



SECOND SUPPLEMENT

TO

The London Gazette

Of TUESDAY, the 7th of DECEMBER, 1915.

Published by Authority.

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WEDNESDAY, 8 DECEMBER, 1915.

Admiralty, 8th December, 1915.

The following Despatch has been received from the Commander-in-Chief, Cape of Good Hope Station:—

“Challenger,”
15th July, 1915.

Sir,—Be pleased to lay before their Lordships the following report of the operations against the “Königsberg” on the 6th and 11th instant:—

In accordance with orders issued by me, the various vessels concerned took up their appointed stations on the 5th July, in readiness for the operations on the following day.

At 4.15 a.m. on the 6th July, H.M.S. “Severn,” Captain Eric J. A. Fullerton, R.N., and H.M.S. “Mersey,” Commander Robert A. Wilson, weighed and proceeded across the bar into the Kikunja branch of the Rufiji river, which they entered about 5.20 a.m.

The “Severn” was anchored head and stern and fire was opened on the “Königsberg” by 6.30 a.m. The “Mersey” was similarly moored and opened fire shortly after.

Both Monitors were fired on with 3-pounders, pom-poms and machine-guns when entering the river and on their way up, and they replied to the fire.

At 5.25 a.m. an aeroplane, with Flight-Commander Harold E. M. Watkins as pilot, and carrying six bombs, left the aerodrome on Mafia Island. The bombs were dropped at the “Königsberg” with the intention of hampering any interference she might attempt with the Monitors while they were getting into position.

At 5.40 a.m. another aeroplane, with Flight-Commander John T. Cull as pilot, and Flight Sub-Lieutenant Harwood J. Arnold as observer, left the aerodrome for the purpose of spotting for the Monitors.

At 5.45 a.m. I transferred my Flag to the “Weymouth,” Captain Denis B. Crampton, M.V.O., and at 6.30 a.m. proceeded across the bar, with the Whalers “Echo” and “Fly” sweeping, and the “Childers” sounding ahead; the “Pyramus,” Commander Viscount Kelburn, being in company.

The “Weymouth” grounded on the bar for a few minutes on the way across, but soon came off with the rising tide, and advanced as far as the entrance to the river, where she anchored.

Fire from small guns was opened on her, and on the Whalers, from the shore, but beyond one shell, which struck the “Fly,” no damage was sustained. A few rounds from the

6-inch guns put a stop to the firing, although it was impossible to locate the position of the guns owing to their being concealed amongst the trees and dense undergrowth.

After anchoring, the "Weymouth" did what was possible to assist the Monitors by bombarding at long range a position at Pemba, where a spotting and observation station was supposed to be, and by keeping down the enemy's fire at the aeroplanes. This was done very effectively.

At the same time the "Pioneer," Commander (Acting) Thomas W. Biddlecombe, R.A.N., under the orders of "Hyacinth," Captain David M. Anderson, M.V.O., engaged the defences at the Ssimba Uranga Mouth, her fire being returned until the defences were silenced.

Returning to the operations of the Monitors; fire was opened, as before stated, at 6.30 a.m., but as the "Königsberg" was out of sight it was very difficult to obtain satisfactory results, and the difficulties of the observers in the aeroplanes in marking the fall of the shots which fell amongst the trees were very great, and made systematic shooting most difficult.

There being only two aeroplanes available, considerable intervals elapsed between the departure of one and the arrival of its relief from the aerodrome 30 miles distant, and this resulted in a loss of shooting efficiency.

At 12.35 one of the aeroplanes broke down, and at 3.50 the second one also. I signalled to Captain Fullerton to move further up the river, which he did, until about 12.50 the tops of the "Königsberg's" masts were visible.

The "Königsberg" kept up a heavy fire on the Monitors until about 12.30, when her fire slackened. At 2.40 p.m. she ceased firing, having for some time limited her fire to one gun. At 3.30 p.m. the Monitors ceased fire, and retired out of the river, rejoining my Flag off Komā Island at 6 p.m. On their way out they were again attacked by the small guns from the banks.

I had returned over the bar in "Weymouth" at 12.30 p.m., and transferred to "Hyacinth" at 3.0 p.m.

The "Mersey" had four men killed and four wounded, two of whom have since died, and her foremost 6-in. gun, at which most of the casualties occurred, was put out of action. The "Severn" fortunately suffered no losses or damage.

The various ships, whalers, tugs, &c., anchored for the night off the Delta, and proceeded to their various stations for coaling, &c., the following morning.

In view of the many difficulties in the way, and the heavy and accurate fire to which the monitors were subjected, I consider that the operations on 6th July, though not a complete and final success, are creditable to Captain Fullerton and Commander Wilson.

As it was necessary to make a fresh attack on the "Königsberg" to complete her destruction, further operations were carried out on the 11th July, by which date the aeroplanes were again ready for service, and the monitors had made good certain defects and completed with coal.

I reinforced the crew of the "Severn" by Acting Sub-Lieutenant Arthur G. Mack, with six Petty Officers and men; and the crew

of the "Mersey" by Lieutenant Richard Ussher and Lieutenant Rundle B. Watson, with six Petty Officers and men. All the above were drawn from "Hyacinth."

The attack was carried out on the same lines as on the previous occasion, and the same mouth of the river was used.

The monitors crossed the bar at 11.45 a.m., followed up to the entrance by "Weymouth" and "Pyramus," the latter proceeding three miles inside, and both searching the banks. "Hyacinth" and "Pioneer" bombarded the Ssimba Uranga entrance.

On this occasion the monitors did not fire simultaneously; the "Mersey" remained under way, and fired while "Severn" moored, and ceased fire when "Severn" commenced.

The "Severn" was moored in a position 1,000 yards closer to the enemy than on the 6th July, which made her fire much more effective.

The observers in the aeroplanes, by their excellent spotting, soon got the guns on the target, and hit after hit was rapidly signalled. At 12.50 it was reported that the "Königsberg" was on fire.

As previously arranged with Captain Fullerton, as soon as they had got the situation well in hand, the monitors moved up the river, and completed the destruction of the "Königsberg" by 2.30 p.m., when I ordered them to withdraw.

The "Königsberg" is now a complete wreck, having suffered from shells, fire and explosions, several of which latter were observed.

The only casualties sustained were three men slightly wounded in the "Mersey." There were no casualties in "Severn."

By 8.0 p.m. all ships, except those detached on patrol, had returned.

I have much pleasure in bringing to the notice of their Lordships the names of the following Officers and men:—

Captain Eric J. A. Fullerton, H.M.S. "Severn."

Commander Robert A. Wilson, H.M.S. "Mersey."

Captain Denis B. Crampton, M.V.O., H.M.S. "Weymouth."

Commander The Hon. Robert O. B. Bridgeman.

Squadron Commander Robert Gordon, in command of the Air Squadron.

Flight Commander John T. Cull.

Flight Lieutenant Vivian G. Blackburn.

Flight Sub-Lieutenant Harwood J. Arnold.

Flight Lieutenant Harold E. M. Watkins.

Assistant Paymaster Harold G. Badger, H.M.S. "Hyacinth." This Officer volunteered to observe during the first attack on the "Königsberg," though he had had no previous experience of flying.

Acting Lieutenant Alan G. Bishop, Royal Marine Light Infantry, of H.M.S. "Hyacinth." This Officer volunteered to observe during the second attack on the "Königsberg," though he had had no previous experience of flying.

Air Mechanic Ebenezer Henry Alexander Boggis, Chatham 14849, who went up on the 25th April with Flight Commander Cull, and photographed the "Königsberg" at a height of 700 feet. They were heavily fired on, and the engine of the machine was badly damaged.

Most serious risks have been run by the officers and men who have flown in this climate, where the effect of the atmosphere and the extreme heat of the sun are quite unknown to those whose flying experience is limited to moderate climates. "Bumps" of 250 feet have been experienced several times, and the temperature varies from extreme cold when flying at a height to a great heat, with burning, tropical sun, when on land.

In the operations against the "Königsberg" on the 6th July both the *personnel* and *materiel* of the Royal Naval Air Service were worked to the extreme limit of endurance. The total distance covered by the two available aeroplanes on that date was no less than 950 miles, and the time in the air, working watch and watch, was 13 hours.

I will sum up by saying that the Flying Officers, one and all, have earned my highest commendations.

Chief Carpenter William J. Leverett, H.M.S. "Hyacinth." This Officer was in charge of the fitting out of the two Monitors.

I also desire to bring to their Lordships' notice the Master of the tug "Revenger," John Osment Richards, and the following members of her crew, who most readily volunteered to serve in their tug and to proceed into the river to the assistance of the Monitors and tow them out if necessary:—

Frank Walker, Navigating Master.

George Edward Milton, Mate.

Frederick James Kennedy, Chief Engineer.

Lewis John Hills, Second Engineer.

Sidney Robert Rayner, Third Engineer.

The four tugs "Blackcock," "Revenger," "Sarah Joliffe," and "T. A. Joliffe" were manned by Naval Officers and men, with the exception of the above named, and although their services were not called for I consider the example they set was most praiseworthy.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

H. KING HALL,

Vice-Admiral,

Commander in Chief.

Admiralty, 8th December, 1915.

His Majesty The KING has been graciously pleased to give orders for the appointment of the following Officers to the Distinguished Service Order, in recognition of their services, as mentioned, on the occasion of the operations against the "Königsberg":—

Captain Eric John Arthur Fullerton, R.N.

Was in charge of the two Monitors, and conducted the operations in the river with complete success.

Commander Robert Amcotts Wilson, R.N.

These two Officers had to deal with a very difficult task, entering a river of which very imperfect information was obtainable, against an unknown and invisible defence, which might well have been very serious, and there is no doubt that the Monitors were

most fortunate in not being more severely handled by the enemy.

Squadron Commander Robert Gordon, R.N.A.S. (Captain, temporary Major, R.M.).

Was in command of the Air Squadron. Was indefatigable in his work, and ran great risks in spotting and reconnoitring.

Flight Commander John Tulloch Cull, R.N.A.S. (Lieutenant, R.N.).

Flight Sub-Lieutenant Harwood James Arnold, R.N.A.S.

Flight Commander Cull and Flight Sub-Lieutenant Arnold were spotting on the 11th July, under fire, in a Biplane, when the enemy's fire damaged it so that it descended in a quarter of an hour from 3,200 feet to 2,000 feet. During this time no attempt was made to return to Headquarters at Mafia, although it was obvious that this could not be done unless a start was made at once.

Flight Sub-Lieutenant Arnold continued to send his spotting signals the whole time, and when a quarter of an hour later the machine was again hit and forced to descend, Flight Commander Cull controlled the machine and Flight Sub-Lieutenant Arnold continued to send spotting corrections to the last, after warning the Monitors that they were coming down, and would endeavour to land near them.

The aeroplane finally came down in the river, turning over and over. Flight Commander Cull was nearly drowned, but was assisted by Flight Sub-Lieutenant Arnold, and both were rescued by a boat from the "Mersey."

The following Petty Officers and men have been awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for their services on the same occasion:—

H.M.S. "Severn."

Chief Petty Officer William J. Sercombe, O.N. 163215.

Able Seaman George A. Hogg, O.N. 202097 (R.F.R.).

Leading Telegraphist Percival Jacobs, O.N. J34831.

Shipwright (2nd Class) William Sheppard, O.N. 346098.

Private Edward Redhead, R.M.L.I. (R.F.R., Plym. 9481).

H.M.S. "Mersey."

Chief Yeoman of Signals E. W. Pettin-gale, O.N. 148718.

Able Seaman H. J. Carter, O.N. 217542. Able Seaman William Corry, O.N. 190507 (R.F.R. Ch.B. 7705).

Stoker (2nd Class) Richard Thompson, O.N. 105721.

Royal Naval Air Service.

Air Mechanic Ebenezer Henry Alexander Boggis, O.N. 14849.

