# Second World War veteran Tom Berry recalls VE Day as he nears 101st birthday



A 100-year-old Second World War veteran, Tom Berry, has recounted his experiences during the war, coinciding with the upcoming 80th anniversary of VE Day. Originally from Liverpool, Mr Berry joined the Royal Navy as a radio operator aboard the Tribal-class destroyer HMS Tartar. The ship earned the nickname "Lucky Tartar" owing to her survival during numerous harrowing confrontations throughout the conflict.

Speaking from his home in Macclesfield, Cheshire, Mr Berry reflected on a memorable celebration aboard HMS Tartar on the eve of his 21st birthday in May 1945, coinciding with the announcement of Germany's surrender. He remembers the excitement of the crew when the captain informed them that they were to "splice the mainbrace," an order allowing sailors to partake in an extra rum ration. “Because it was my birthday, I got more than most and got a bit squiffy,” he noted.

VE Day, observed on May 8, marks the end of nearly six years of warfare in Europe, and is celebrated for the significant sacrifices made during that time. The Royal British Legion has organised a tea party and remembrance service at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire to honour Second World War veterans, including Mr Berry, who will celebrate his 101st birthday the following day.

Despite his notable experiences, Mr Berry humbly refrains from labelling himself a hero, instead describing himself as “a lucky man on a lucky ship.” HMS Tartar was one of just four destroyers to survive the war from a fleet of 16 at the conflict's onset.

Mr Berry recounted one of the ship's most dangerous missions during D-Day, where HMS Tartar provided naval support to the Allied troops landing in Normandy. “Our orders were to shell the German emplacements,” he said, expressing concern for the soldiers facing the unknown peril of the invasion. The destroyer's mission was marked by narrow escapes; after successfully assisting the ground troops, HMS Tartar engaged in battle with two German destroyers, sustaining damage that cost the lives of four crew members.

Following the victory in Europe, Mr Berry described feelings of frustration as the war continued in the Asia-Pacific. He commented on the discordant nature of celebrating while still facing gunfire in the East. One encounter he recalled involved a heavily armed Japanese cruiser that posed a significant threat due to its superior range. “It was a tense time, but we kept going,” he remarked.

The war ultimately concluded for Mr Berry on September 2, 1945, when HMS Tartar was present at the signing of the Japanese surrender in Tokyo Bay. As he prepares to celebrate not only a milestone birthday but also the remarkable history he lived through, Mr Berry continues to express gratitude for his survival and his unique experiences during a tumultuous era.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Tartar_%28F43%29> - This page provides detailed information about HMS Tartar, including its service during World War II and its nickname 'Lucky Tartar' due to its numerous escapes from dangerous situations.
2. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Normandy_landings> - This article discusses the Normandy landings, including the Battle of Ushant, where HMS Tartar engaged German destroyers during the invasion of Normandy.
3. <https://www.naval-history.net/xGM-Chrono-10DD-34Tribal-Tartar.htm> - This source details HMS Tartar's involvement in the D-Day landings, including its role in providing cover for minelaying operations off the French coast in preparation for the Allied landings in Normandy.
4. <https://www.jproc.ca/haida/tartar.html> - This page provides information about HMS Tartar's actions during World War II, including its involvement in the Battle of Ushant and its role in the D-Day landings.
5. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\_of\_Ushant\_(1944)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Ushant_%281944%29) - This article covers the Battle of Ushant, where HMS Tartar engaged German destroyers during the invasion of Normandy.
6. <https://www.naval-history.net/xGM-Chrono-10DD-34Tribal-Tartar.htm> - This source provides detailed information about HMS Tartar's service during World War II, including its role in the D-Day landings and its nickname 'Lucky Tartar'.
7. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/100-year-old-veteran-recalls-getting-squiffy-amid-ve-day-celebrations-RG7I6FE2DVNVZHHAQYLGJ7D7EY/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data