

- 1241 BENGAL received direct hit in stern.
Fire in officers' baggage room
- 1245 Ammunition running short (subsequent check showed 5 rounds H.E. D.A. fuse remaining). Vessel damaged fore and aft. Tanker had succeeded in opening range from raiders to approx. 7 miles. Decision taken to break off engagement against uneven odds. Made smoke. Undamaged raider continued chase and firing. She obtained several near misses.
- 1304 Altered course 230°.
- 1308 Tanker observed hit abaft bridge.
- 1309 Altered course 240°.
- 1310 Altered course 250°.
- 1312 Very large explosion observed on first raider, which had been burning continuously. No further sight of this raider.
- 1320 Tanker last observed steering approx. 190°.
- 1340 Ceased making smoke to observe enemy.
- 1345 Nothing in sight. Estimated that over 200 rounds were fired at BENGAL.
- 1346 Altered course to 305°. Revolutions reduced to 170.

Larger raider which is presumed sunk was larger edition of Kunikawa Maru class and approximately 10,000 tons.

Smaller raider which was not hit by BENGAL was also of Kunikawa Maru class and approximately 8,000 tons.

No ensign was flown by either raider, and both fired broadsides of 4 guns which appeared to be 5.9".

2. In addition to the damage logged the following damage has been sustained. D.G. gear* is not completely effective, the S/A gear† is out of action, and there is additional shrapnel damage to various parts of the vessel, including the shell plating fore and aft both sides of the vessel.

3. The intention was to draw the enemies' fire and act as screen for as long as possible in an effort to let the tanker ONDINA make her escape. This object was attained to the extent that she was not observed to be hit until fifty-six minutes after the first raider opened fire, and twenty-three minutes after we had ceased firing, though we were under fire for approximately fifteen minutes after the tanker had been hit. After we had hit the first raider the second did not close the range below 7,000 to 8,000 yards.

4. I cannot praise too highly the conduct of all the officers and men of this vessel, and while under these circumstances it is difficult to single out individuals I would particularly like to commend the 12-pdr. crew for the able fashion in which they used their weapon and kept it firing after what appeared to be a direct hit immediately below the gun position.

5. A narrative is attached.

(Signed) W. J. WILSON,
*Lieutenant-Commander, R.I.N.R.,
Commanding Officer.*

Admiralty footnote —

* D G gear—anti-magnetic mine equipment

† S/A gear—sounding apparatus

NARRATIVE.

On Wednesday morning, 11th November, 1942, a beautiful sunny day with a calm sea, H.M.I.S. BENGAL was proceeding in company with the tanker ONDINA.

2. At about 1145 an unknown vessel was sighted steaming straight for us; it was still a good distance away, and its identity could not be established. The alarm gongs were sounded and the ship's company went to "Action Stations". The unknown ship was heading straight for us, our course was altered to starboard and the tanker told to follow; this brought the unknown ship on our port beam.

3. At this time a second vessel was seen appearing over the horizon and coming up on our port bow. It could now be seen that these two unknown ships were fairly large, the first (Raider No. 1) about 10,000 tons, and the second (Raider No. 2) about 8,000 tons. Both appeared to be typical Japanese construction.

4. The tanker was told to act independently, and given a rendezvous for the next day.

5. As the unknown ship had not challenged us, also as she was not flying any ensign, it was fairly certain she was an enemy. Knowing that it would be impossible for the tanker and us to evade these two ships we altered course again and headed straight for Raider No. 1 so as to engage her, hoping that the tanker might get away.

6. When the range was closed to about 3,500 yards, Raider No. 1 opened fire, the first shell landing about 400 yards dead ahead. Shells were bursting all around us but our 12-pdr. gun crew fired salvo after salvo and about the sixth found its mark. It hit Raider No. 1 aft and must have exploded in her after magazine or "Ready Use" stowage on deck, for a terrific explosion was observed, flames leaping high in the air. Great cheers went up by all who had seen this, but the gun's crew kept to its job and kept firing. By this time Raider No. 2 had come into range and she too had opened fire on us. Shells were bursting everywhere. A piece of shrapnel from a near miss holed us in the forward provision room just above the water line.

7. A direct hit was expected any moment; the odds were too much against us, the enemy being able to bring to bear four 5.9" or 6" guns per ship, to our one 12-pdr. Nevertheless we knew that we had already got our revenge, for a strong fire was seen to be still burning on Raider No. 1.

8. Having expended all our ammunition with the exception of a few rounds we broke off the attack and steamed away at full speed.

9. All this time the tanker had been steaming away as fast as she was able and it was not until after we stopped attacking that the enemy opened fire on her.

10. Raider No. 1, which had considerably slowed down, concentrated her port guns on the tanker, and her starboard ones at us. Raider No. 2 was chasing us and firing continuously.

11. The tanker was seen to be hit just abaft the bridge and clouds of smoke went up.

12. Next another terrific explosion was seen aboard Raider No. 1. The fire had presumably crept forward to the main magazine, for this