

A PARTICULARLY FINE WW2 SUBMARINERS D.S.M. GROUP AWARDED TO A MEMBER OF THE 4-INCH GUN CREW OF H.M.S. RORQUAL FOR HIS ACTIONS DURING A SURFACE FIREFIGHT IN THE ADRIATIC IN WHICH AN ARMED TUG WAS SUNK AND A FLOATING BATTERY DAMAGED



DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL, G.V.I.R. 'J.99296 C. J. THOMAS. A.B. R.N.' IMPRESSED NAMING; 1939-45 STAR; AFRICA STAR; DEFENCE AND WAR MEDALS; ROYAL NAVY L.S. & G.C., G.V.R. 3RD ISSUE, COINAGE HEAD 'J.99296 C. J. THOMAS. A.B., H.M.S. ALECTO'. MOUNTED FOR WEAR

D.S.M. *London Gazette* 29 July 1941.

The recommendation states: *'For conspicuous good service during seven war patrols and for coolness and efficiency as trainer during a close-range gun action from submerged when an armed tug was sunk and a bombardment lighter mounting two medium calibre guns set on fire and damaged'*.

Charles James Thomas was born in Perran Downs, Marazion, Cornwall on 31 July 1903. He entered the Service as a Boy 1st Class in 1920 and attained the rank of Able Seaman in 1923, during which time he served aboard the Hood and Caradoc. Thomas volunteered for the Submarine Service in 1927 and was posted to the submarine depot ship Dolphin for the first time in 1932. During the Second World War his Certificate of Service records service aboard the submarine depot ships Dolphin, Medway and Forth amongst others.

H.M.S. RORQUAL

Thomas service record shows he joined H.M.S. Rorqual on 29 October 1938, serving with this submarine under Captain Dewhurst at the outbreak of the war until May 1941. During his service as

stated in his recommendation, Thomas was the Trainer on the submarines 4" MK.12 gun, the Trainer being the member of the guns crew who sat at the side of the gun controlling the direction of the gun onto target, whilst the Gun Layer controlled the elevation.



H.M.S. Rorqual, 1768 tons (surfaced) was launched in 1936, built by Vickers-Armstrong in Barrow-in-Furness and armed with six 21-inch torpedo tubes, carrying 12 torpedoes, one 4-inch gun and 50 mines. With guns, torpedoes and mines she was the 10th highest scoring British submarine of the Second World War, sinking over 45,000 tons of enemy shipping. The boat was broken up in 1946.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Rorqual_\(N74\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Rorqual_(N74))

Thomas was awarded the D.S.M. for his part in the action of 31 January 1941, which took place off the Yugoslav island of Kercula in the Adriatic. Whilst on patrol, the submarine Rorqual observed the Italian armed sea-going tug Ursus of about 1,000 tons, mounting two small guns, towing an armoured 100 ton lighter mounting two 6-inch guns, one A.A. gun and two machine guns. Correctly assuming that the seaborne artillery would be unable to bear on its target in a sea swell, the Rorqual surfaced and with its single 4-inch gun, opened fire on the tug at a range of about 500 yards. The submarine's first shot hit the bridge of the tug and both tug and floating battery returned fire but with no effect. Eventually fire broke out on board the tug and she began to sink and the submarine broke off the engagement. The drifting and damaged battery, holding the survivors from the tug was eventually towed by the Yugoslav S.S. Drava to Hvar harbour and was thence collected by another Italian tug. The British account of the action speaks of the battery being '*dirty and ramshackle to the last degree*' and of the crew, '*as demoralised and defeatist. Their greatest hope was to be interned in Yugoslavia.*' In the Italian account, extracted from the newspaper Corriere della Sera, 8 February 1941, states that, '*a salvo of three shells hits the hull of the submarine which goes slowly to the bottom, leaving large patches of oil on the surface thus ending this magnificent action*'.

For the action, Commander R. H. Dewhurst was awarded the D.S.O., two officers the D.S.C., four other ranks, including Thomas, the D.S.M. and five others were mentioned in despatches. As a member of the gun crew, Thomas was directly involved in the action.

Further details of Captain Dewhurst and Rorqual's War Patrols can be found on this excellent website:

1427 hours - Fired this torpedo but it had a gyro failure forcing Rorqual to go deep.

1546 hours - Aircraft now arrived in the area and Rorqual went deep again."



S-1245 (late S-536b.) (Established—December, 1937.)
(Revised—September, 1937.)

GUNNERY HISTORY SHEET.

To be attached to the rating's Service Certificate until final discharge. History Sheet is to be given to the man, together with his Service Certificate, when he leaves the Service.

Name: THOMAS, C. J.
 (Surname in BLOCK LETTERS.)
 Port Division: Devonport
 RECORD OF GUNNER

To be filled in, in H.M. Ships, when a rating is found Where a rating is found is to be made in R.E.D. for employment in ship man's Depot, and

Date: _____

The corner of this certificate is to be cut off and the character of rating with a "D" character, or "D" with "A", "B", "C", "D", "E", "F", "G", "H", "I", "J", "K", "L", "M", "N", "O", "P", "Q", "R", "S", "T", "U", "V", "W", "X", "Y", "Z", "AA", "AB", "AC", "AD", "AE", "AF", "AG", "AH", "AI", "AJ", "AK", "AL", "AM", "AN", "AO", "AP", "AQ", "AR", "AS", "AT", "AU", "AV", "AW", "AX", "AY", "AZ", "BA", "BB", "BC", "BD", "BE", "BF", "BG", "BH", "BI", "BJ", "BK", "BL", "BM", "BN", "BO", "BP", "BQ", "BR", "BS", "BT", "BU", "BV", "BW", "BX", "BY", "BZ", "CA", "CB", "CC", "CD", "CE", "CF", "CG", "CH", "CI", "CJ", "CK", "CL", "CM", "CN", "CO", "CP", "CQ", "CR", "CS", "CT", "CU", "CV", "CW", "CX", "CY", "CZ", "DA", "DB", "DC", "DD", "DE", "DF", "DG", "DH", "DI", "DJ", "DK", "DL", "DM", "DN", "DO", "DP", "DQ", "DR", "DS", "DT", "DU", "DV", "DW", "DX", "DY", "DZ", "EA", "EB", "EC", "ED", "EE", "EF", "EG", "EH", "EI", "EJ", "EK", "EL", "EM", "EN", "EO", "EP", "EQ", "ER", "ES", "ET", "EU", "EV", "EW", "EX", "EY", "EZ", "FA", "FB", "FC", "FD", "FE", "FF", "FG", "FH", "FI", "FJ", "FK", "FL", "FM", "FN", "FO", "FP", "FQ", "FR", "FS", "FT", "FU", "FV", "FW", "FX", "FY", "FZ", "GA", "GB", "GC", "GD", "GE", "GF", "GG", "GH", "GI", "GJ", "GK", "GL", "GM", "GN", "GO", "GP", "GQ", "GR", "GS", "GT", "GU", "GV", "GW", "GX", "GY", "GZ", "HA", "HB", "HC", "HD", "HE", "HF", "HG", "HH", "HI", "HJ", "HK", "HL", "HM", "HN", "HO", "HP", "HQ", "HR", "HS", "HT", "HU", "HV", "HW", "HX", "HY", "HZ", "IA", "IB", "IC", "ID", "IE", "IF", "IG", "IH", "II", "IJ", "IK", "IL", "IM", "IN", "IO", "IP", "IQ", "IR", "IS", "IT", "IU", "IV", "IW", "IX", "IY", "IZ", "JA", "JB", "JC", "JD", "JE", "JF", "JG", "JH", "JI", "JJ", "JK", "JL", "JM", "JN", "JO", "JP", "JQ", "JR", "JS", "JT", "JU", "JV", "JW", "JX", "JY", "JZ", "KA", "KB", "KC", "KD", "KE", "KF", "KG", "KH", "KI", "KJ", "KL", "KM", "KN", "KO", "KP", "KQ", "KR", "KS", "KT", "KU", "KV", "KW", "KX", "KY", "KZ", "LA", "LB", "LC", "LD", "LE", "LF", "LG", "LH", "LI", "LJ", "LK", "LL", "LM", "LN", "LO", "LP", "LQ", "LR", "LS", "LT", "LU", "LV", "LW", "LX", "LY", "LZ", "MA", "MB", "MC", "MD", "ME", "MF", "MG", "MH", "MI", "MJ", "MK", "ML", "MN", "MO", "MP", "MQ", "MR", "MS", "MT", "MU", "MV", "MW", "MX", "MY", "MZ", "NA", "NB", "NC", "ND", "NE", "NF", "NG", "NH", "NI", "NJ", "NK", "NL", "NM", "NO", "NP", "NQ", "NR", "NS", "NT", "NU", "NV", "NW", "NX", "NY", "NZ", "OA", "OB", "OC", "OD", "OE", "OF", "OG", "OH", "OI", "OJ", "OK", "OL", "OM", "ON", "OO", "OP", "OQ", "OR", "OS", "OT", "OU", "OV", "OW", "OX", "OY", "OZ", "PA", "PB", "PC", "PD", "PE", "PF", "PG", "PH", "PI", "PJ", "PK", "PL", "PM", "PN", "PO", "PP", "PQ", "PR", "PS", "PT", "PU", "PV", "PW", "PX", "PY", "PZ", "QA", "QB", "QC", "QD", "QE", "QF", "QG", "QH", "QI", "QJ", "QK", "QL", "QM", "QN", "QO", "QP", "QQ", "QR", "QS", "QT", "QU", "QV", "QW", "QX", "QY", "QZ", "RA", "RB", "RC", "RD", "RE", "RF", "RG", "RH", "RI", "RJ", "RK", "RL", "RM", "RN", "RO", "RP", "RQ", "RR", "RS", "RT", "RU", "RV", "RW", "RX", "RY", "RZ", "SA", "SB", "SC", "SD", "SE", "SF", "SG", "SH", "SI", "SJ", "SK", "SL", "SM", "SN", "SO", "SP", "SQ", "SR", "SS", "ST", "SU", "SV", "SW", "SX", "SY", "SZ", "TA", "TB", "TC", "TD", "TE", "TF", "TG", "TH", "TI", "TJ", "TK", "TL", "TM", "TN", "TO", "TP", "TQ", "TR", "TS", "TT", "TU", "TV", "TW", "TX", "TY", "TZ", "UA", "UB", "UC", "UD", "UE", "UF", "UG", "UH", "UI", "UJ", "UK", "UL", "UM", "UN", "UO", "UP", "UQ", "UR", "US", "UT", "UU", "UV", "UW", "UX", "UY", "UZ", "VA", "VB", "VC", "VD", "VE", "VF", "VG", "VH", "VI", "VJ", "VK", "VL", "VM", "VN", "VO", "VP", "VQ", "VR", "VS", "VT", "VU", "VV", "VW", "VX", "VY", "VZ", "WA", "WB", "WC", "WD", "WE", "WF", "WG", "WH", "WI", "WJ", "WK", "WL", "WM", "WN", "WO", "WP", "WQ", "WR", "WS", "WT", "WU", "WV", "WW", "WX", "WY", "WZ", "XA", "XB", "XC", "XD", "XE", "XF", "XG", "XH", "XI", "XJ", "XK", "XL", "XM", "XN", "XO", "XP", "XQ", "XR", "XS", "XT", "XU", "XV", "XW", "XX", "XY", "XZ", "YA", "YB", "YC", "YD", "YE", "YF", "YG", "YH", "YI", "YJ", "YK", "YL", "YM", "YN", "YO", "YP", "YQ", "YR", "YS", "YT", "YU", "YV", "YW", "YX", "YZ", "ZA", "ZB", "ZC", "ZD", "ZE", "ZF", "ZG", "ZH", "ZI", "ZJ", "ZK", "ZL", "ZM", "ZN", "ZO", "ZP", "ZQ", "ZR", "ZS", "ZT", "ZU", "ZV", "ZW", "ZX", "ZY", "ZZ".

Official Number: 99296

Nearest known Relative or Friend: Edna Thomas
 (Relationship, Name, and Address)
12, Broad St., Devonport
Devonport

Place of Birth: Devonport
 Date of Birth: 27 July 1903
 Parish: St. Andrew's
 Town or County: Devonport
 Usual place of Residence: Person Down, Marazion
Person Down, Marazion
Person Down, Marazion
James

Trade brought up to: _____
 Religious Denomination: _____
 Can Swim: _____
 Signature on _____
 Date to Pension: _____

SEA.
 more than six months.
 on to that effect
 before unsuitable
 monodere of the

Medals, Claps, &c.
 Initials of
 Gunner
 Officer

Page 1

<https://naval-encyclopedia.com/ww2/uk/grampus-class-submersibles-1932-36.php>

Serving at H.M.S. Dolphin from July 1941, he joined H.M.S. Sealion in January 1942 and appears to have served with this submarine until March 1943. Thomas had attained the rank of Acting Leading Seaman in August 1942 and was confirmed to that rank a year later. He was released from the service in October 1945.



Condition NEF. Ex DNW September 2002. Sold with:

- 1) The recipient's original Certificate of Service
 - 2) The recipient's original Gunnery History Sheet
 - 3) The recipient's original Torpedo History Sheet
 - 4) A submarine veteran blazer badge, signs of removal
 - 5) An original newspaper cutting from the Daily Sketch, 22 May 1942, illustrating 12 submariners, Thomas included, who received the D.S.M. at an Investiture on 19 May 1942
 - 6) A copy photograph of H.M. Rorqual and a Submarine service cap tally
- Together with a quantity of copied research details, including the war service history of H.M.S. Rorqual, official recommendation for D.S.M. and conflicting British and Italian reports of the 'D.S.M.' action etc



A very fine gallantry group to a long service submariner who as the ships Gun Trainer would have seen a good deal of action