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TUESDAY, 13 APRIL, 1915

*Admiralty,
13th April 1915*

The following despatch has been received from Rear Admiral the Hon Horace L. A. Hood C B M V O D S O reporting the proceedings of the flotilla off the coast of Belgium between 17th October and 9th November 1914 —

Office of Rear Admiral
Dover Patrol
11th November 1914

SIR — I have the honour to report the proceedings of the flotilla acting off the coast of Belgium between October 17th and November 9th

The flotilla was organised to prevent the movement of large bodies of German troops along the coast roads from Ostend to Nieuport to support the left flank of the Belgian Army and to prevent any movement by sea of the enemy's troops

Operations commenced during the night of October 17th when the *Attentive* flying my flag accompanied by the monitors *Severn*, *Humber* and *Mersey* the light cruiser *Foresight* and several torpedo

boat destroyers, arrived and anchored off Nieuport Pier

Early on the morning of the 18th October information was received that German infantry were advancing on Westende village, and that a battery was in action at Westende Bains. The flotilla at once proceeded up past Westende and Middlekirke to draw the fire and endeavour to silence the guns

A brisk shrapnel fire was opened from the shore which was immediately replied to and this commenced the naval operations on the coast which continued for more than three weeks without intermission

During the first week the enemy's troops were endeavouring to push forward along the coast roads and a large accumulation of transport existed within reach of the naval guns

On October 18th machine guns from the *Severn* were landed at Nieuport to assist in the defence, and Lieutenant E. S. Wise fell gallantly leading his men

The *Amazon*, flying my flag was badly holed on the waterline and was sent to England for repairs and during these early days most of the vessels suffered casualties chiefly from shrapnel shell from the field guns of the enemy

The presence of the ships on the coast soon

caused alterations in the enemy's plans, less and less of their troops were seen, while more and more heavy guns were gradually mounted among the sand dunes that fringe the coast.

It soon became evident that more and heavier guns were required in the flotilla. The Scouts therefore returned to England, while H.M.S. "Venerable" and several older cruisers, sloops and gunboats arrived to carry on the operations.

Five French torpedo-boat destroyers were placed under my orders by Admiral Favereau, and on the 30th October I had the honour of hoisting my flag in the "Intrepide," and leading the French flotilla into action off Lombartzyde. The greatest harmony and enthusiasm existed between the allied flotillas.

As the heavier guns of the enemy came into play it was inevitable that the casualties of the flotilla increased, the most important being the disablement of the 6-inch turret and several shots on the waterline of the "Mersey," the death of the Commanding Officer and eight men and the disablement of 16 others in the "Falcon," which vessel came under a heavy fire when guarding the "Venerable" against submarine attack; the "Wildfire" and "Vestal" were badly holed, and a number of casualties caused in the "Brilliant" and "Rinaldo."

Enemy submarines were seen and torpedoes were fired, and during the latter part of the operations the work of the torpedo craft was chiefly confined to the protection of the larger ships.

It gradually became apparent that the rush of the enemy along the coast had been checked, that the operations were developing into a trench warfare, and that the work of the flotilla had, for the moment, ceased.

The arrival of allied reinforcements and the inundation of the country surrounding Nieupoort rendered the further presence of the ships unnecessary.

The work of the squadron was much facilitated by the efforts of Colonel Bridges, attached to the Belgian Headquarters, and to him I am greatly indebted for his constant and unflinching support.

I would like especially to bring to your notice:—

Captaine de fregate Richard, of the "Dunois," Senior Officer of the French flotilla, whose courtesy and gallantry assisted to make the operations a success.

Captain C. D. Johnson, M.V.O., in charge of 6th Destroyer Flotilla.

Commander Eric J. A. Fullerton, in command of the monitors, whose ships were constantly engaged in the inshore fighting.

Commander A. D. M. Cherry, of the "Vestal," who commanded the sloops, which were constantly engaged for the whole period. He remained in command of the flotilla after my departure on 7th November, and continued the bombardment on 8th November, returning to England the next day.

Commander H. C. Halahan, of the "Bustard," whose gunboat was constantly in action close to the shore.

Commander A. L. Snagge, of the "Humber."

Commander H. G. L. Oliphant, of the "Amazon."

Lieutenant-Commander R. A. Wilson, of the "Mersey."

Lieutenant-Commander G. L. D. Gibbs, of the "Crusader," in which ship my flag was hoisted during most of the operations.

Lieutenant-Commander J. B. Adams, R.N.R., on my staff.

Lieutenant H. O. Wauton, of the "Falcon," who maintained his position in a heavy fire on the look-out for submarines, and was unfortunately killed.

Lieutenant H. O. Joyce, of the "Vestal," who was badly wounded by a shell, but rallied his men to attend to the wounded, and then got his gun again into action.

Sub-Lieutenant C. J. H. DuBoulay, of the "Falcon," who took command of his ship after the Captain and 24 men were killed and wounded.

Petty-Officer Robert Chappell, O.N. 207788, of the "Falcon," who, though both legs were shattered and he was dying, continued to try and assist in the tending of the wounded. He shortly afterwards died of his wounds.

Petty-Officer Fredk. William Motteram, of the "Falcon," O.N. 183216, for immediate attention to the wounded under fire on 28th October.

Able Seaman Ernest Dimmock, of the "Falcon," O.N. 204549, who directly the casualties occurred in "Falcon," finding himself the only person unwounded on deck, went immediately to the helm and coned the ship.

Herbert Edward Sturman, of the "Mersey," Boy, 1st class O.N.J. 24887, who, when wounded by shrapnel, continued to serve the guns.

Leading Seaman John Thos. Knott, O.N.J. 1186, of the "Brilliant," who, when all men at his gun being killed or wounded, and himself severely wounded, endeavoured to fight his gun.

The following are specially recommended by their Commanding Officers for their good behaviour and coolness under fire:—

Chief Engine Room Artificer William Ernest Brading, of the "Falcon," O.N. 268579.

Private R.M.L.I. Alfred J. Foster, of the "Brilliant," O.N. Ch./10605.

Petty-Officer Sydney Edric Murphy, of the "Mersey," O.N. 190841.

Petty-Officer Henry Sayce, of the "Mersey," O.N. 132956.

Herbert Edward Sturman (Boy), of the "Mersey," O.N. J. 24887.

Leading Signalman Cyril Henry Swan, of the "Sirius," R.F.R., O.N. 230592.

Petty-Officer James Weatherhead, of the "Rinaldo," O.N. 127747.

Leading Seaman John Keane, of the "Rinaldo," O.N. 204128.

Private R.M.L.I. Joseph Martin, of the "Humber" (who landed with Marine detachment), O.N. Ch./15582.

Stoker, 1st, Samuel Johnston, of the "Humber," O.N. Ch./282822 (R.F.R. Ch.B. 4090).

Petty-Officer Robt. Frederick Jennings, of the "Vestal," O.N. 157343 (R.F.R. Po. B. 1481).

Petty-Officer Charles Henry Sutton, of the "Vestal," O.N. 158086.

Leading Seaman Frederick Stanley Woodruff, of the "Vestal," O.N. 237062.

Able Seaman William Chapman, of the "Vestal," O.N. 183312 (R.F.R. Po. B. 1666).

Officer's Steward James Whiteman, of the "Vestal," O.N. L. 1275.

I beg to append a list of the vessels engaged.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

HORACE HOOD,

Rear-Admiral, Dover Patrol.

The Secretary of the Admiralty.

Enclosure to Rear-Admiral Hood's despatch of the 11th November.

LIST OF SHIPS WHICH TOOK PART IN OPERATIONS OFF BELGIAN COAST.

- "Venerable," Captain V. H. G. Bernard.
- "Attentive," Captain C. D. Johnson, M.V.O.
- "Foresight," Captain H. N. Garnett.
- "Brilliant," Captain (ret.) H. Christian.
- "Sirius," Commander (ret.) W. H. Boys.
- "Severn," Commander E. J. A. Fullerton.
- "Humber," Commander A. L. Snagge.
- "Mersey," Lieutenant-Commander R. A. Wilson.
- "Vestal," Commander A. D. M. Cherry.
- "Rinaldo," Commander H. J. Kennard.
- "Wildfire," Commander E. Altham.

- "Bustard," Commander H. C. Halahan.
- "Excellent," Lieutenant-Commander (ret.) E. A. Digby.
- "Crane," Commander R. H. Coppinger.
- "Falcon," Lieutenant H. O. Wauton (killed).
- "Flirt," Lieutenant H. S. Braddyll.
- "Mermaid," Lieutenant P. R. P. Percival.
- "Myrmidon," Lieutenant-Commander (ret.) R. H. B. Hammond-Chambers.
- "Racehorse," Lieutenant E. P. U. Pender.
- "Syren," Commander T. C. H. Williams.
- "Amazon," Commander H. G. L. Oliphant.
- "Cossack," Lieutenant-Commander G. C. Harrison.
- "Crusader," Lieutenant-Commander G. L. D. Gibbs.
- "Maori," Lieutenant-Commander B. W. Barrow.
- "Mohawk," Commander E. R. G. R. Evans, C.B.
- "Hazard," Commander N. E. Archdale.
- "Nubian," Commander C. E. Cundall.
- "Viking," Lieutenant J. P. Gibbs.
- Submarine C. 32, Lieutenant-Commander B. V. Layard.
- Submarine C. 34, Lieutenant-Commander J. F. Hutchings.
- "Dunois," Capitaine de fregate Richard.
- "Capitaine Mehl," Lieutenant de vaisseau Rossignal.
- "Francis-Garnier," Lieutenant de vaisseau de Pianelli.
- "Intrepide," Lieutenant de vaisseau Vaudier.
- "Aventurier," Lieutenant de vaisseau Semichon.

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