

14. At 0018 an Oropesa float was passed on the starboard hand, presumably CROMER's, as that ship was met at 0022 proceeding towards it.

15. Dan buoys correctly marking the channel were passed at 0023, 0042, 0048, 0057, 0101, 0111, 0131 and 0142. In two cases sweeping dans and the original channel dans laid by LAFOREY were close together and were confusing.

16. At 0026 LAFOREY was met steaming to seaward. She reported "Channel O.K. No cross set"

17. At 0028 CROMARTY was passed standing by a drifting dan buoy.

18. At 0052 LAFOREY and ANTHONY passed at high speed steaming towards Nosi Hara.

19. At 0106 ANTHONY turned round and steamed to seaward.

20. At 0130 course was altered to 136° for the passage between Nosi Hara and Nosi Anjombavola and at 0142 DEVONSHIRE passed Q.1 berth and altered course to the Northward round Nosi Hara, coming to an anchor in position 053° Q.1 berth 1.65 miles at 0057. This berth was 3½ cables from the shore, half way along the island, and was chosen to have the island as a background on the bearings from Nos. 7 and 8 batteries.

21. Two minesweepers were already at anchor off Nosi Hara, and CROMER joined them at about 0205. LAFOREY, FREESIA and probably two more minesweepers were to the South Eastward of Q.1 when DEVONSHIRE passed.

Proceedings in the Western Anchorage.

22. A period of waiting followed. The movements of Groups IV and V were obscured by Nosi Hara, but the passage of WINCHESTER CASTLE and KEREN's landing craft, and that of LAFOREY, LIGHTNING, FREESIA and ROYAL ULSTERMAN could be followed almost up to the beaches.

23. At 0342 LAFOREY's report of mines in the vicinity of JJ was received.

24. DEVONSHIRE's position lying head to wind did not enable her to keep all her guns bearing on No. 7 fort. Arrangements were made to slip cable instantly in case it was necessary to open fire. The pinnacle was lowered and a dan buoy was laid off Nosi Hara reefs to facilitate manoeuvring the ship in the narrow space available. The officer who laid this buoy reported that it was almost impossible to see the ship against the background of the island, even in the bright moonlight.

25. At 0440 flares were seen on White Beach signifying local success there. At 0454 LAFOREY's report that "Red landing 0430 believed unopposed" was received. At 0454 star shell appeared in the sky and was presumed to be HERMIONE at Ambodi-Vahibe. At 0523 the Senior Naval Officer (L)'s order for WINCHESTER CASTLE to weigh and proceed to main anchorage was received. At 0540 the Walrus aircraft was sent off to reconnoitre the batteries and report particularly on No. 8 battery. At 0546 the success signal for No. 7 battery was received.

26. By now it was broad daylight; WINCHESTER CASTLE and BACHAQUERO were seen advancing down the swept channel towards the main anchorage. Simultaneously a signal was received from ROMNEY to the effect that she had cut and exploded two moored mines in the neighbourhood of Nosi Famaho. I decided to stop these ships immediately until I was certain that the Senior Naval Officer (L) understood the situation. Both ships were told that there were mines in the anchorage and that they were not to proceed until ordered by the Senior Naval Officer (L). ROMNEY's signal indicated that 100 per cent. clearance of the anchorage would be necessary to make it safe. Signals explaining the position were passed to WINCHESTER CASTLE at 0620, the Senior Naval Officer (L) at 0625, BACHAQUERO at 0628 and the Flag Officer Commanding, Force "F" at 0652. The Senior Naval Officer (L) subsequently sent a staff officer on board DEVONSHIRE where the situation was fully explained.

27. DEVONSHIRE and LAFOREY were acting as W/T guards for F.O.O.* 2 and F.O.O. 1 respectively. Both got into communication quickly and easily, LAFOREY at 0459 and DEVONSHIRE at 0514, reports being passed by V/S† to KEREN as they came in.

28. At 0620 the Walrus returned and landed, reporting that no sign of No. 8 battery was visible.

29. Swordfish, Albacores, Martlets and Hurricanes were all now seen at intervals on their various tasks. No hostile aircraft were sighted at this stage.

30. At 0705 Senior Naval Officer (L) asked if DEVONSHIRE was in communication with the Flag Officer Commanding, Force "F." Difficulty was being experienced as the Flag Officer Commanding, Force "F" only answered occasionally and several reports were broadcast.

31. FREESIA and FRITILLARY began inner A/S patrols.

32. At 0750 KEREN and various ships of Group IV moved to the main anchorage, which the sweepers had now swept. Mines continued to be reported from Courrier Bay.

33. Consideration was now given to the question of shifting berth to my inshore bombarding position (N.1). Senior Naval Officer (L) offered me sweepers but it subsequently transpired that no sweepers could be spared from the more important task of clearing the channel for BACHAQUERO. I decided therefore to proceed to an intermediate position from which I could enfilade the main road to Antsirane and at the same time keep in good visual communication with ships in both anchorages. The position chosen was 105° Q.1 1.4 miles, where the ship anchored at 0851.

34. During the forenoon ships of Group V came into the anchorage and by 1200 the outer anchorage was clear.

35. At 1126 a general call from the Army on shore asked for bombing of the observation post at Windsor Castle. At 1138 the Walrus was sent off for this duty and carried out ten

Admiralty footnotes:—

* F.O.O. = Forward Observation Officer

† V/S = visual signal