

and steered to the north-westward under cover of smoke. AJAX and ACHILLES immediately hauled round, first to north, then to the west to close the range and regain bearing, accepting the temporary loss of "A" arcs. Both ships were by this time proceeding at full speed.

It appears probable that the First Division's concentration and also EXETER'S fire had up to this point been most effective and it is thought that this and the firing of EXETER'S torpedoes were the cause of the enemy making smoke and altering course away.

0638-0650.

22. At about 0638 EXETER altered course to starboard so as to fire her port torpedoes. She then steered to the north-east to close the First Division till about 0645 when she turned to a westerly course to keep within range.

23. During this period, EXETER received two more 11 in. hits. "A" turret was put out of action, and the second shell burst in the Chief Petty Officers' flat amidships, started a fierce fire, and caused the 4 in. magazine to be flooded by burst water mains. All compass repeaters were now out of action, and Captain Bell, using a boat's compass, resolutely maintained EXETER in action with "Y" turret firing in local control and the gunnery officer, Lieutenant-Commander R. B. Jennings, Royal Navy, controlling the fire from the after searchlight platform.

24. At 0640 an 11 in. direct action shell fell short of ACHILLES in line with the bridge and burst on the water. Splinters killed four ratings in the D.C.T. and stunned the gunnery officer, Lieutenant R. E. Washbourn, Royal Navy. Captain Parry and the Chief Yeoman who were on the bridge were also slightly wounded at the time. The D.C.T. itself was undamaged and, after a few minutes, resumed control from the after control position which had temporarily taken over. The survivors of the crew of the D.C.T. took over the duties of the casualties in a most resolute and efficient manner.

About 0646 reception on ACHILLES fire control W/T set faded, and thereafter she carried on in individual control.

0650-0708.

25. During the period ACHILLES was in individual control, she had great difficulty in finding the line, and at first her salvos were falling well short. Reports of the fall of these salvos were transmitted by the aircraft of AJAX whose gun control officer, not knowing that ACHILLES was no longer in concentration firing, accepted them as referring to his own fall of shot, and corrected accordingly.

The enemy was making smoke at the time, and conditions for direct observations were very bad.

This resulted in AJAX salvos falling well over and the target was not found again until 0708.

26. AJAX and ACHILLES hauled round to the north-westward at 0656 to open their "A" arcs. GRAF SPEE made frequent alterations of course to throw out our gunfire, and from 0700 onwards she made great use of smoke; she appeared to have some form of chlorosulphonic apparatus aft, and used this as well as smoke floats.

27. Captain Bell, of H.M.S. EXETER, hauled round to the westward at 0650, and was still engaging the enemy, adjusting his course so as to keep "Y" turret bearing.

EXETER now had a list of 7 degrees to starboard, and had several compartments flooded forward as a result of an 11 in. hit under the forecastle. She was still being engaged by GRAF SPEE, but the latter's fire appeared at this time to be falling a considerable distance over EXETER.

0708-0728.

28. GRAF SPEE'S range from the First Division was still 16,000 yards at 0710. I then decided to accept the loss of "A" arcs in order to close the range as rapidly as possible. Course was altered to the westward, and AJAX and ACHILLES were ordered to proceed at their utmost speed.

29. At 0716, GRAF SPEE made a drastic alteration of course to port under cover of smoke, but four minutes later she turned to the north-west and opened her "A" arcs on the First Division. AJAX was immediately straddled three times by 11 in. at a range of 11,000 yards, but the enemy's secondary armament was firing raggedly, and appeared to be going consistently over, between AJAX and ACHILLES.

30. At 0720, the First Division turned to starboard to bring all guns to bear. Our shooting appeared to be very effective, and a fire was observed amidships in GRAF SPEE.

31. At 0725, AJAX received an 11 in. delay action hit on the after superstructure. The shell passed through various cabins, then "X" turret trunk, wrecking the turret machinery below the gunhouse and finally bursting in the Commodore's sleeping cabin, doing considerable damage. A portion of the base of the shell struck "Y" barrette close to the training rack and jammed the turret. It was this shell that killed four and wounded six of "X" turret's crew. This one hit therefore put both "X" and "Y" turrets of AJAX out of action.

32. It now appeared to me that GRAF SPEE intended to neglect EXETER and was determined to close the First Division on a north-westerly course. Thinking she would hold this course, it was decided to fire one broadside of torpedoes from AJAX.

At 0724 AJAX turned to starboard and fired four torpedoes at a range of 9,000 yards. GRAF SPEE probably saw these being fired, as she at once turned some 130 degrees to port, though she came back to the north-west three minutes later.

0728-0740.

33. EXETER had been dropping gradually astern, as she had to reduce speed owing to damage forward. She still continued firing "Y" turret in local control until about 0730, when power to the turret failed due to flooding. She could then no longer keep up with the action, and about 0740 steered to the south-east at slow speed, starting to repair damage and make herself seaworthy.

34. AJAX and ACHILLES hauled back to about 260 degrees at 0728 to close the range still further. At 0731, the aircraft reported