



**Harold Chester Mosdell**

**Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland)**

**Royal Navy**

**Service No. P/188840**

**World War II**

**Born:** 02 December 1908

**Died:** 24 August 2009 (Age 100 Years)

**Place of Birth:** Bay Roberts, Conception Bay, Newfoundland

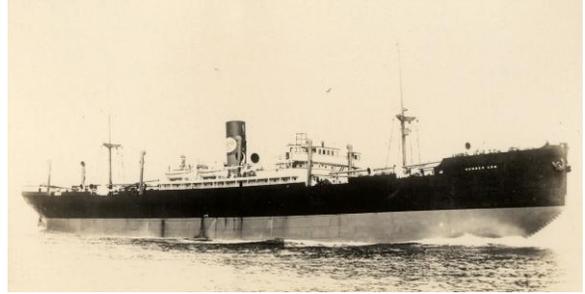
**Parents:** Richard and Mary (nee Rabbitts) Mosdell

According to records, the Mosdell family who were living in Bay Roberts when their first four children were born moved to Port aux Basques in 1910 or 1911, where Richard sr. took a position as agent with the Newfoundland Reid Railway.

The 1921 Newfoundland general census for Port aux Basques lists the family as follows: Richard 42, Wife, Mary 40 and children, Robert 17, Cecil 14, twin boys Harold and Richard 13, Mary 10, Margaret 7, Dorothy 6, Patricia 3, and baby Minerva age 6 months.

In 1929 at age nineteen (19) Harold secured a job as part of the crew on the vessel Humber Arm and began his life at sea. He was engaged as a “deck

boy” initially. He is described at the time as being 5’6” tall and 121 lbs.



**Humber Arm**

The Humber Arm was a British Steam Merchant Ship owned by Bowater’s Newfoundland Pulp & Paper Mills Ltd, Corner Brook. It was sunk on 08 July 1940, when torpedoed by U-99, 60 miles off the coast of Ireland.

In September 1933, Harold is a passenger on the Nova Scotia enroute to Liverpool, England. His occupation is listed as seaman.

Harold enlisted in the Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland) in February 1940 and was part of the 175-man 5<sup>th</sup> Naval Contingent that left Newfoundland on 07 March 1940 for overseas.

Here is a clipping from the Observer’s Weekly newspaper of 16 February 1943. Harold was a good seaman as noted in this report. Worthy of note, in addition to Harold serving, four of his siblings also served.

## The Mosdell Family

Here in the City now on short leave is Chief Petty Officer Herbert Mosdell, son of Mr and Mrs. Richard Mosdell, of LeMarchant Road, who has been overseas since 1940. His promotion was rapid, from ordinary seaman to rating; second hand Petty Officer, and now C.P.O. He served in the British and Eastern Mediterranean waters. Other members of the same family now serving are: Cecil W. G. Mosdell, Canadian Army Service Corps; a second brother, Richard, junior, 3rd. Engineer in the Merchant Navy; a third brother Lance, on vital war work with the American Government, and a sister, Dorothy, who enlisted in the C.W.A.C., December 15th. 1942, and is now in uniform in Canada.

Here is another record worth while.

Harold married Bella Louise Chafe of Petty Harbour. The couple did not have any children.

Bella passed in 1987 at 76 years of age. Harold died in 2009 in his 101st year. They are buried in the Anglican Cemetery Forest Road, St. John's

Below is a letter to his mother published in the Observer's Weekly on 01 August 1944 which details his experiences on D-Day.

# Wfld. Sailor Tells Thrilling Story Of Invasion Day

C.P.O. Harold Mosdell of St. John's Was With First Naval Force to Land Troops in France

A NEWFOUNDLAND Sailor who had a grandstand seat on one of the biggest military operations of all time—the Allied landing in Occupied France, gives a vivid word picture of D-Day in the following extracts from a letter recently received by Mrs. R. Mosdell, 174 LeMarchant Road, from her son Chief Petty Officer Harold C. Mosdell, R.N.

*From The Observer's Weekly  
01 August 1944*

C.P.O. Mosdell is one of the many Newfoundlanders who managed the troop-carriers, landing-craft, mine-sweepers and the hounded and one other small and large boats that moved out on D-Day to help strike a decisive blow for the liberation of Europe.

These were the men who, it might safely be said, tipped the spearhead of the invasion of Europe, and C.P.O. Mosdell puts into vivid words thoughts that must have been in the minds of many other Newfoundlanders who gave history a hand off the Normandy Beachhead.

## SOMEWHERE OFF FRANCE JUNE 6TH, 1944

Dear Mother:—This is D. Day and finds the invasion in full swing. We are in the thick of things at this moment. There is a bombardment of the beaches going on, from the capital ships, and knocking seven bells out of Jersey. We are at one of the places which is offering resistance.

As you heard over BBC tonight, our assault is a major success, but is still going on. We have not come under fire yet, and so far there has been no loss or casualties from the naval end of things. Cannot say how the army is faring, but believe all is well with them. The landings started in early morning. We were not here for the very beginning. We had in our care the first reinforcements which put us in the second naval forces to arrive at the chosen place, which gives us the honour of being the first to land troops in occupied France. Landings are taking place all day. We arrived here in early afternoon. We have had no interference from the much vaunted Luftwaffe. So far their most brilliant achievement in the face of our invasion is absence. Contrast that with 1940-41 when a bare handful of flyers, mostly British, knocked the said Luftwaffe from the sky in their hundreds per day. And now four years later, with those people of Europe, who chose freedom over serfdom, combined with the mighty forces of the United States of America and our own, we have already scored a great victory.

The above up to 20.00 hours or 8 p.m. to you.

## 22 TO 2300 HOURS

A couple of enemy planes made an appearance, and gave my gunners a chance. One of the gunners is one of our own lads. We scored hits on one which soon after disappeared into the sea in flames. From midnight everything quite normal. The army having progressed inland some miles seemed to have a bit stiffer resistance.

## 7TH JUNE

So the big bombers gives them a hand. And both ours and American Battleships and Cruisers are shelling Jerry's positions. So far I cannot name any of the Capital ships or heavy Cruisers, but their names are familiar.

## 1300 HOURS

Just came below now, after watching a particularly difficult

point in enemy hands get squared off, so Tommy can put things in ship-shape. Well up to now, thank God, personally I have had no fear or undue worry. Am a bit tired and sleepy owing to the strain of the last few days. We were told on leaving port what the job was, so everyone knew what to expect. And now I feel safe in saying that the enemy was surprised and had little opposition to offer.

## 1600 HOURS

Took forty winks and was awakened by air-raid alarm. However nothing happened. Still meeting with opposition on the beaches. Bombardment by naval forces still going on now at 20.00 hours. The day has been fine and warm, but a heavy swell is running and causing some inconvenience to landing craft taking the soldiers ashore. Our lot are nearly all Americans. But the first ashore were British and Canadian, and I am wondering if Cecil was among them. I may not know for a month or more, until everything is settled into a military routine. Now I suppose you would like to know about the sort of ships employed. Well I can't give you names, but they ranged as follows: Battleships, Battle Cruisers, heavy and light Cruisers, Destroyers, Corvettes, Subs., Trawlers, M.T.Bs, M.L., and all sort of comic looking landing craft, which you have seen on the newsreels at various times. Then merchant ships, from luxury liners to little coasters and tugs, even motor boats. There were upwards of 4000 ships, not including thousands of landing craft of various types mentioned above, and they flew the flags of all the Allied countries. The greatest armada the mind of man has ever conceived.

In spite of what I have previously seen in my time in the Service, it leaves me gasping. Now consider that a great portion of these ships had been at sea for some days, getting together at the rendezvous and passing through known and unknown minefields, avoiding E- and U-boats, surely one can see a higher hand at work. And if we conduct ourselves properly the same hand will crown our efforts in behalf of justice and righteousness with success. But the evil abroad in Europe must be destroyed, and the guilty suffer the penalty of their wickedness. All the foregoing is up to 2100 hours or 9 p.m. on June 7th. If opportunity offers I will tell you what I can.

Now then when we arrived here yesterday another ship signalled she had mail for us, so we went alongside and I found there were four letters for me dated April 24th, May 8th, May 19th and 21st. I was delighted to hear from you. It is likely to be some considerable time before I shall be able to write any more than a note to you. At this stage I don't know if we shall be returning to

England. I said yesterday I would try and drop a further line if possible.

## JUNE 8TH

Still shelling pockets of resistance, but landings carry on. From reports the Army is doing better than we expected, and have captured some towns. Had another visit from the Luftwaffe which ended same as previous one. All beach resistance has ceased and we are now in absolute control of the whole sector on which we made assaults. And now we can marvel at the vast array of ships for convoy after convoy has arrived and departed again for more men and material.

If the Home Front can keep up supplies, we can and will get it across, and Tommy and the Doughboys can use it and will to great advantage. No more Dunkirks, no more retreats this time. That is yours and my job until he surrenders, be it short or long.

## JUNE 9TH

All is quiet today, except that on the gentle breeze if one listens you can hear faintly the artillery of both sides occasionally from far inland.

Well we are on the move again. Where, we don't know or care very much, although it would be nice to get home and have a nice cool glass of beer and hear the people and papers of Britain and America comment about it. I am willing to bet the whole public were surprised it was all over so quickly. There is nothing more for me to say any more than thank God it was such a success and for His protection while we were there and back.

Chins up, we are on our way.

Your affectionate son,  
HAROLD C. MOSDELL.