

Patron: Lord Cobbold DL
Ivry, Lady Freyberg

5 Lt. Cdr. Malcolm David Wanklyn VC, DSO** RN (1911-1942) #9837 on the web family tree

June 2019

We can do no better than to reprint our Cobbweb of August 2017

“The ship and her company are gone, but the example and the inspiration remain.”

Thus wrote Their Lordships of The Admiralty (unusually) when reporting that H M Submarine UPHOLDER (Lieutenant Commander M D Wanklyn VC DSO** RN) had been lost. It was April 1942.

Under the command of David Wanklyn UPHOLDER'S first war patrol was from Portsmouth to Gibraltar early in 1941. Thereafter Mediterranean patrols typically lasted 2 to 3 weeks with 10 days between to refuel and rearm in Malta. These supposed rest periods were frequently interrupted by air-raids upon which UPHOLDER dived to the bottom of the harbour. In a little under 12 months Malcolm David Wanklyn and his crew were credited with sinking over 93,000 tons of enemy shipping and damaging a further 34,000 tons.

The sinking of ‘Conte Rosso.’ This attack was to earn Wanklyn the award of the Victoria Cross, the first awarded to a submariner in World War II. Here is the citation:

On the evening of 24th May 1941, whilst on patrol off the coast of Sicily, Lieutenant-Commander Wanklyn in command of His Majesty's Submarine UPHOLDER, sighted a southbound enemy troop convoy, strongly escorted by destroyers. The failing light was such that observation by periscope could not be relied on, but a surface attack would have been easily seen. UPHOLDER'S listening gear was out of action. In spite of these handicaps, Lt. Cdr. Wanklyn decided to press home his attack at short range. He quickly steered his craft into a favourable position and closed in so as to make sure of his target. By this time the whereabouts of the escorting destroyers could not be made out. Lt. Cdr. Wanklyn, while fully aware of the risk of being rammed by one of the escort, continued to press on towards the enemy troopships. As he was about to fire, one of the enemy destroyers suddenly appeared out of the darkness at high speed and he only just avoided being rammed. As soon as he was clear he brought his periscope sights on and fired torpedoes, which sank a large troopship. The enemy destroyers at once made a strong counter-attack and during the next 20 minutes dropped 37 depth charges near UPHOLDER. The failure of his listening device made it much harder for him to get away, but with the greatest courage, coolness and skill he brought UPHOLDER clear of the enemy and safe back to harbour.

David Wanklyn was the Royal Navy's top submarine ace, the most successful submariner in the Western Allied Navies and the most highly decorated Royal Navy hero of the second World War.



David Wanklyn



HMS Upholder

