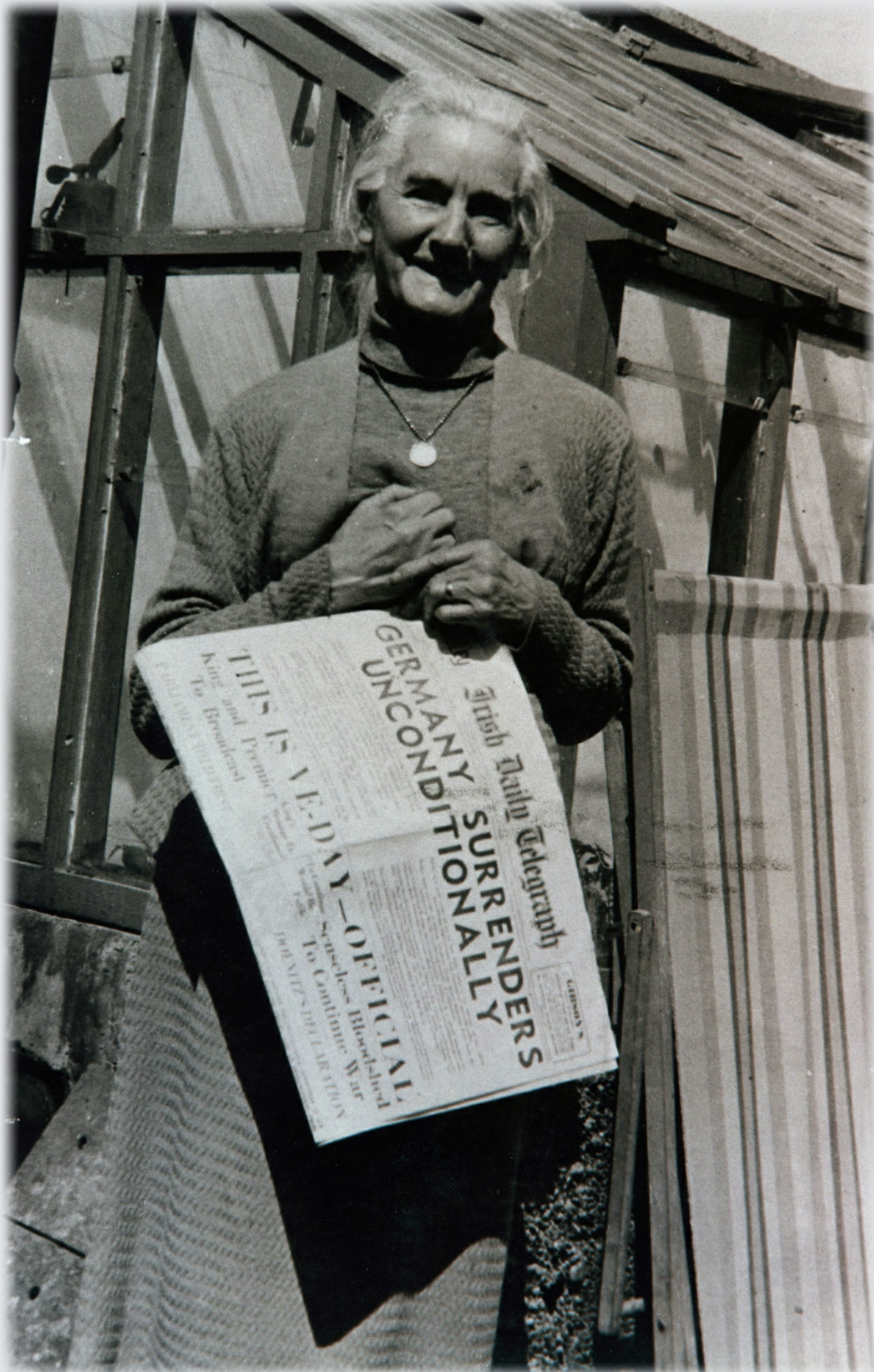


# Victory in Europe

After nearly six long years of war peace returned to Europe when the Chief of Staff of the German Army, General Jodl, signed his country's unconditional surrender at General Eisenhower's headquarters in Rheims.

Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> May 1945 was proclaimed Victory in Europe Day.



Mrs McCausland holding a copy of the *Irish Daily Telegraph*. Image courtesy of Ballymoney Museum.



# Victory in Europe

The announcement of the German surrender and victory in Europe, on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> May, was welcomed across the area and people took to the streets of towns and villages to celebrate, some as early as the Monday evening.

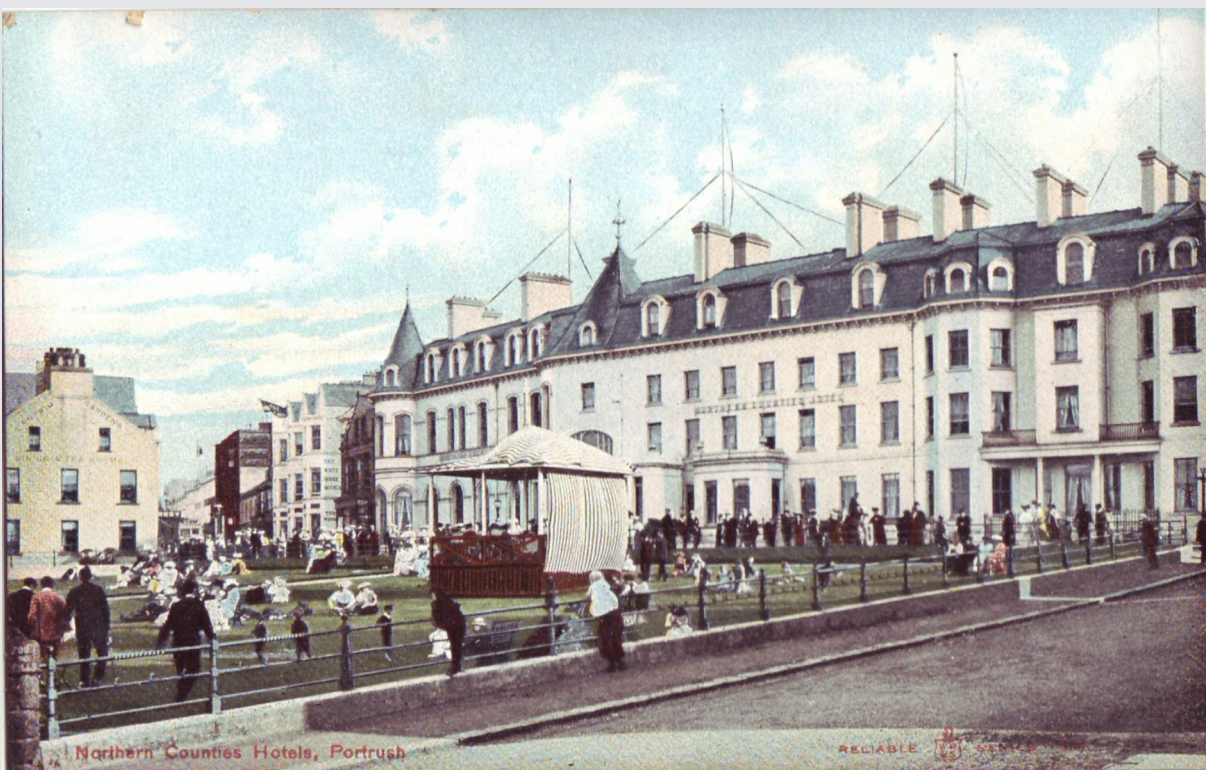
In Coleraine, following the broadcast of Churchill's speech, the bells of St Patrick's Parish Church rang out a victory peal, with those of St Malachy's R.C. Church and Killowen Parish Church joining in. The streets were soon thronged with large crowds of people and services of thanksgiving were held in local churches. Local bands paraded through the town adding to the air of festivities, bonfires with effigies of Hitler blazed in nearly every street and a large V sign flashed from the roof of the technical school.



St Patrick's Church, Coleraine. Image courtesy of the Scotti Rooms.

In Portstewart, local school children, headed by a detachment of Belgian soldiers, paraded to the Warren where they enjoyed sports, cake and lemonade. That night the promenade was lit with fairy lights and a large bonfire blazed on the hill. The Town Hall was packed for a Victory Dance organised by the local British Legion.

In Portrush, local children were treated to two hours free entertainment in Barry's, followed by a free matinee and ice-cream. In the evening, Campbell College O.T.C. Band led a parade of ex-Servicemen, Civil Defence Services,



Campbell College, Belfast was requisitioned as a military hospital in 1940 and the school boarders were evacuated to the Northern Counties Hotel, Portrush. Image courtesy of Coleraine Museum.

St John Ambulance Brigade, W.V.S., Girl Guides, Boys' Brigade and the Church Lads' Brigade to a thanksgiving service in the Presbyterian Church. A bonfire, organised by the local Urban Council, was lit on Ramore Head, with a programme of sports organised for children on the Wednesday.



# Victory in Europe

In Ballymoney, loud-speakers relayed the speeches of the King and the Prime Minister to large crowds who had gathered in the bunting bedecked streets. In the Diamond Johnny Owens' dance band used the air-raid shelter as a make-shift stage and bonfires were lit, including one in the field at the Robinson Memorial Hospital which was suitably decorated for the occasion. As in most towns and villages, services of thanksgiving were held in the local churches. In the evening, about 1200 people crowded into a free Victory Dance in the Town Hall, where Johnny Owens and his Moderniques supplied the music. The following day, bands paraded around the town and children and adults alike enjoyed a fancy-dress parade organised by Mr William Dunlop.



Johnny Owens Dance Band. Image courtesy of Coleraine Museum.

In Bushmills, flags and bunting floated from every building and the townspeople were joined by large crowds from the surrounding area to celebrate. Throughout the day people sang and danced, while local bands gathered up and paraded through the streets, with Belgian soldiers lending their support to the bands. In the evening squibs and rockets were let off, the Square was floodlit from the War Memorial and bonfires were lit at several locations around the town.

In Ballycastle, shops remained open until lunchtime as it was Fair Day, after which Moyarget Flute Band and Ballycastle Pipe Band led a crowd of over 500 people through the town. The Victory celebrations organised by Ballycastle

Urban Council commenced with a special Mass of thanksgiving for peace in St Patrick's and St Brigid's R.C. Church. The entire contingent of Belgian soldiers stationed in the town paraded to the church to take part in the service. Over 600 local school children, headed by Ballycastle Pipe Band, paraded to Grottery Park where they took part in the sports organised by the council.



Image courtesy of Coleraine Museum.



# Victory in Europe

In Limavady, hundreds of sailors, soldiers, airmen and W.A.A.F.s who were stationed in the surrounding area joined local people to celebrate the announcement of peace. Special services of thanksgiving, attended by large congregations, were held in the local churches. A special committee had been formed to oversee the decoration of the town and in the evening the local bands led parades around the “magnificently decorated” streets of the town. After dark bonfires were lit around the town with a particularly large one in Catherine Street, where large crowds enjoyed dancing into the early hours of the morning. Celebrations continued on Wednesday with band parades, bonfires and rocket displays before concluding with an open-air dance in Catherine Street. The dance, organised by staff of the local Transport Board, continued until 3 o’clock in the morning, with the top of an air-raid shelter being used as a platform for the dance band.



Street parties like this one in Ballymoney, were held in towns and villages across the country. Image courtesy of Ballymoney Museum.



Garvagh War Memorial. Image courtesy of the Scotti Rooms.

In Garvagh, large crowds gathered in the town on Monday evening when Garvagh Pipe Band paraded through the streets and there was a large bonfire in Lower Main Street. On Tuesday afternoon, Churchill’s victory speech was relayed over a loud-speaker system. This was followed by a victory peal of the Parish Church bell then the discharge of detonators and rockets. A united thanksgiving service was held at the War Memorial in the evening and effigies of Hitler and Mussolini were set alight, with several bonfires lit as darkness fell. A programme of sports arranged for local children on the Wednesday had to be cancelled due to the weather.



# CANADIAN SAILOR FALLS OVER CLIFF

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## Victory Day Tragedy at Portrush

Victory Celebrations in Portrush on Tuesday night were marred by the tragic death of John Archibald Paterson, a young Canadian sailor, who was fatally injured when he accidentally fell over the cliff at Ramore Head. Deceased was aged 19 years, and belonged to Peterborough, Ontario. He had been spending a few days leave in Portrush...

Hugh P Patton, an auxiliary coastguard employed on Ramore Head, said that about 12.45 he was in the wireless station when a young lady knocked at the window. She said she thought a Canadian sailor had fallen over the cliff in the vicinity of the bonfire. John Henry McConaghy, another auxiliary coastguard, and witness climbed down the cliff on to the rocks and directly below where the bonfire was they found the deceased...

Dr J M Hunter said he received a message shortly before one o'clock a.m., and proceeded by boat to the place where deceased was lying on the rocks... Witness rendered first aid and afterwards, with the help of other men, took deceased in the boat to the harbour and then to Hopefield Cottage Hospital in an ambulance...



Ramore Head. Image courtesy of Coleraine Museum.



# Victory in Europe

In the weeks leading up to Allied victory in Europe many men who had been taken prisoner returned home as the prisoner of war camps were liberated by the advancing Allies.

Fusilier Jim Platt arrived home in Coleraine in early March 1945 after having been a prisoner of war in Germany for nearly four-and-a-half years. Jim told of his time as a POW in an interview with *Coleraine Chronicle*, “I was confined in Stalag 20A. From October 1940 to May 1944, I was in Stalag 20B and from then till January this year I was attached to Stalag 3A. In some of these internment camps there were as many as ten thousand prisoners, comprising Russians and other Allied nationals. Irishmen whom I met included several from the Coleraine district, including John McCormick of Killowen, who had been serving with the Royal Artillery, and two others named McGrath and Watton.”



POWs at Stalag 11B at Fallingbomel welcome their liberators, 16 April 1945. © IWM BU 3661

Rifleman Drain, from Portrush, was taken prisoner in Tunisia, before being taken to Italy and then on to Stalag 8C. He said that during his time as a prisoner the Germans treated them “worse than some, better than others.” Each man was given approximately one-sixth of a loaf of black bread, and, if

he was lucky, some margarine, to last him a day. Occasionally they received scraps of meat. “But,” he added, “if you did not work, you weren’t fed.” He was, with other members of the same camp, marched nine hundred miles across Germany to another camp, Stalag 11B. “If it wasn’t for the Red Cross,” he said, “very few prisoners would ever reach home. No prisoner of war can ever thank them enough.”

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Personalkarte I: Personelle Angaben															Beschriftung der Erkennungsmarke									
Kriegsgefangenen-Stammlager:															Nr. 226809									
Name: HAMILTON															Lager: IV B.									
Vorname: JAMES															Staatsangehörigkeit: IRELAND									
Geburtsdatum und -ort: 22/9/1905 BALLYMONEY IRELAND															Dienstgrad: L/ BOMBERDIER									
Religion: PRES.															Lebensstellung: POSTMAN									
Vorname des Vaters: JAMES															Beruf: ROYAL ARTILLERY									
Familienname der Mutter: GIVEN.															Militär Nr. (Stammrolle des Heimatlandes): 7010448									
Bild:															Gefangennahme (Ort und Datum): MATAR (LIBYA) 23/1/42									
Nähere Personalbeschreibung															Ob gesund, krank, verwundet eingeliefert:									
Größe: 5'9" Haarfarbe: DARK															Name und Anschrift der zu benachrichtigenden Person in der Heimat des Kriegsgefangenen									
Fingerabdruck des rechten! Zeigefingers															WIFE — MRS J. HAMILTON, 17 WANDSOR AVE, COLERAINE, COUNTY DERRY IRELAND									

Prisoner of War card for James Hamilton. Image courtesy of Coleraine Battery Collection.



# Victory in Europe

As Allied victory in Europe approached, April 1945 witnessed the liberation of some of the Nazi concentration camps. The British Army liberated Bergen-Belsen on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1945. The men of Coleraine Battery took over the running of the main gate at Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp and carried out general guard duties at Sandbostel Prisoner of War Camp.

*"The battery carried out security duties at Belsen and Sandbostel. It's different when you see a friend die, you feel sad and grieve for them. But to see a couple of thousand skeletons being thrown, heads to tails into a hole in the ground, covered in lime and then bulldozed over. It did not seem to have the same effect on the Battery. It was so strange, you all felt the same way, thinking 'This is horrible, those German bastards!' and all that. You talked about it and tried to accept it. The only way we could cope with this was to leave it behind when we returned home."* (Anonymous member of Coleraine Battery, 2004)



▲ Dr Fritz Klein, the camp doctor, standing in a mass grave at Belsen. © IWM BU 4260



▲ Cheerful women inmates collect their bread rations from one of the five camp cookhouses. © IWM BU 4274

◀ The camp crematorium furnace, used by the Germans to incinerate dead bodies. © IWM BU 4004



# Admiral Sir Arthur Hezlet

## WW2 Submarine Ace

Arthur Richard Hezlet, born on 7 April 1914 in South Africa, was the son of Major-General Robert Knox Hezlet of Bovagh House, Aghadowey.

Arthur joined the Royal Navy aged only 13, and went to sea as a midshipman on HMS *Royal Oak* in 1932. On the outbreak of war he was serving as a First Lieutenant on HMS *Trident* and was given his first command after attending a commanding officer's qualifying course in 1940. The following year he was sent to Malta as a 'spare CO' and it was during one of these patrols, skippering HMS *Unique*, that he sank the Italian troopship *Esperia*. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions – his first attack, in command, on the enemy.

In 1943, he was appointed Lieutenant-Commander and given command of HMS *Trenchant* before being sent to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in May 1944, where he undertook long-range patrols and earned his first Distinguished Service Order. The following June, Hezlet took *Trenchant* into shallow mined water to intercept and sink the Japanese heavy cruiser *Ashigara*, the largest Japanese warship sunk by the Royal Navy during the war. He was awarded the US Legion of Merit and a Bar to his DSO for this action.

Hezlet ended his naval career as Vice Admiral and was knighted in 1964. After retirement Sir Arthur was active with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and

the Royal British Legion. In retirement he wrote many books, including the *History of British and Allied Submarine Operations*, *HMS Trenchant at War* and a history of the USC, *The 'B' Specials*.

Vice-Admiral Sir Arthur Richard Hezlet, KBE, CB, DSO and Bar, DSC, US Legion of Merit, died, aged 93, in Aghadowey on the 7 November 2007.



Lieutenant R H Brunner, HMS *Terrapin*, and Commander A R Hezlet, HMS *Trenchant*, on their return from a successful patrol. © IWM A 28133