

14. The Navigating Officer, Lieutenant Commander Gill, who controlled the ship under my orders carried out his duties in a most calm and exemplary manner, on one or two occasions when the whole H.A. armament was firing he had considerable difficulty in passing helm orders to the Quartermaster in the Upper Conning Tower but I do not think that this in any way caused the ship to be hit. The delay in giving helm orders in one or two cases was perhaps half a minute.

15. In the attacks up to date and in the last one which I am about to describe, it is estimated that four or five enemy aircraft were shot down but the Air Defence Officer informs me that he did not until the very end engage those torpedo bombers which had dropped their torpedoes but kept his fire for further aircraft approaching. I had previously told the Gunner Officer that there was not to be any wasteful expenditure of H.A. ammunition.

16. The enemy attacks were without doubt magnificently carried out and pressed well home. The high level bombers kept tight formation and appeared not to jink. I only observed one torpedo bomber who apparently had cold feet and fired his torpedoes at a distance of at least two miles from the ship. The torpedoes ran very straight and the tracks were exceptionally easy to see in the calm water and the torpedoes appeared to be running shallow although one of the last hits was observed to be under the starboard bilge keel between 87 and 102 stations, when the ship finally rolled over. I think the ship had a list to port at the time of this hit.

17. I had intended to recover the Walrus aircraft at 1215. Under the circumstances this became impossible. She subsequently made a forced landing on the sea and was towed into harbour by STRONGHOLD.

#### *Fifth and Last Attack.*

18. The respite from the previous attack was brief. Torpedo bomber aircraft seemed to appear from several directions and the second torpedo hit the ship in the vicinity of the Gun-room and apparently jammed the rudder, and although the ship was still steaming at well over twenty knots she was not under control. Shortly after this at least three torpedoes hit the ship, two being on the port side and one on the starboard side. I knew now that she could not survive and at once gave the order for everyone to come on deck and to cast loose Carley floats. It has been learnt that the broadcasting apparatus was still working throughout the ship with the exception of the compartments down below aft but word was quickly passed down from Y turret and the after control. The decision for a Commanding Officer to make to cease all work in the ship below is an exceedingly difficult one, but I felt very sure that she would not survive four torpedoes and this was borne out for she only remained afloat about six or seven minutes after I gave the order for everyone to come on deck. I attribute the fact that so many men were fortunately able to be saved to these six or seven minutes, combined with the fact that the broadcast apparatus was still in action.

19. When these final two or three torpedoes detonated the ship rapidly commenced to take up a heavy list to port. Men were now pouring

up on deck. They had all been warned, 24 hours before, to carry or wear their lifesaving apparatus. When the ship had a 30 degrees list to port I looked over the starboard side of the Bridge and saw the Commander and two or three hundred men collecting on the starboard side. I never saw the slightest sign of panic or ill discipline. I told them from the Bridge how well they had fought the ship and wished them good luck. The ship hung for at least a minute and a half to two minutes with a list of about 60 degrees or 70 degrees to port and then rolled over at 1233.

20. With the exception of those officers I have mentioned who were immediately under my notice I find it very difficult specially to recommend any particular officer or man for decoration because every officer and man in the ship carried out his duties to the utmost, and it is possible that if comparison could be made, many of those who were lost are of all the most deserving.

21. Destroyers VAMPIRE and ELECTRA immediately closed and picked up survivors. They did their work in a most efficient manner and I cannot say enough of their work of rescue and care of the ship's company on the way back to harbour. ELECTRA subsequently went off to assist in searching the water round PRINCE OF WALES for survivors while we did the same on the Bridge of VAMPIRE on whose Bridge I was, and I am very certain that no one surviving was left.

22. From what I saw myself and reports I have received the work of the medical officers was tireless and beyond all praise.

(Signed) WILLIAM TENNANT.  
Captain, R.N.

14th December, 1941.

#### REPORT BY LIEUTENANT COMMANDER A. G. SKIPWITH, R.N.

*Singapore.*

12th December, 1941.

I have the honour to submit, in accordance with Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet signal 0946GH/11th December, the following brief narrative of events leading to the loss of H.M.S. PRINCE OF WALES.

2. At the time of the first air attack the squadron was returning to Singapore under the orders of Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet.

3. At 1113 on 10th December fire was opened on eight twin engined high level bombers which attacked REPULSE in close formation.

4. At 1141½ fire was opened on nine torpedo bombers which attacked H.M.S. PRINCE OF WALES from the port side. The ship was hit by a torpedo at 1144 in a position approximately abreast P 3 and P.4 turrets. The damage caused by this hit was as follows and the result apparent before the next attack developed.

(a) The ship assumed a list of 11½° to port and increased her trim by the stern, the port side of the quarterdeck being awash by 1220.

(b) "B" Engine Room, "Y" Boiler Room, the port Diesel Room and "Y" Action Machinery Room flooded.

(c) Both propeller shafts stopped.