on the 2nd July.

On the 5th, RELENTLESS left Port Louis, ostensibly en-route to Durban but was diverted to search for survivors from JASPER PARK. Having found some survivors, RELENTLESS landed survivors from the Greek ship HYDRAIOS in Portuguese East Africa (*now Mozambique*) at Zawara Point, and those from the Norwegian ship BREIVIKEN in Inhambane (*the southernmost province of Mozambique*) before arriving in Durban on the 8th.

July saw the Indian Ocean deployment continued until RELENTLESS again returned to Freetown in early August to join military convoy WS32. On the 12th, together with the destroyers NORMAN, QUIBERON and RAPID and the frigates DERG, KALE and TAY, RELENTLESS escorted convoy WS32 to Capetown. On arrival there on the 18th, RELENTLESS resumed Flotilla duties.

During the following months, RELENTLESS continued with mainly Convoy escort duties, escorting convoys between Freetown, Capetown, Durban, Kilindini, Aden, Bombay and Colombo. One of the more notable events was in September; RELENTLESS had left Durban on the 14th, escorting Convoy CM45 to Kilindini and then on to Aden. On the 22nd, the day after leaving Kilindini, RELENTLESS rescued two boatloads of survivors (34 people) from the

US merchant ship CORNELIA P SPENCER which had been torpedoed and sunk the previous day by U-188 about 300 miles off the coast of Mogadishu (*Somalia*).

On 22nd November, RELENTLESS sailed for Simonstown, arriving there on the 25th for a much needed refit. On completion of the refit, RELENTLESS took passage to Colombo after being transferred for service with the Far Eastern Fleet.

Remarkably, RELENTLESS does not appear to have suffered any casualties in action during the war period, the only two casualties recorded were both during 1943:

Surname	Forenames	Ship Name	Rank	Lost	How Lost
Booth	Frederick John	Relentless	A.B.	23/12/1943	Died - illness
Pearce	Albert Wilfred Harold	Relentless	Sto.1.	05/06/1943	Died - killed in a road traffic accident in Durban

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WW2 COMMISSIONS – 1944

OFFICERS February 1944

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Navigating Officer	Lt AF Dickson RNR
	Lt RC Griffiths SANF(V)
	S/Lt SH Handley RNVR
	Mid TDC George SANF(V)

During January, the ship was deployed in the Indian Ocean for patrol and convoy defence duties and then in February RELENTLESS was involved in Operation CANNED with the cruiser NEWCASTLE. This operation was another attempt to find the elusive U-Boat supply ship CHARLOTTE SCHLIEMANN.

More detail is provided on this operation elsewhere on the History tab, see “Operation CANNED”

In conjunction with Catalina aircraft based in Mauritius, the German ship was sighted on the 12th and intercepted southeast of Mauritius by RELENTLESS (*Lt Cdr R A Fell*). The CHARLOTTE SCHLIEMANN (*Capt. Rothe*) engaged with her main armament but was scuttled on approach by RELENTLESS in position 2323S 7437E. 41 survivors, including the captain, were rescued by RELENTLESS but around 40 other survivors in 4 different boats sailed west. After an ordeal of 26 and 30 days, two of the boats reached the east coast of Madagascar, over 1,600 miles away from the sinking. The remaining 2 boats were never seen again.

For a personal view of this action, the following account by a young telegraphist, Kenneth Waterson (from the BBC series WW2 PEOPLE’S WAR “THE STORY OF MY LIFE ON BOARD THE DESTROYER H.M.S RELENTLESS 1944/1945”) is memorable.

(All Ken Waterson’s accounts are shown in full in the REFERENCE section)

Earlier in the year, in February 1944, The Relentless took part in Operation CANNED, the object of which was to find and destroy an enemy supply vessel believed to be operating in

the South Indian Ocean. The Relentless left Grand Port, Mauritius, on February 8th 1944 and proceeded to her search area. It had been arranged that land based aircraft, CATALINAS, would cooperate in the search and after contact had been made, search of the area commenced. On February 11th 1944 in the afternoon, Relentless received the aircraft's first sighting report and altered course to intercept. Contact was made with the enemy vessel in the evening and was seen to be the tanker CHARLOTTE SCHLIEMANN which began drastic avoiding action. Relentless closed at speed of 30 knots to within 2000 yards on the port beam of the tanker and fired 8 torpedoes. Gun fire with main armament was then opened but ceased as three torpedoes hit, causing explosions in the tanker. Her back was seen to be broken and she sank in 10 minutes. 41 survivors out of a crew of 88 were picked up by the Relentless.

The Charlotte Schliemann had been to Tokyo and was on its way back to Germany. She had a 6" gun and could have sunk the Relentless before the latter could have got within range. The Relentless closed at such high speed that she created such a bow wave that made her appear to be a cruiser. The Charlotte Schliemann turned tail and fled. The German had been sought by the Royal Navy for some time and several ships had had a go at her but missed her.

Relentless fired her 8 torpedoes in a fan shape, 3 of which struck home. The hull of the German popped up upside down and the Relentless thought it was a submarine. In the meantime scramble nets had been put over the side of Relentless for the 41 out of 88 German sailors to scramble up. Unfortunately one who gave the Nazi salute as he came over the side was kicked back into the sea and left to drown by a seaman from Liverpool who had had his wife and child killed in a bombing raid.

All those who were on watch at the time received some form of recognition. I think the Captain got the D.S.O., the Torpedo Officer similar, the Torpedo Petty Officer a medal and the torpedo man similar. The Radar Operator got a medal and the Petty Officer Telegraphist got mentioned in dispatches for reading the German's distress message and sending it in, from which their code was broken.

The prisoners were housed in the watch keepers' mess, the watch keepers moved out elsewhere. One seaman dropped his revolver down their hatchway when he was standing guard at the top of their gangway. They brought it back up to him handle first. The prisoners were handed over to the French in Madagascar where they were treated badly.

On Wednesday 8th March RENOWN, flying the flag of Vice Admiral, Eastern Fleet, VALIANT, CEYLON, and EMERALD, screened by ROTHERHAM (Captain (D) 11th Destroyer Flotilla), RELENTLESS, NORMAN, NAPIER and NEPAL, and followed by ILLUSTRIOUS (Rear Admiral, Aircraft Carriers Eastern Fleet), NIZAM, QUICKMATCH, and QUALITY sailed for Operation INITIAL.

In the afternoon, a full programme of practices was carried out, including 15" and 6" gun firings at battle practice targets and A.A. firing practices for all types of weapons. At 1630, the fleet was formed as a unit, W/T silence enforced and course set for the northward. The plan of the operation was a sweep into the Bay of Bengal, with the object of a show of force in the area and, at the same time, to afford the fleet a chance for training. On the following day, further exercises were carried out, particularly to the range calibration of radar for gunner, and radar height finding for fighter direction purposes.

The fleet reached the most northerly position for the operation, which was off Vizagapatam on the 10th and then turned to the southward. Exercises were continued, including practices to improve the efficiency of night plotting, anti-aircraft fire at torpedo bombers and blind fire at night.

On the 11th, further night exercises were carried out, but the day was marred by a serious accident on the deck of ILLUSTRIOUS. A Corsair aircraft crashed into the port barrier stanchion and almost immediately burst into flames. There was a serious petrol fire in which two officers and two ratings were killed and several others badly burned. The fire took an hour to extinguish and wrecked P.2 pom-pom. Five aircraft that were in the air at the time were sent to land at Madras. QUICKMATCH picked up a badly burned officer from the sea and was sent to Madras with him. During the day, W/T silence was broken, in accordance with the Commander in Chief's orders, in the hope that the transmissions might be picked up by the enemy, thus indicating that our units were operating in the Bay of Bengal. The opportunity was taken to exercise manoeuvring using VHF R/T which had just been fitted in the Fleet.

The fleet re-entered Trincomalee on 12th March. INITIAL was an uneventful operation but provided the Fleet with an excellent training opportunity.

On 10th June, the RELENTLESS was deployed with the QUILLIAM, QUALITY, RACEHORSE, REDOUBT and RAPID for screening of the aircraft carrier ILLUSTRIOUS, the escort aircraft carrier ATHELING and the cruisers GAMBIA (RNZN), CEYLON and PHOEBE as Force 68. This was a deception operation, codenamed COUNCILLOR, intended to threaten carrier based attacks on Sabang, Sumatra. On the 11th however, the operation was cancelled except for deployment of the submarine SURF to transmit wireless signals from a flying off position to simulate continuation of operation. Force 68 returned to Ceylon.

RELENTLESS was deployed on Operation PEDAL on the 19th with the QUALITY, QUILLIAM, QUICKMATCH, RAIDER, ROTHERHAM, RACEHORSE and ROEBUCK as screen for the ILLUSTRIOUS, the battlecruiser RENOWN, the French battleship RICHELIEU and cruisers NIGERIA, KENYA and CEYLON as Force 60 during air attacks on Port Blair in the Andaman

Islands. On completion of the operation on the 21st, RELENTLESS returned to Ceylon with Force 60.



ONBOARD "RELENTLESS" 1944

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In July, RELENTLESS deployed with the Flotilla for Fleet screening and patrol duties in the Indian Ocean and on the 22nd, joined the battleships QUEEN ELIZABETH and VALIANT, the RENOWN and RICHELIEU, the cruisers CUMBERLAND, NIGERIA, KENYA, CEYLON, PHOEBE, GAMBIA and Dutch cruiser TROMP as screen with the ROTHERHAM, RACEHORSE, ROCKET and RAPID. This was an Eastern Fleet operation – Operation CRIMSON - which included air operations by carriers and bombardment of targets at Sabang, Sumatra.

It was this operation that earned RELENTLESS the Battle Honour – SABANG 1944

On 25th July, she was part of the screen for Eastern Fleet units during carrier operations and took part in bombardments with Eastern Fleet ships on completion of air attacks.

During August, RELENTLESS again deployed with the Flotilla for screening duties and convoy defence in the Indian Ocean but did not take part in screening of major ships during Operation BANQUET.

On the 14th, the ship deployed with the ROTHERHAM, RAPID, REDOUBT, ROCKET, RACEHORSE and RAIDER as screen for the aircraft carriers INDOMITABLE and VICTORIOUS, the battleship HOWE and the CUMBERLAND and KENYA during planned photo-reconnaissance flights and air strikes as part of Operation LIGHT.

On 17th August, Operation LIGHT A was cancelled due to adverse weather (photo-reconnaissance flights over Pangkalan and air strikes on airfields). However, RELENTLESS was deployed for screening during Operation LIGHT B (flights over northern Sumatra and strikes at Sigli.). Together with the major ship units of the Eastern Fleet, RELENTLESS returned to Ceylon on the 19th.

On 15th October, RELENTLESS was deployed with the RAIDER, NORMAN (RAN) and the Dutch destroyer VAN GALEN as screen for the cruisers LONDON, CUMBERLAND and SUFFOLK in Group 2 of Force 63.

This was Operation MILLET, an Eastern Fleet diversion operation during US landings on Leyte. Force 63, which included the RENOWN, provided cover during air operations by the aircraft carriers INDOMITABLE and ILLUSTRIOUS in the Nicobar Islands. On the 17th, the ship carried out bombardment of shore targets in the Nicobar Islands with other ships of Group 2. On the 19th, there were retaliatory attacks by Japanese aircraft but these were repelled by the carrier aircraft.

During October, RELENTLESS had a change of Commanding Officer. Lt Cdr R A FELL was replaced by Lt Cdr G B Barstow on the 26th.

On 17th December the USS ADMIRAL BENSON left Melbourne and was escorted to Bombay from a rendezvous position at 5 South by RELENTLESS and ROEBUCK where they arrived on the 30th.

WW2 COMMISSIONS – 1945

On 5th January, RELENTLESS and ROEBUCK left Bombay to escort the USS Admiral Benson, parting company on crossing 5° South and leaving the American ship to proceed independently to Melbourne. Subsequently, ROTHERAM, RELENTLESS and ROEBUCK escorted the troopships EMPRESS OF SCOTLAND, USS GENERAL WILLAM MITCHELL and USS GENERAL GEORGE M RANDALL back north to Addu Atoll in the Maldives. ROEBUCK escorted the EMPRESS OF SCOTLAND to Aden and ROTHERAM and RELENTLESS escorted the American ships to Bombay, where they arrived on the 25th.

On the 30th, RELENTLESS escorted the USS ...Mitchell and Randall back to 5° South, leaving them to make their own way to Melbourne where they duly arrived on 12th February.

The USS GENERAL CREELY left Fremantle on 11th May and RELENTLESS escorted her to Calcutta, arriving 20th May.

During the infrequent lulls between escorting Convoys or as anti-submarine Screen for capital ships, the 11th Destroyer Flotilla, either as a whole or in their separate, constituent parts spent time anchored in Trincomalee Naval Base in Ceylon. Maintenance, repairs and training were usually carried out during these periods.

In most situations, but especially in wartime, it is impractical to send ships back to UK to re-commission and as a result any changes of personnel were generally made piecemeal. During May, significant changes were made to RELENTLESS' crew. About one third of the ship's company were drafted off and replaced by relatively inexperienced men.

It was whilst in Trincomalee on the 13th June, that this lack of experience led indirectly to an incident onboard RELENTLESS. There was a mutiny.

In terms of how the mutiny affected the operability of the ship; it didn't. However, in terms of personnel, it certainly did. The incident led to the imprisonment or detention of a number of the crew and the transfer from the ship of some others. In all, some 56 members of the crew - 54 ratings and two officers - were removed. You can find more information on *MUTINY ON THE RELENTLESS* in the REFERENCE section.

On 18th June, RELENTLESS was deployed with ROTHERHAM, RACEHORSE, REDOUBT and ROEBUCK as screen for the cruisers ROYALIST and SUFFOLK and the escort carriers STALKER, KHEDIVE and AMEER during air operations as part of Operation BALSAM. This was an air operation comprising photo reconnaissance and attacks on airfields and railways over southern Malaya.

During July, RELENTLESS resumed Eastern Fleet duties and in August was deployed with the Eastern Fleet in Operation ZIPPER in support of landings at Port Swettenham. However, this operation was delayed due to pressure from the USA and the implementation of the release programme for servicemen in the Far East.

RELENTLESS was in Trincomalee when the war against Japan ended on 14th August 1945. In September, she was deployed in support of landings in Malaya with the other ships of the Flotilla (Operation ZIPPER), and on the 8th, sailed from Penang for Singapore. On 11th September, as part of Operations ZIPPER and TIDERACE (the liberation of Singapore), NELSON, RICHELIEU, ROYALIST, EMPEROR, KHEDIVE, CEYLON, SAUMAREZ, TARTAR, RELENTLESS, PALADIN, MYNGS, BLACKMORE and FARNDALE anchored in Singapore Roads before steaming south to take place in the queue for the One Fathom Bank.

On 12th September, detachments for the surrender ceremony proceeded ashore. Officers and men of the Fleet attended the ceremony.

As a matter of interest, Captain (D) of RELENTLESS' 11th Destroyer Flotilla, in ROTHERHAM (*Captain H Briggs*), personally accepted the surrender of 34,000 personnel of the Japanese Imperial Navy. To commemorate the event, the main gate in Singapore Naval Dockyard was renamed "Rotherham Gate". Furthermore, HMS ROTHERHAM is named for the Captain of HMS Royal Sovereign at Trafalgar, not the town in Yorkshire...

Later that day RICHELIEU, escorted by RELENTLESS, sailed for Trincomalee.

RELENTLESS was at Colombo on 2nd October and shortly thereafter, together with other ships of the 11th Destroyer Flotilla, she departed the Far East and sailed for UK.

Routed via the Addu Atoll in the Maldives, Aden, Suez Canal, Alexandria, Malta and Gibraltar, RELENTLESS arrived in Chatham sometime in late-November 1945.



HMS RELENTLESS leaving Malta in October 1945 on her way back to UK

Note the 3 bands on the funnel. The top band appears to be a darker colour than the two lower bands. 'One black over two reds' was assigned to the 11th Destroyer Flotilla

OFFICERS – October 1945

Captain	Lt Cdr G B Barstow
1st Lt	Lt G B Wilby
Engineer Officer	Lt() DWK Walton RNR
Doctor	Sur Lt F A Rutland RNVR
Gunner (T)	J R Hales
Navigating Officer	Lt I W Lockhead SANF(V)
	S/Lt L J Smith RNZNVR
	S/Lt E W Gladstone RNVR
	Mid A J Austin
	Mid W P F Webber

On arrival in Chatham in November, RELENTLESS was paid off into Reserve and laid up in the Chatham Reserve Fleet until 1947 when she was transferred to Harwich.



HMS RELENTLESS – Laid up in Reserve, 1949



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