

Vice-Admiral Sir John Martin

Son (with one sister) of Sg.R.Adm. William Ludgate Martin, OBE, FRCS (1870-1960), and Elsie Mary Catford (1880-1975), of Swanage.

Married (12.03.1942, Scotland) Rosemary Ann Deck (04.10.1922 -), younger daughter of Samuel Frederick Deck (1883-1949), and Nancy Aileen Le Mesurier Croll (1891-1974), of Suffolk; two daughters, two sons.

Vice-Admiral Sir John Martin, died aged 93, was decorated during his incident-packed war and went on to hold several important appointments after the conflict

His first scare of the fighting came when he was gun direction officer in the destroyer *Pelican* during the Norwegian campaign. On April 22 1940 the ship was attacked by two Junkers 88 and a bomb set off a huge explosion of *Pelican*'s depth charges, blowing away her stern with the loss of many - including the first lieutenant.

The blast was followed by an eerie silence as *Pelican* lost power and wallowed helplessly. After organising firefighting and the removal of the wounded, Martin stepped in unflinchingly to dispose of the human remains that still littered the decks, and which were having a grim effect on the morale of the *surviving* crew.

He then took over as second-in-command and split the anchor cable, ready for towing; he was still on watch when *Pelican* reached Lerwick and, two days later, Fleetwood. Only afterwards did he realise that he had been wounded in the neck and right leg.

While on sick leave and, by his own judgement, still "nervous and fearful", Martin heard the news of the evacuation of Dunkirk and hurried to Chatham, where he joined the tug *Sun IV* as naval liaison officer. The vessel was ordered to tow 12 lifeboats across the Channel and, between salvage operations, made several crossings, rescuing a total of 236 soldiers and towing several lifeboats laden with troops. When he arrived home again his mother was "rather appalled by my appearance and utter exhaustion".

John Edward Ludgate Martin was born into an Irish protestant family on May 10 1918; his father was a Dublin-trained surgeon in the Navy who rose to become a Surgeon Rear Admiral. Martin was educated at Miss Yabsley's school in Malta and Sherborne prep, where he earned his King's Scout badge. In 1938 he joined the Duncan term at the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, where he became Chief Cadet Captain and was awarded the King's Dirk.

Pelican returned to convoy work on the East Coast until damaged by another collision, with the trawler *Cape Portland*, and on February 19 1941 she was blown up twice in half an hour by mines. Martin was injured again, though he remained on the bridge, supporting himself on the chart table, until the ship reached Sheerness for repairs. This time he was hospitalised for several weeks while shrapnel from his earlier injury was removed from his leg.

He next joined the destroyer *Antelope* in March 1941, which was ordered to hunt the *Bismarck* after the sinking of *Hood*; during the search Martin had a lucky escape when he was swept off his feet in a green sea and only saved himself from being lost overboard by seizing a lifeline.

In late 1942 and early 1943, after specialist training in navigation, he took part in the Allied landings at Algiers, Sicily, and Salerno, and was awarded the DSC for steadfast courage and skill in dangerous and important minesweeping operations.

He saw service in the fast minelayer *Manxman* and the cruiser *Bermuda* in the British Pacific Fleet, and in 1945 was at the relief of Shanghai and of Tsingtao, where he found the German-built brewery still fully-functioning.

Martin then suffered a severe attack of tachycardia (which troubled him throughout his life), and returned home as home as a passenger in the carrier *Victorious* sleeping, he wrote, "port side officers, starboard side nurses".

Postwar, Martin proved himself an able staff officer, serving on the directing staff of the Royal Navy Staff College, 1952-53, and on the joint planning staff in Singapore, 1954-55. He was second-in-command of the cruiser *Superb* during the Suez Crisis.

In 1961-62 Martin was the senior naval officer in the West Indies, visiting the islands and the east coast of America, helping quell riots in Guyana, and overseeing independence of Jamaica and of Trinidad and Tobago. He also conducted hurricane relief in Belize and took charge of security for the 1962 meeting in Bermuda of Harold Macmillan and President Kennedy.

After these rigours Britannia Royal Naval College proved a relatively easy appointment, though he had to reconcile the academic ambitions of his undergraduate sub-lieutenants with classrooms still fitted with desks designed for 13-year olds. Martin was Flag Officer Middle East, and later, during the withdrawal from Aden, was Commander British Forces Gulf, based at Bahrain, where he was mentioned in despatches.

His last appointments were as head of the Navy's personnel services and training, 1968-70. On promotion to Vice Admiral in 1970 he became Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic, until 1972, when he was appointed KCB. From 1974-80 he was Lieutenant governor and Commander-in-Chief of Guernsey.

John Martin, who died on May 31, married Rosemary Deck in 1942; she survived him with their two sons and two daughters.

Cadet	01.09.1935
Midshipman	01.05.1936
A/Sub Lieutenant	01.05.1938
Sub Lieutenant	01.11.1938

Lieutenant 16.11.1939
 ?, seniority 16.05.1939
 Lieutenant Commander 16.08.1947
 Commander 31.12.1951
 Captain 31.12.1957
 Commander 30.06.1961
 Rear Admiral 07.07.1966
 Vice Admiral 21.04.1970 (retired 24.04.1973)
 Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath KCB 03.06.1972 HM's birthday 72 [investiture 30.11.72]
 Companion of the Order of the Bath CB 08.06.1968 HM's birthday 68 [investiture 03.12.68]
 Distinguished Service Cross DSC 07.12.1943 Operation Antidote (minesweeping Galita to Sousse, Tunisia 05.43) [investiture 27.02.45]
 Mention in Despatches MID 23.01.1968 Aden operations

Education: RN College, Dartmouth (1932-1935).

10.09.1935 - (04.)1936 HMS Frobisher (cadet training cruiser)
 01.05.1936 - (02.)1937 HMS Queen Elizabeth (battleship) (Mediterranean)
 06.1937 - (07.)1937 HMS Warspite (battleship) (Mediterranean)
 31.10.1937 - (03.)1938 HMS Devonshire (cruiser) (Mediterranean)
 02.05.1938 - (12.1938) promotion course, Portsmouth [HMS Victory]
 14.02.1939 - (02.)1941 HMS Pelican (sloop)
 31.03.1941 - (02.)1942 First Lieutenant, HMS Antelope (destroyer)
 (04.1942) no appointment listed
 04.05.1942 - (08.)1942 long navigation course [HMS Dryad]
 09.10.1942 - (08.)1943 Navigating Officer, HMS Rhyl (Bangor class minesweeper) (13th Minesweeping Flotilla) (DSC)
 10.1943 - (12.1943) HMS Rothesay (Bangor class minesweeper) (for navigational duties) (13th Minesweeping Flotilla)
 24.01.1944 - (01.)1945 HMS Heron (RN Air Station, Yeovilton, Somerset) (for navigational duties)
 26.02.1945 - (07.)1945 Navigating Officer, HMS Manxman (minelayer)

14.08.1945 - 1946 Navigating Officer, HMS Bermuda (cruiser)
 (04.1946) no appointment listed

12.08.1946 - (04.)1947 Squadron Navigation and Direction Officer, Training Battleships [HMS Nelson]

24.09.1947 - (07.1948) Navigating Officer, HMS Victorious
 1949 Staff College

25.04.1949 - (05.)1950 HMS Dryad

15.08.1950 - (05.)1951 Navigating Officer, HMS Devonshire

31.12.1951 - 1954 Directing Staff, RN Staff College [HMS President]

20.05.1954 - (04.)1955 Naval Member, Joint Services Planning Staff, Far East [HMS Terror]

19.01.1956 - (01.)1957 Executive Officer, HMS Superb
 1958 Joint Services Staff College
 (01.1959) no appointment listed

04.05.1959 - 1961 Deputy Director, Complementing (DDC), Manpower Planning and Complementing Division, Manpower Department, Admiralty [HMS President]

30.06.1961 - 07.1963 Senior Naval Officer, West Indies & from 1962 Commander, British Forces, Caribbean Area & Island Commander, Bermuda, NATO [HMS Ulster]

30.09.1963 - 08.1966 Captain, Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth [HMS Dartmouth]

09.1966 - 09.1967 Flag Officer, Middle East

01.09.1967 - (08.)1968 Commander, British Forces in the Gulf [HMS Jufair (RN base, Bahrein)] (CB, despatches)

17.09.1968 - 06.1970 Director General of Naval Personal Services and Training

09.1970 - 01.1973 Deputy Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic (KCB)

Lieutenant Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Guernsey, 1974-1980. President, Nautical Institute, 1975-1978.

THE ABOVE SERVICE INFORMATION WAS MOSTLY OBTAINED FROM

"WORLD WAR UNIT HISTORIES" website at

http://www.unithistories.com/units_index/default.asp?file=../officers/personsx.html