

H.M.S. DEVONSHIRE.

15th August, 1941.

Operation "E.F." was carried out with the object of making attacks by carrier-borne aircraft on German shipping in the waters adjacent to Kirkenes (Norway) and Petsamo (Finland).

Forces Taking Part.

DEVONSHIRE	INGLEFIELD
(Flag of Rear Admiral	(Captain (D), 3rd
Commanding, First	Destroyer Flotilla).
Cruiser Squadron).	INTREPID
SUFFOLK	ICARUS
	ESCAPADE
FURIOUS	ECLIPSE
VICTORIOUS	ECHO
R.F.A. BLACK	ACTIVE
RANGER*	ANTHONY
	ANTELOPE
	ACHATES

2. ADVENTURE was placed under the orders of the Rear Admiral Commanding, First Cruiser Squadron, so that she might make her passage to North Russia under cover of the forces taking part in Operation "E.F."

Narrative.

22nd July.

3. Force "Q", consisting of ECLIPSE, ECHO, and BLACK RANGER, left Scapa at 0001 on 22nd July and proceeded to Seidisfiord†, where the destroyers fuelled from R.F.A. WAR SUDRA, and the Force then proceeded to the rendezvous at Position "X" (70 degs. 28 mins. N., 08 degs. 00 mins. E.).

23rd July.

4. ADVENTURE left Scapa at 0030 on 23rd July and arrived at Seidisfiord before Force "P".

5. Force "P", consisting of DEVONSHIRE, SUFFOLK, FURIOUS, VICTORIOUS, INTREPID, ESCAPADE, ANTHONY, ACHATES, ACTIVE and ANTELOPE, sailed from Scapa at 2300 on Wednesday, 23rd July, and proceeded at 20 knots to Seidisfiord. A/S‡ air escort was provided by the Commander-in-Chief, Rosyth.

24th July.

6. At 0856 on the 24th DEVONSHIRE detected an aircraft approaching. A fighter patrol was flown off from FURIOUS but it quickly became obvious that DEVONSHIRE had detected the A/S patrol. The incident was of value in that it brought out various small points of co-operation between R.D.F. ships** and the two aircraft carriers. One Fulmar landed on when FURIOUS was stern to wind and crashed.

7. The whole of this day was very overcast. In the afternoon visibility decreased and varied from one mile to five and it was not possible

to operate an A/S patrol. I regarded this as rather a blessing as it reduced the possibility of our being sighted by enemy aircraft.

25th July.

8. At 0258 ACHATES, which was starboard ship of the screen, struck a mine. ANTHONY immediately went to her assistance, and ACHATES reported that she was badly damaged forward but that her engines would still work. The Squadron at the same time was turned away, and soon after, as it became thicker, it was obvious that with an uncertain position Seidisfiord could not be made in safety. I accordingly turned to the southward looking for clear weather, and after crossing the hundred fathom line turned to the westward at 0730.

9. The coast was sighted at 0833 but the exact position could not be ascertained as it was shrouded in shifting fog and only the mountain tops were occasionally visible. The Force was turned to the northward and later to the north-eastward on soundings. A destroyer was sent inshore at 0951 to try to identify the land, and about 1100 an aircraft was flown off. At about 1130 ANTHONY and ACHATES were sighted. The tow had just parted, and they were then about 40 miles from Seidisfiord.

10. It had been my original intention to send VICTORIOUS and SUFFOLK into Reydarfiord,* but I decided that it was unwise to leave them to make this difficult entrance under the prevailing conditions. At 1400 the Force was off Seidisfiord. The coast was still completely shrouded in fog, and INTREPID was sent in and told to proceed with great caution and endeavour to find the entrance, of which she was given the approximate bearing. At 1415 Glettinganes Light was sighted and it was possible to fix our position. The Force then proceeded into Seidisfiord, DEVONSHIRE and FURIOUS anchoring above the minefield, and VICTORIOUS and SUFFOLK joining ADVENTURE near the entrance to the fiord.

11. An A/S patrol was carried out by destroyers in the mouth of the fiord. On anchoring I was told by the Examination Officer, Lieut. R. P. B. Veal, R.N.R., that a U-boat had been operating in the neighbourhood during the preceding two or three days. I was surprised that I had no information of this from the Admiral Commanding, Iceland, but I supposed he thought it was a false report. My investigations, however, did not at all convince me that it was false and I ordered VICTORIOUS, SUFFOLK and ADVENTURE to move further up the fiord where they had to anchor in forty fathoms. In the fiord were two A/S trawlers, WASTWATER and SEALYHAM. I ordered these to carry out an A/S patrol off the entrance.

12. I had arrived at Seidisfiord eleven hours late on my programme and I decided that it would be better to hold over the whole operation for twenty-four hours and thus retain its original timing. This had been arranged so as

Admiralty footnotes:—

* An Admiralty oil tanker.

† Seidisfiord—on the east coast of Iceland.

‡ A/S—Anti Submarine.

** R.D.F. ships—those ships fitted with radar equipment.

Admiralty footnote:—

* Reydarfiord—about 25 miles south of Seidisfiord