

were not damaged, but M.G.B.117's pom-pom could not be laid owing to the failure of the elevating ram. Force B was still being illuminated by starshell, but was not being actively engaged. It was decided to withdraw to the north and signal the Force A to find out if they had attacked with torpedoes. Accordingly at 0342, Force B proceeded north at 22 knots, and stopped at 0353, where signals were made to Force A, firstly asking if they were all right, and secondly asking if they had completed the attack. At 0357, a message from Force A was received, ordering Force B to attack from seaward.

6. Accordingly, Force B proceeded at 26 knots steering north-east, and at 0406 were again illuminated by starshell. At 0407, Force B engaged the enemy screen on a similar course. Enemy fire was still heavy, especially from larger calibre guns, but was not so intense as during the first attack. Starshell again made it difficult to see the enemy at all clearly, and no results of own gunfire were observed. At 0408 the signal "Attack completed" was received from Force A. At 0410, Force B disengaged to the north-west and stopped at 0413, when the signal "Withdraw" was received from Dover.

7. As however it was obvious that the enemy were by now in a confused state and were firing at each other, it was decided to make a brief attack in order to keep the kettle boiling. Accordingly Force B proceeded at 0415, steering east at 10 knots in single line abreast to port, and at 0418, opened fire. Two T.L.C.* type craft were observed, and several E or R-boats in a formed state were observed by the light of the enemy starshell. A considerable amount of enemy fire was observed, but not very much in our direction, and it appeared as if the kettle was boiling nicely. At 0420, Force B turned 180° and disengaged under smoke. Course was set west at 28 knots and then to Dover by the swept channel.

General Conclusions.

8. It had previously been arranged between the S.O.s of the forces that if possible, M.G.B.s should make diversionary attacks from seaward, in order to draw the attention and fire of the enemy, while M.T.B.s made an unobserved attack on the main target from inshore. In the event, this was carried out successfully, although the M.T.B.s did not attack while the M.G.B.s were carrying out the first diversion.

9. It is estimated that the enemy escort consisted of at least two gun coasters or T.L.C.s and three or more groups of E or R-boats, each group consisting of at least 4 boats. The groups were mainly on the seaward side of the convoy, and were also ahead and astern of the main target. From the intensity of larger calibre fire, there may have been more larger sized escorts, as it was too accurately placed to have been fired from the shore.

10. It was interesting and heartening to observe during the first attack that although the enemy fire was intense, and it appeared impossible for boats to live through it, negligible damage was actually sustained.

(Signed) R. B. ROOPER,
Lieutenant, R.N.

Admiralty footnote:

* T.L.C.—Tank Landing Craft.

ENCLOSURE 4 TO F.O.C. DOVER'S LETTER.

SIGNAL.

FROM ... V.A. Dover.

Tonight Saturday Force A, M.T.B.s 202 (S.O.), 204, 231, and Force B, M.G.B.s 114 (S.O.), 108, 116, are to be sailed in company to pass AA buoy at 0045, thence via swept channel to Berck Buoy where patrol is to be assumed in vicinity.

Object to intercept and destroy northbound convoy which may be expected to be on passage from Le Havre.

Albacores of 841 Squadron may be patrolling convoy route to Dieppe with freedom to bomb surface craft south of latitude 50° 20' North.

Unless in action and in absence of other orders, forces are to leave patrol area at 0500 and return by same route at best speed until AA buoy is passed thence to harbour.

1545/25th September.

The following Despatch was submitted to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty on the 18th November, 1943, by Admiral of the Fleet Sir JOHN C. TOVEY, K.B.E., D.S.O., Commander-in-Chief, The Nore.

*The Nore,
18th November, 1943.*

DESTROYER AND COASTAL FORCE ACTION WITH E-BOATS ON NIGHT OF 24TH/25TH OCTOBER, 1943.

Be pleased to lay before Their Lordships the following report on E-boat operations on the night of 24th/25th October, 1943. The forces employed were:—

Destroyers patrolling convoy route:

EGLINTON, WORCESTER, MACKAY, and CAMPBELL.

With F.N. Convoy:

PYTCHLEY.

Coastal Force Units:

Unit P. M.T.B.s 693, 689.

Unit O. M.G.B.s 86, 85.

Unit C. M.L.s 112, 114.

Unit Y. M.G.B.s 607, 603.

Unit L. M.T.B.s 444, 445.

Unit V. M.G.B.s 313, 327.

Unit R. M.G.B.s 609, 610.

Unit S. R.M.L.s* 250, 517.

Unit E. M.T.B.s 438, 443, 440.‡

Unit J. M.T.B.s 442, 439.‡

‡ At Lowestoft until receipt of first enemy report.

PART I—NARRATIVE.

The Coastal Force dispositions for this night had been made with an eye to a possible attack north of Yarmouth. The dispositions north of Yarmouth are shown in Appendix A. Other patrols and Coastal Force Units operated south of the area shown in the diagram.

2. Soon after 2200A several reports from bombers who had been out "gardening"† were received. These indicated the possibility of small craft in the vicinity of 52° 50' N.

Admiralty footnotes:

* R.M.L.s—Rescue Motor Launches.

† "Gardening"—laying parachute sea-mines.