

H.M.S. "Warwick," flying my flag, and a division of destroyers consisting of H.M. Ships "Whirlwind," "Velox," and "Trident," under Captain Wilfred Tomkinson, R.N., cruised midway between Ostend and Zeebrugge.

10. Meanwhile the operation proceeded in accordance with the plan, except for the unfortunate breakdown of the "Sappho," due to a boiler accident, which reduced her speed to such an extent that she was unable to reach her destination in time to take part. This halved the chances of success, and was a great misfortune.

With regard to the proceedings of "Vindictive," I cannot do better than quote from the report of Lieutenant Victor Crutchley, on whom the command devolved when Commander Godsall was killed and Lieutenant Sir John Alleyne seriously wounded:—

"On arrival at position P, course was altered for the Stroom Bank Buoy. The boat marking the buoy was seen and left close on the port hand; the buoy was not seen. Speed was reduced to twelve knots on passing the buoy.

"At this time the smoke screen was excellent. There was a lane between the eastern and western sections, and the only fire experienced was shrapnel, which I considered was fired at a venture, and did no harm. We ran on for thirteen minutes from the Stroom Bank Buoy, and then, as the entrance was not sighted, altered course to the westward parallel to the shore, and reduced to 60 revolutions (nine knots). As we still failed to see the entrance we altered course 16 points to starboard, and returned along the shore to the eastward. We again failed to find the entrance, and so altered course 16 points to starboard. All this time, owing to fog and smoke, the visibility was not more than  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cables. This time the entrance was sighted about one cable on the port beam, and at the same time the ship came under a very heavy fire from shore batteries of all descriptions.

"On sighting the entrance, in accordance with previous orders, I passed the order 'preparatory abandon ship' to the engine-room. As soon as the entrance was sighted the ship was handled from the conning tower. Commander Godsall immediately turned up for the entrance and ordered smoke to be lighted. At about this time communication with the after control failed. Just after the entrance was passed, Commander Godsall went outside the conning tower and gave the order hard-a-starboard from outside.

"Immediately after this a heavy shell burst either on the conning tower or very close to it; Lieutenant Alleyne was knocked out, and Commander Godsall was not seen again, and all the occupants of the conning tower were badly shaken. I then ordered the port telegraph to full speed astern, to try to swing the ship across the channel. She grounded forward on the eastern pier when at an angle of about three points to the pier. As the ship stopped swinging, and at the time I considered that no more could be done, I ordered the ship to be abandoned.

"When the engine-room had been abandoned, Engineer Lieutenant-Commander Bury blew the ship up by firing the main charges and after auxiliary charges, and I

endeavoured to fire the forward auxiliary charges. There was a considerable shock when the first set of charges were fired. I am not positive that the forward auxiliary charges fired, as I could not distinguish the shock from other disturbances.

"When I got on board M.L. 254 I found that the First Lieutenant had been killed by a shell bursting, also one deckhand. The captain, Lieutenant Geoffrey H. Drummond, R.N.V.R., and the coxswain, had been wounded. We went out of the harbour stern first followed the whole way by machine-gun fire. On finally going ahead the fore-castle flooded, and the boat was very much down by the bows. The pump and buckets were got under way and all spare hands placed right aft. However, the water was gaining, and 'S.O.S.' was made by flashing lamp continually to seaward. The courses steered from Ostend were north for 15 minutes, and then west by north until picked up by 'Warwick.'

"I cannot speak too highly of the bravery of the M.L.'s coming alongside inside Ostend; they were under a continuous and heavy fire. M.L. 254 rescued two officers and thirty-seven men.

"The question of recommendations is a very difficult one. Every man, without exception, behaved splendidly."

11. It had been Commander Godsall's intention to ram the western pier with the object of swinging the ship across the channel under port helm, a manoeuvre that would have been greatly assisted by the tide, which was setting strongly through the piers to the eastward. It would appear that when the "Vindictive" eventually found the entrance she was too close to the eastern pier to use port helm without risk of grounding broadside on. This would account for Commander Godsall's order "hard a starboard" a few seconds before he was killed. The "Vindictive" was thus committed to starboard helm when the command devolved on Lieutenant Crutchley, who very promptly put the port telegraph to full speed astern. Unfortunately the port propeller, which was very severely damaged against Zeebrugge Mole, was of little value. Due to this, and also to the fact that the tide was setting strongly against her starboard side, the ship's stern did not swing across the channel as desired, with the result that she grounded at an angle of about 25 degrees to the eastern pier, leaving a considerable channel between her stern and the western pier.

12. At 2.45 a.m., fifteen minutes after the programme time for the withdrawal of the motor craft, the "Warwick" and her consorts proceeded slowly to the westward parallel to the coast.

13. At 3.15 a.m. a signal of distress was observed from the direction of Ostend. I directed the division to close, and found M.L. 254 (Lieutenant Geoffrey H. Drummond, R.N.V.R.) badly damaged and in a sinking condition, with two officers and thirty-seven men of the "Vindictive's" crew on board. Lieutenant Drummond was very severely wounded, his second in command, Lieutenant Gordon F. Ross, R.N.V.R., and other men killed, and most of her small crew and many of the "Vindictive's," including her gallant Engineer-Commander, were wounded. They were transferred to the "Warwick," and this