

screen, course having been altered to 340 degrees at 1635. Our destroyers were well clear of the smoke by 1700 but the enemy were out of sight, evidently having retired at high speed to the Westward and South-westward.

47. Between 1640 and 1925 a series of heavy bombing attacks were made on our fleet by enemy aircraft operating from shore bases. WARSPITE was bombed at 1641, 1715, 1735, 1823 and 1911. EAGLE was bombed at 1743, 1809, 1826, 1842 and 1900. These two ships received the most attention but the 7th Cruiser Squadron received numerous attacks and many bombs fell near the destroyers. In some cases attacks were made from a considerable height. There were no hits and the fleet suffered no damage but there were numerous near misses and a few minor casualties from splinters. MALAYA claimed to have damaged two aircraft with A.A. fire but no enemy machines were definitely seen to crash.

48. From 1700 the fleet steered 270 degrees, the destroyers forming Cruising Order No. 3 in company with the 7th Cruiser Squadron to the Northward of WARSPITE. By 1735 the fleet was within 25 miles of the coast of Calabria and course was altered to 200 degrees. When, however, it became clear that the enemy had no intention of resuming the fight and could not be intercepted before making Messina, course was altered to 160 degrees at 1830 to open the land and to 130 degrees at 1930.

49. After the action, as subsequently reported by WARSPITE's aircraft, the enemy fleet was left in considerable confusion, all units making off at high speed to the South-west and Westward towards the Straits of Messina and Port Augusta. It was not until 1800 that they sorted themselves out, the cruiser squadrons taking station to the South-eastward of their battleships and destroyers to the North-west and astern of them. The last enemy report was received from WARSPITE's aircraft at 1905 and the enemy fleet was then in position 37° 54' N, 16° 21' E, i.e. about 10 miles off Cape Spartivento, steering 230 degrees at 18 knots.

They were attacked by their own bombers at 1705 and again at 1857. No hits were observed.

50. At 2115 course was altered to 220 degrees for a position South of Malta. There were no incidents during the night.

51. The following destroyers were detached so as to arrive at Malta at 0500.—STUART, DAINITY, DEFENDER, HYPERION, HOSTILE, HASTY, ILEX, JUNO. (STUART arrived with only 15 tons of fuel remaining).

52. At 0800 the fleet was in position 35° 24' N, 15° 27' E., steering West, and remained cruising to the South of Malta throughout the day while destroyers were fuelled.

53. An air raid took place on Malta at 0855 but no destroyers were hit. Three or four enemy aircraft were shot down.

54. The first batch of destroyers completed fuelling at 1115 and rejoined the Commander-in-Chief at 1525. HERO, HEReward, DECOY, VAMPIRE and VOYAGER were then sent in, the last three to sail with convoy M.S. One after refuelling. At 2030 ROYAL SOVEREIGN with NUBIAN, MOHAWK and JANUS were sent in, and GLOUCESTER and

STUART were detached to join convoy M.F. One which had been sailed from Malta by the Vice-Admiral, Malta, at 2300 on 9th July escorted by DIAMOND, JERVIS, and VEN-DETTA.

55. Flying boat reconnaissance of Augusta had located 3 cruisers and 8 destroyers in harbour and at 1850 EAGLE's striking force was flown off to carry out a dusk attack. Unfortunately these forces had left harbour before the striking force arrived. One flight, however, located a destroyer of the NAVIGATORI class in a small bay to the Northward and sank it. The other flight returned without having dropped torpedoes. The striking force landed at Malta on completion of the operation.

56. At 2000 the 7th Cruiser Squadron was detached to search to the Eastward in the wake of convoy M.F. One.

57. At 2100 the fleet was in position 35° 28' N, 14° 30' E., steering 180 degrees. There were no incidents during the night.

*Thursday, 11th July.*

58. At 0130 course was altered to 000 degrees so as to be in position 35° 10' N, 15° 00' E., at 0800. ROYAL SOVEREIGN, with HERO, HEReward, NUBIAN, MOHAWK and JANUS, rejoined from Malta at this time and EAGLE landed on the striking force from Malta.

59. At 0900 the Commander-in-Chief in WARSPITE screened by NUBIAN, MOHAWK, JUNO and JANUS, proceeded ahead at 19 knots to return to Alexandria. The Rear-Admiral, 1st Battle Squadron, in ROYAL SOVEREIGN, with EAGLE and MALAYA and remaining destroyers, proceeded on a mean line of advance of 080 degrees at 12 knots to cover the passage of the convoys.

60. The fleet was again subjected to heavy bombing attacks. Between 1248 and 1815 five attacks were made on WARSPITE and attendant destroyers, 66 bombs being dropped. Between 1112 and 1804, twelve attacks were carried out on the forces in company with the Rear-Admiral, 1st Battle Squadron, about 120 bombs being dropped, and four bombing attacks were carried out on convoy M.S. One. There was no damage and no casualties. It was noted that the ship was shadowed by aircraft who transmitted "longs" by W/T at intervals in order to direct attacking aircraft.

61. At 1500 convoy M.S. One was passed and VAMPIRE relieved JANUS on WARSPITE's screen, JANUS remaining with the convoy.

62. WARSPITE was in position 34° 22' N, 19° 17' E., steering 110 degrees at 2100.

*Friday, 12th July.*

63. There were no incidents during the night. Course was altered from time to time during the day to throw off shadowing and attacking aircraft. At 0700, Vice-Admiral (D) with the 7th Cruiser Squadron rejoined the Commander-in-Chief and was then detached with ORION and NEPTUNE to join convoy M.F. One, LIVERPOOL and SYDNEY remaining in company with WARSPITE.

64. The following bombing attacks took place during the day:—

Between 0850 and 1150 seventeen attacks were made on WARSPITE, about 300 bombs being dropped.