

T.S.D.S. destroyers ahead, were passed within 10 feet. The possibility exists, therefore, that one or more of the above casualties may have been caused by mines and not by torpedo.

15. These E-Boat attacks did not go unpunished, at least one and possibly two E-Boats being destroyed. V.H.F.* conversations in Italian intercepted in H.M.S. ASHANTI confirmed this.

16. At about 0140, H.M.S. PATHFINDER went alongside H.M.S. MANCHESTER and after discussion with the Captain embarked about 150 of the ship's company and then proceeded to join Rear-Admiral Commanding, 10th Cruiser Squadron as he had been ordered to do.

17. Subsequently, the Commanding Officer, H.M.S. MANCHESTER decided to abandon and sink his ship. The last of the ship's company left the ship at about 0245 and at about 0550 the ship was seen to sink.

18. At 0245, H.M. Ships CHARYBDIS, ESKIMO and SOMALI joined Rear-Admiral Commanding, 10th Cruiser Squadron.

19. S.S. WAIRANGI was hit in the engine room and S.S. ALMERIA LYKES before No. 1 hold. Both ships were abandoned and their crews picked up some hours later by H.M. Ships ESKIMO and SOMALI. Neither ship was seen to sink though both are reported as left in a sinking condition. Commanding Officer, H.M.S. ESKIMO reports that he did not complete the sinking of the ships because he thought there might be an opportunity later for salvaging them. S.S. SANTA ELIZA was sunk later in a bombing attack.

20. At dawn D.4, Rear-Admiral Commanding, 10th Cruiser Squadron in H.M.S. ASHANTI had in company with him H.M. Ships KENYA, CHARYBDIS, INTREPID, ICARUS, FURY, ESKIMO, SOMALI and the M.T. ships MELBOURNE STAR, CLAN FERGUSON and ROCHESTER CASTLE. H.M.S. LEDBURY with S.S. OHIO was 5 miles astern, H.M.S. PATHFINDER and H.M.S. BRAMHAM with S.S. PORT CHALMERS were 10 miles to the north-west, while H.M.S. PENN was observed beyond S.S. PORT CHALMERS standing by an M.T. ship—probably S.S. WAIMARAMA—which was on fire and shortly afterwards blew up. Later S.S. DORSET was sighted to the northward and ordered to join the convoy.

21. It was learned later that S.S. BRISBANE STAR spent the night and part of the day in the Gulf of Hammamet. Whilst in territorial waters his ship was boarded by the French authorities who, after protest, behaved well and took a seriously wounded man ashore to Susa. S.S. BRISBANE STAR eventually reached Malta at 1430 the following day, 14th August.

22. At 0712, Rear-Admiral Commanding, 10th Cruiser Squadron ordered H.M. Ships ESKIMO and SOMALI to return and stand by H.M.S. MANCHESTER. On their way to do so they picked up survivors of S.S. ALMERIA LYKES and WAIRANGI and at 1040 off Kelibia they recovered about 150 of the MANCHESTER's ship's company from Carley

floats. They were then only half a mile from the coast and were able to see several hundreds of, apparently, H.M.S. MANCHESTER's ship's company being marched away. Having recovered all survivors, H.M. Ships ESKIMO and SOMALI proceeded for Gibraltar.

23. At 0810, the first of a series of air attacks was experienced by Force X, JU.88s delivering a dive bombing attack, mostly directed at S.S. CLAN FERGUSON, second ship of H.M.S. CHARYBDIS's column. S.S. CLAN FERGUSON received a direct hit and blew up. Her next astern passed through the flames apparently unscathed. H.M.S. CHARYBDIS reports seeing two aircraft diving on S.S. CLAN FERGUSON and only one coming out of the dive, the other presumably being destroyed by the explosion.

24. Further attacks by Stuka dive bombers accompanied by Italian aircraft laying parachute mines ahead and on the flanks of the convoy occurred at 0925. The Stukas made a set at S.S. OHIO who sustained several near misses. One Stuka which was shot down by the combined efforts of H.M.S. ASHANTI and S.S. OHIO dived into S.S. OHIO's side.

25. The Malta Beaufighters and Spitfires were now in sight of Force X and seen to be making contact with the enemy at times. Rear-Admiral Commanding, 10th Cruiser Squadron reports that, observing they had no fighter direction aid from Force X, he considered the fighters performed a magnificent job of work throughout the day.

26. At 0941, H.M.S. KENYA was near missed by further dive bombers, and at 1017 and 1050 similar combined dive bombing and minelaying attacks occurred. In these S.S. DORSET, who was rejoining, and S.S. OHIO, were both near missed and stopped. H.M. Ships PENN, LEDBURY and BRAMHAM stood by S.S. OHIO and DORSET. The latter was eventually sunk at 2014 after being set on fire by more air attacks.

27. At 1120, Italian torpedo bombers carried out an attack combined with the dropping of parachute mines or circling torpedoes. Torpedoes were dropped at long range and except for one which became entangled in S.S. PORT CHALMERS' paravane (subsequently cleared safely) none appeared to endanger the force.

28. Beaufighters and long-range Spitfires were observed to shoot down at least 4 enemy aircraft in the distance but unfortunately one Spitfire was engaged by merchant ships during a dive bombing attack and crashed, the pilot being killed.

29. By 1230, Force X was within range of Malta's short-range Spitfires and thereafter was unmolested.

30. At 1430, the Malta Escort Force under the Senior Officer, Minesweepers, in H.M.S. SPEEDY, reinforced the escort and at 1600, Force X, less H.M. Ships PENN, BRAMHAM, and LEDBURY, who continued to stand by S.S. OHIO and DORSET, retired to the westward. S.S. PORT CHALMERS, MELBOURNE STAR and ROCHESTER CASTLE were turned over to the local escort and eventually entered harbour at Malta safely at 1825.

Admiralty footnote

* V.H.F.—very high frequency radio telephone.