

**A FINE SECOND WAR D.S.M. AWARDED FOR GALLANTRY IN THE DESTROYER H.M.S. LIVELY DURING THE 2ND BATTLE OF THE SIRTE, 22 MARCH 1942, HAVING BEEN MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES FOR HIS PART FORCE 'K'S DESTRUCTION OF AN ITALIAN CONVOY AND DESTROYER ON 8 NOVEMBER 1941**



**DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL, G.V.I.R. 'KX. 86830 J. E. MARTIN. CH. STO.'**  
**IMPRESSED NAMING, TOGETHER WITH M.I.D. OAK LEAF**

**D.S.M. *London Gazette* 8 September 1942:**

*'For gallantry, skill and seamanship in a brilliant action against strong enemy forces, which were driven off and severely damaged. This action resulted in the safe passage to Malta of an important Convoy.'*

The original recommendation for an 'Immediate' award states: *'Chief Stoker Martin was instrumental in extinguishing the fire in the top of the funnel. When the ship was holed forward by a splinter from a 15-inch shell, Martin acted with great promptness in shoring up bulkheads and hatches. He was tireless in organising the necessary pumping to keep the flooding under control and his example of cheerfulness, energy and coolness was most inspiring to the men working with him. He carried out all the above in addition to his normal duties of supervising the fuel and boiler-water situation.'*



M.I.D. *London Gazette* 24 February 1942.

*'For gallantry, skill and resolution in a brilliant night action South of Taranto, against odds, in which, without hurt or loss to the Royal Navy, ten enemy Supply Ships were wholly destroyed, one Destroyer sunk, and at least one other badly damaged'*

Joseph Edward Martin likely joined the L-class destroyer H.M.S. Lively on the eve of her tour of operations in the Mediterranean in September 1941.

[http://ahoy.tk-jk.net/HMSLivelyBook/HMS\\_LIVELY\\_BOOK.htm](http://ahoy.tk-jk.net/HMSLivelyBook/HMS_LIVELY_BOOK.htm)

[https://www.naval-history.net/xGM-Chrono-10DD-41L-HMS\\_Lively.htm](https://www.naval-history.net/xGM-Chrono-10DD-41L-HMS_Lively.htm)

Lively first came to prominence for her part in a brilliant victory achieved by Force 'K' on 8 November 1941, when - assisted by 'Ultra' radar - the cruisers Aurora and Penelope, in company with the Lively and Lance, manoeuvred into a favourable position to engage an Italian convoy. By dawn, Force 'K' had sunk all seven enemy transports and one of their destroyers, the Fulmine. It was for this spectacular night action that Martin was mentioned in despatches

Just over two weeks later, Lively was back in action, participating in the destruction of two enemy supply ships, a result largely made possible by the cunning of her Petty Officer Telegraphist, James Griffin, who was able to note, to the amusement of his shipmates, the call signs of two enemy shore bases and a prowling aircraft. He then took a hand in the enemy's W./T. organisation and, making use of their call signs, controlled the traffic, following the enemy procedure carefully. The enemy apparently accepted this state of affairs and order was resumed out of a chaos of wireless chatter by Lively controlling the transmitting stations to silence, which was preserved for half an hour. A later attempt by the Italians to renew wireless activity was met with an angry interjection by Griffin, who, clearly warming to his new-found task as Acting Enemy Wireless Controller, was pleased to find the Italians quickly obeyed. Griffin was awarded the D.S.M., a distinction shortly to be shared by Martin.

### **D.S.M. FOR THE 2ND BATTLE OF THE SIRTE**

Undoubtedly Lively's finest moment occurred in the 2nd battle of the Sirte, fought between a Malta convoy escort under Admiral Sir Philip Vian, and a far superior Italian force. On 22 March 1942, in a game of cat and mouse, Vian succeeded in protecting his merchantmen from the serious threat posed by the Italian battleship Littorio, and it was his destroyers that led the way:

*'By this time the sea had risen appreciably and the Sikh, Lively and Hero, as they closed to engage the enemy, were rolling and pitching violently and their decks were swept with solid water as the waves broke over them. They attacked their overwhelming adversary with guns and torpedoes - three destroyers pitted against a battleship, three cruisers, and six destroyers - and at the same time extended the smoke-screen westward to cover the now threatened merchantmen ...'* (Victory at Sea, by Lieutenant-Commander P. K. Kemp, refers).

It was at this stage, as the smoke-screen started to take effect, that the mighty Littorio barked back in anger, her 15-inch shells damaging a number of the R.N. escorts, Vian's Cleopatra and the plucky Lively among them. Rapidly responding to a fire in the top of Lively's funnel, Martin commenced a series of damage-control procedures that would result in his award of the D.S.M.

### **LIVELY SUNK**

On the 10th of May 1942 the British destroyers HMS Jackal, HMS Jervis, HMS Kipling and HMS Lively sailed from Alexandria at 18:15 to intercept an Italian convoy of 3 merchant ships escorted by 3 destroyers which had sailed from Navarins Bay, bound for Benghazi, however at about 15:15 on the

11th the ships were spotted by German JU88 reconnaissance aircraft which flew round the ships at a height of 10,000 feet despite the anti-aircraft fire from the destroyers, then flew off. At this point the proposed attack on the convoy was called off by the commander of the force, aboard HMS Jervis and the force turned back for Alexandria, forming line abreast, with HMS Lively on the Port wing of the formation. Shortly after this an escort of Beaufighters arrived over the destroyers.



H.M.S. LIVELY

At 16:25 the force was attacked by a force of Junkers JU88s of Fliegerkorps II, North of Sidi-el Barrani, the dive bombing attack coming out of the sun at a steep angle. At about 16:30, during the first wave of the attack, which had overwhelmed the 4 Beaufighters escorting the British ships, although they shot down a Heinkel III and damaged two more and five of the Junkers JU88s. HMS Lively was sunk 100 miles North East of Tobruk at 3324N 2538E, with the loss of 76 of her crew. A diving JU88 dropped 4 bombs from a low altitude, almost unopposed as the Lively's main armament did not fire, possibly mistaking the German aircraft for one of the Beaufighters, and the pom-pom line of fire was masked by the superstructure, the only guns firing being the Oerlikons.

At least 3 of the bombs hit the Lively on the forecastle, penetrating through three decks before exploding, blowing out the whole forepart of the ship. Travelling at high speed, she drove the wrecked forepart under the surface, rolled over onto her Starboard side and sank within 4 minutes. Survivors from the forward part of the ship and the bridge were distributed over about quarter of a mile as the rapidly sinking ship lost way with her stern in the air, and the bridge and funnel awash. As the remainder of the survivors abandoned the ship more bombs exploded in the water around them, several of them tried to climb into a ship's boat which had floated free, but this capsized and sank. HMS Kipling moved in, picking up some of the survivors in the oil contaminated water, followed by HMS Jervis, which started picking up some of the larger groups, however they were driven off by further bombing attacks, circling around the survivors position. After the attacks ceased Kipling again returned and started picking the main groups Lively's men from the water Jervis came back and commenced to pick up the more scattered survivors. One of these was the Lively's commanding officer, Lt. Commander Hussey, who was holding on to a coir torpedo fender with the Gunnery Officer, John Jones and Able Seaman Dommett, a member of B guns crew, who was semi conscious. As HMS Jervis approached, Lt. Commander Hussey left the fender and swam towards the

approaching destroyer, catching hold of the boat rope near the bows, holding onto which he was towed for several hundred yards, as the Jervis, with her scrambling nets lowered moved towards the fender. The 2 men on the fender were rescued and Lt. Commander Hussey, suffering from exhaustion was hauled aboard.

Almost all of the survivors were picked up by HMS Kipling and HMS Jervis, and the 3 destroyers set off for Alexandria but shortly afterwards they came under air attack from Junkers 88s of another squadron. HMS Kipling, now 60 miles North of Mersa Matruh, and was also sunk, at 32 38N 25 20E and HMS Jackal was severely damaged and set on fire.

The survivors from the Kipling were picked up by HMS Jervis, which attempted to take the crippled and burning Jackal in tow, however this proved to be impossible, and her crew were taken off. HMS Jervis, now with some 650 survivors aboard, sank the Jackal with a torpedo at 4:55 on the morning of the , then set course for Alexandria. Several of the injured survivors had died during the night, including Lt. Commander Hussey, and at 10:30 the ship briefly stopped some 60 miles west of Alexandria, and, with a brief service they were buried at sea, before the Jervis finally returned to Alexandria.

Martin survived that ordeal and received his D.S.M. at a Buckingham Palace investiture held in March 1944.



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