

## Arthur Jago

The story of Arthur Jago is the tale of a man who took part in the two man chariot attack on the Tirpitz and thus may be of particular interest.



Arthur is long dead. At the time I was instrumental in having the salient details published in the Evening Post much to his wife's delight. The notes were made at the time of the interviews so are not a later recollection.

Bob Baxter, 2015

### **'Arthur Jago. b. 1920/21**

Arthur answered the door of the prefab in Swiss Drive, Ashton where he now lives. He made me very welcome and introduced me to his wife whom I had not met before. It was her birthday and there were cards in various places. The telephone rang before we had said any more. It was their grandson (one of several) he was telephoning from Lynham having just flown in from the Falklands where he had broken an ankle playing football for his ship's team. He had telephoned to wish his grandmother a happy birthday and to find out what arrangements had been made for the party which he was sure would take place that day. Arrangements having been made, Arthur was able to give me his undivided attention and I was able to take some good pictures including a couple of him with his medal board which holds quite an impressive array. Arthur reminded me that the last time we had met was on the Centre in 1965. He could recall the subject of our conversation which was more than I could do.

After the photographic session Arthur put on his coat and we went off to his local the Ship and Castle otherwise known as the Whitening Yard. His wife indicated that she would like him to be back home by three but I felt it was more a wish than a command. The pub was quite full since it was one o'clock when we entered. He explained that most of the people present worked in various factories and offices on the trading estate and that they would vanish at one thirty sharp. The place has not changed much over the years save for the introduction of the one armed bandits. It remains a Scrumpy

House with all that that entails both as to character of the pub and the drinkers. Arthur had his pint of scrumpy and I asked for a mineral water, which caused the very capable barwoman to ask her colleague in a loud voice if she knew the price of mineral water. However Arthur made it quite clear that he was not put out by the drinking habits of his acquaintances. It was very clear that he was well known not in any way tolerated but his assistance was actively sought by various characters wanting to know where they could purchase items on advantageous terms then some business about a trailer and moving it before two o'clock on Saturday because the City were playing at home. All these things were dealt with on a casual basis which failed to interrupt our conversation. In other words Arthur was very much in his element. However it was quite clear to me that he would not talk to me with any continuity in those surroundings so I suggested that we should adjourn elsewhere for something to eat on the basis that the only thing available there was cottage pie and that would not do me any good. We ended up in a place at the end of the Long Ashton bypass to which I used to take my mother for lunch where I recalled that they did a fair variety of food and also had a reasonable seating arrangement so that we could have a talk without too much interruption. This proved to be quite a good choice and in a short time I had my salad and Arthur his plaice and chips together with a half of dry Blackthorn each. Arthur attacked his meal with a steady determination of the steady drinker who is not particularly interested in food. The tale was very interesting. He had no particular tales of the Minesweepers. Most of his recollections were coloured with heroic drinking in one form or another.

When I asked him about being called up in 1939 I struck pay dirt. First of all he made it clear that all the personnel on the Flying Fox before the war were seamen and gunnery ratings. A proportion of them went on their annual training in 1938 and were then retained. The group who went in 1939 were retained in similar fashion.

I think Arthur went in 1938. Before being called up he had worked mainly for various butchers, Vizards being the main one. He originally came from the Dings and his wife came from St. Paul's Road, Bedminster which was a road off Dean Lane. They were married in the period 1938/1941.

In 1941 he was a leading stoker on a shovel in a coal fired ship. He was married and earning the standard rate for a leading stoker of 1s. 3d. per day or 8 Shillings and 9 Pence per week. He saw a notice on the board asking for volunteers for arduous duties for which the volunteers would be paid an extra one pound per day. At the present time with a leading stoker or his present day equivalent would be earning two hundred pounds a week so the bonus would be of the order of five hundred pound a week.

Some duties as he found when he got to Dolphin! The two hundred foot ascent in the tank with only a nose clip on went off without a hitch since he was a very fit young man and he was highly delighted with the idea of a pound a day extra for serving in submarines. When he arrived at Loch Eurice in Scotland he began to have different ideas. Arthur ended up as a stoker on a two man chariot preparing to attack the Tirpitz. As he says the man who wrote 'Above us the Waves' did a better job of describing the training and attack than Arthur ever could so he told me a story that he does not want to be published during his lifetime.

One day he and a young Sub Lieutenant were on a practice attack on the Warspite. They had stopped to negotiate a net and the young man up front lost his mouthpiece and was in grave danger of drowning since they were some seventy feet down. Arthur parked the Chariot under a ledge and brought the Subby up thus saving his life. There was no upset over the loss of the Chariot since they were expendable so they simply went off again on another one.

The young sub lieutenant was killed the following week but Arthur completed the training and was sent on the Tirpitz attack as spare crew which meant that they rode the Chariot submerged across the North sea on the end of a tow for eight hours at a time which was the limit of their air supply. Arthur did enlarge somewhat on the joys of climbing up and down the nets trying to lift them to force a passage underneath or failing that climbing up to the top and then, with the aid of the man up front, trying to force the Chariot over the catenary's bight. As he said this could be practiced in daylight but the attacks were always carried out after dark. He did make it clear however that the old hierarchy prevailed in that it was the stoker who got off and did the pushing and shoving whilst the man from down aft remained sat on the machine.

After the Tirpitz attack Arthur went back to general service as a petty officer and was later made up to chief.

He fondly recalls how Vice Admiral Geoffrey Place (who won the VC for his part in the attack on the Tirpitz) made a point of coming into the mess at the Fox to have a half with Jago during one ACR's inspection.

However some three years ago, a Lt Cdr came into the mess where Arthur still goes from time to time. He had a roll of charts with him and asked Arthur if he had any idea where the Chariot he had abandoned had been left. First ensuring that after all these years the Admiralty were not about to charge him with losing it, Jago agreed to look at the chart. After some negotiation it was agreed that Arthur and his wife should be transported to Loch Eurice to point out as far as he could remember the point at which the Chariot had been abandoned. Much to Arthur's surprise they were taken to Yeovilton and flown to Scotland where they were ensconced in a very nice hotel. The following morning Arthur was on the jetty at 0900 and was taken by launch to the site. A frogman was despatched at the point indicated by Arthur and, bingo, there it was in pristine condition some seventy feet down just as he said. There was a crane available and the machine was very quickly raised and Arthur and his wife went on to have a very enjoyable two week holiday at the expense of the pusser which pleased him no end. It transpired that the Chariot was required for the Dolphin Submarine museum and, as is so often the case, there were no remaining examples so they had to find one that had been lost in a previous war as a result of this Arthur acquired some additional decorations to which he was entitled and which he refers to as his Dolphins. When I let him have the pictures I will enquire further. They must have some significance since when he went to see his grandson's passing out parade at Raleigh a year or two ago he was invited to watch from the reviewing stand after the four ringer in charge of Raleigh caught sight of them.

Arthur is now sixty-nine and retired from the employ of Bristol City Council some four years since. Because he had been a caretaker of one of the Redcliffe flats he was offered council accommodation. The little prefab in Swiss Drive is he says ideal since it is within easy walking distance of the Fox, his allotment (which he took on many years ago from his grandfather) and his local the Ship and Castle. He remains very active despite a minor stroke and quite often takes fishing and other trips to the country with his old cronies. He has been for many years the Standard Bearer for the local branch of the RN & RM Old Comrades Association.'