

Stroom Bank Buoy, accounts for the failure to block Ostend Harbour. There is no discredit to anyone; indeed, none could have carried out their duties more admirably than did the Ostend forces on this occasion.

(b.) I anticipate success in the new endeavour, the undertaking of which has only been waiting favourable weather conditions during the last few days.

(c.) The lion's share of the work was, of course, done by the C.M.B.'s, M.L.'s, and blockships.

I have, &c.,

HUBERT LYNES,

Commodore, Dunkirk.

Vice-Admiral Sir Roger Keyes, K.C.B.,

C.M.G., M.V.O., D.S.O., R.N.,

Dover.

OSTEND OPERATIONS.

May 10, 1918.

Fleet House, Dover,

June 15, 1918.

(No. 2305/003.)

SIR,

Be pleased to lay before the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty the following report on the renewed attempt made in the early morning of the 10th May, 1918, to block the entrance of the Ostend-Bruges Canal by sinking the "Vindictive" therein.

2. When I learnt on the 23rd April that the attempt to block Ostend had not succeeded, I represented to their Lordships the desirability of repeating the operation at once. The "Vindictive," the only vessel available at the moment, being placed at my disposal, every effort was made to repair the damage she had suffered and fit her out before the expiration of the period in which the tide and darkness suited, *i.e.*, about four days. This was accomplished at Dover, thanks to the strenuous efforts of Rear-Admiral C. F. Dampier, the Superintendent of the Dockyard, and his small staff; the services of Engineer Commander Henry F. Bell, R.N., and Mr. A. J. Luke being particularly valuable.

Two hundred tons of cement were put into the "Vindictive's" after magazines and upper bunkers on both sides, which was all her draught would permit her to carry, in view of the depth of water in the approaches to Ostend Harbour.

Major-General Sir William Hickey, K.C.B., Commanding Dover Garrison, most helpfully provided men for filling bags with cement and putting them on board.

3. As already reported in my last despatch, Commander Alfred E. Godsal, R.N., and Lieutenant-Commander Henry N. M. Hardy, D.S.O., R.N., of the "Brilliant" and "Sirius" respectively, had begged to be allowed to make another attempt, and had reported that all their officers and Petty-Officer Joseph J. Reed of the "Brilliant," had volunteered for this service. As Commander Godsal had led the previous attack, he was given command of the "Vindictive," and Lieutenant Victor A. C. Crutchley, R.N., Sub-Lieutenant Angus H. Maclachlan, R.N., and Petty-Officer Joseph J. Reed, all of the "Brilliant," accompanied him. Engineer Commander William A. Bury, R.N., however, claimed his right to remain in the "Vindictive." This very gallant officer, who greatly distinguished

himself on the 23rd April, represented that his knowledge of the engines and boilers of his ship should be utilised. He further begged that Engine Room Artificers Hubert Cavanagh, Norman Carroll, Alan Thomas, and Herbert Alfred Harris, who also volunteered, might be allowed to remain with him. I acceded to his request.

Lieutenant Sir John Alleyne, D.S.C., R.N., of H.M.S. "Lord Clive," who had been most useful in fitting up the navigational arrangements which were destroyed on the 23rd April, asked to be allowed to navigate the vessel during the operation. I approved of this request, feeling that this officer's experience and intimate knowledge of the shoals and currents on the Belgian coast would be of great value to the Commander of the "Vindictive."

The crew were selected from a very large number of volunteers from vessels of the Dover Patrol.

4. The "Vindictive" was in all respects ready by the desired date, but the weather was unfavourable, and the operation had to be postponed until the necessary condition of tide and darkness recurred. This delay made it possible to prepare a second ship, the old cruiser "Sappho," which was taken from Southampton to Chatham and fitted out by Chatham Dockyard with the greatest celerity and thoroughness.

5. Lieutenant-Commander Hardy took command of her, and he was accompanied by all the officers of the "Sirius," Lieutenant Edward L. Berthon, D.S.C., R.N., Sub-Lieutenant Alfred V. Knight, R.N.R., and Engineer-Lieutenant William R. McLaren, R.N. Her crew were selected from a very large number of volunteers in the Royal Naval Barracks at Chatham.

6. Aerial observation on the 9th May showed that many torpedo and submarine craft were still shut up in Bruges, and proved that the effectiveness of the blocking of the Zeebrugge branch of the canal was maintained up to that date. Although the craft so shut up in Bruges have been unable to use the small waterways to Ostend, the latter port was still being used by enemy torpedo craft and submarines.

7. Other information, confirmed by aerial observation, also disclosed the fact that to counterbalance the forced inactivity of the craft in Bruges, and probably to resist any repetition of the April attack, a considerable number of German destroyers had joined those units of the Flanders force which were outside the canal on the night of the 22nd-23rd of that month.

8. Commodore Hubert Lynes, C.M.G., at Dunkirk, having so ably carried out the direction of the former attempt as part of the Zeebrugge and Ostend scheme, I entrusted the conduct of the operations on this occasion to him, placing under his orders all the monitors, destroyers, motor launches, and coastal motor boats required, in addition to the blocking ships "Vindictive" and "Sappho." On the evening of the 9th May, the weather conditions being most promising, the "Vindictive" and "Sappho" sailed in company to join Commodore Lynes at Dunkirk.

His report, which is attached, furnishes the details of the operation.

9. In order to prevent interference from Zeebrugge by the newly-arrived enemy destroyer force mentioned in paragraph 7