

bombing runs. Later two Albacores and Hurricanes joined in and the Walrus returned at 1219. Nothing had been seen of the enemy on the top of the mountain though subsequent events proved them to have been there all the time.

36. At 1054 F.O.O. 2 asked that DEVONSHIRE should close in in order to extend her command of the area to the South of Antsirane and ensure the continuation of W/T communication. This request was complied with and a new berth in position 134° Q.1 2.1 miles was taken up at 1146 and F.O.O. 2 informed that it would be impossible to move the ship any closer. Unfortunately this position shut DEVONSHIRE out from direct visual communication with KEREN, and the disadvantages of this break in communications soon began to be felt. Eventually, when F.O.O. 2 had advanced beyond our extreme gun range, it was decided that the maintenance of good communication outweighed other considerations and at 1420 the ship again shifted berth 2 cables to the Westward from which position KEREN could be seen.

37. At 1149 the Senior Officer, Minesweepers, reported that AURICULA had struck a mine and asked for assistance for her wounded. It could be seen that she had not sunk and that a number of boats were in attendance. Later she drifted out of sight behind a merchant ship. At 1239, having heard nothing further, I asked the Senior Naval Officer (L) if he required any assistance, and at 1248 asked the Senior Officer, Minesweepers, to report the position regarding AURICULA. No news was received until 1530 when a staff officer from the Senior Naval Officer (L) arrived on board to see me. He seemed in some doubt as to who should have been in charge of the operation of salvaging AURICULA, which was still afloat. I explained to him that DEVONSHIRE would provide any assistance asked for but that the Senior Naval Officer (L) was in charge of the anchorage and would have to make the arrangements for towing AURICULA inshore. Hearing that the ship had a shaky bulkhead I sent a boat at 1545 with a Shipwright Officer, three Shipwrights and a load of wood to undertake the necessary shoring. This officer returned and reported to me about 1830 that the ship would undoubtedly sink before the morning, and should be beached as soon as possible. This was reported to the Flag Officer Commanding, Force "F," the Senior Naval Officer (L) and the Senior Officer, Minesweepers.

38. At 1300 three Potez aircraft were sighted over the target area. The air raid warning "Red" was hoisted and passed by W/T. At 1326 the hostile aircraft had disappeared and orders were given to revert to 15 minutes notice.

39. At 0758 the Senior Naval Officer (L) informed me that Captain (D), 12th Destroyer Flotilla had been asked to send EASEDALE to oil DEVONSHIRE as soon as PAKENHAM had fuelled. At 0852 Captain (D), 12th Destroyer Flotilla informed me that DERWENTDALE, alongside whom he was lying, considered the weather unsuitable for berthing alongside. I replied to the effect that I did not wish to oil in any case until my role as bombarding ship had come to an end. During the afternoon EASEDALE anchored in my

vicinity and I asked her whether she could come alongside in the weather conditions then prevailing and was informed that she could. Arrangements were therefore made to get her alongside with the last of the light so that I could complete with oil before the moon rose. These arrangements unfortunately clashed with Captain (D), 12th Destroyer Flotilla's organisation, and subsequently led to EASEDALE being emptied of oil at a time when she was required for fuelling destroyers. EASEDALE is more handy than DERWENTDALE and can come alongside under worse weather conditions.

40. About 1630 your signal timed 1533 was received which suggested that the anchorage could not be considered safe from submarine attack and that I should proceed to join your flag before dark. To comply meant proceeding immediately and the sudden removal of the ship would have broken an important line of army communication without adequate warning. I also considered it important to complete with fuel, for which arrangements were already in train, and proposed in my signal timed 1657 to join you in the morning. This signal was repeated to the Senior Naval Officer (L) and cleared to KEREN at 1738. It was subsequently approved by your signal timed 2057.

41. Before proceeding, arrangements were made for PAKENHAM to take over the line of communication with F.O.O. 2 who had not been heard since 1622 and she was subsequently told to confirm that she had made touch (my signal timed 0610/6th May and PAKENHAM's signal timed 0743/6th May which reported that communications had not been re-established with F.O.O. 2 until 0733/6th May).

42. The LINDZ, a small black yacht, wearing the Red Ensign entered harbour at 1510 and proceeded into Ambararata Bay. After enquiries, FREESIA reported that she had been examined by GENISTA.

43. ANTHONY arrived at 1512 proceeding up the anchorage at high speed. I thought it advisable to warn her that the anchorage was mined.

44. Three French Morane fighters were sighted at 1707 machine gunning Blue Beach. Air raid warning "Red" was initiated immediately afterwards and repeated by the Flag Officer Commanding, Force "F", at 1728. No attacks on the fleet developed and the fighters were seen to disappear in a South Easterly direction and the air raid warning "White" was passed at 1731.

45. The moon rose at 2213, oiling was completed by 2300. EASEDALE was anchored and DEVONSHIRE slipped from her and proceeded to sea, passing Nosi Hara at 2341. It was assumed that my departure would be reported to the Senior Naval Officer (L) and as V/S signalling in the anchorage was undesirable no further signal reporting my movements was made. This was regretted later when the Senior Naval Officer (L)'s signal timed 0705 was received off Cape Amber asking me to engage the French warship that was making a nuisance of herself in English Bay.

Bombardment of the Oranjia Peninsula.

46. At 0553 the Flag Officer Commanding, Force "F" 's signal timed 0350 was received ordering DEVONSHIRE to be ready to bombard the Oranjia Peninsula by 1200. Course was altered for Cape Amber which was passed