Twitter Thread by The Cat From Greece



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Everything is appalling, so here are some stories about the Navy's Coastal Forces (Motor Gun Boats and Motor Torpedo Boats) in WW2.

These small vessels had very powerful engines which were complex and hard to maintain.

As a result, base engineering staff sometimes had to remain on board to continue their work during operations.

On one occasion, an Engineering Officer was labouring in the machinery space when the boat went into battle.

Not having seen one before, he opened the hatch to look around. Every gun was in action, and enemy tracer zipped past his head. The noise was appalling.

The officer (unnamed in the story, but perhaps a nautical Wooster) took in the scene for a moment, then turned to the CO and remarked, 'Oh I say! Madly *war*, isn't it?', before returning to his tinkering.

During the raid on Dieppe an MGB picked up a German airman, who was sent below under armed guard.

Some time later, the CO found the German sitting in a gangway playing with the ship's kitten, and keeping very still because the 'guard' had fallen asleep with his head on the German's shoulder.

The German had, unbeknownst to him, already been very lucky that day.

One of the MGB's crew, incensed by the Blitz, vowed to throw overboard any German he came across.

However, this prisoner began helping with the wounded as soon as he was picked up, causing the rating to shelve his homicidal plan.

When the CO asked why, the rating replied 'He's a gentleman, sir.'

On another occasion, MGBs came in with prisoners and lined them up on the jetty for collection by a detachment of guards.

One of the Germans was drenched, so an MGB officer told the guard commander that he needed dry clothes.

Misunderstanding this instruction, the Petty Officer thought the German was simply a wet RN rating and ordered him over to the stores shed to get a new uniform.

No doubt rather baffled by this turn of events, the German jogged off, unescorted, to join the stores queue, from which he was retrieved some time later.

Prisoners again, this time in the Mediterranean.

On 13 May 1943 MTBs attacked ferries evacuating German troops from North Africa, sinking them and taking numerous prisoners.

These included a number of paratroopers, notoriously tough and resourceful soldiers.

Ratings were instructed to guard them, but due to a shortage of small arms on the tiny MTBs, some of the guards had to borrow German weapons.

Just after they set out for home, the CO of one MTB was considerably alarmed to hear a long burst of submachine gun fire behind him.

He was all the more alarmed to discover that it emanated from a German paratrooper, with a smoking MP40 still in his hands.

Turning to the RN guard for an explanation, the CO was cheerily reassured that 'It's all right, sir! He was just showing me how it worked.'