



THIRD SUPPLEMENT TO The London Gazette.

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WEDNESDAY, 11 APRIL, 1917.

*Admiralty,
11th April, 1917.*

The following despatches from Vice-Admiral Sir John M. de Robeck, K.C.B., late Vice-Admiral Commanding the Eastern Mediterranean Squadron, and Vice-Admiral Sir Rosslyn E. Wemyss, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., M.V.O., late Senior Naval Officer, Mudros, describe the naval operations in connection with the withdrawal of the Army from the Gallipoli Peninsula:—

*" Lord Nelson " at Mudros,
22nd December, 1915.*

SIR,—

Be pleased to lay before the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty the following report on the operations connected with the evacuation of the positions at Suvla and Anzac.

The evacuation was carried out in three stages, as follows:—

(a) A Preliminary Stage.

During this stage all personnel, animals, and vehicles not necessary for a winter campaign were removed. This necessitated no special arrangements, and was completed by

the date on which definite orders to evacuate Suvla and Anzac were received.

(b) An Intermediate Stage.

During this stage all personnel, guns, and animals which were not absolutely necessary for the defence of the positions in the event of an enemy attack at the last moment were removed. This also was carried out without special arrangements beyond the withdrawal of increased amounts of material each night.

(c) Final Stage.

Special and detailed orders were necessary for the operations of this stage, which had to be completed in thirty-six hours, and which included the embarkation of all personnel remaining, and of all guns and animals not previously withdrawn.

The principle decided upon for all three stages was secrecy and the attempt to take the enemy entirely by surprise. It was hoped that he would ascribe any unusual activity, if observed, to the preparation for an attack. Every effort was therefore made during the whole of the operations to maintain the beaches, offing, etc., in their usual appearance, and all embarkations were carried out during the dark hours. The increase in the number of motor

lighters, boats, etc., in use at the beaches was hidden as far as possible during the daytime.

The preliminary stage was completed satisfactorily by the 10th December, when the definite orders to evacuate were received.

It had been computed that ten nights would be required for the intermediate stage, on each of which three thousand personnel and a proportion of guns and animals would be embarked from each beach. This estimate was eventually reduced, special efforts being made in order to take advantage of the fine weather, the duration of which could not be relied on at this season.

The intermediate stage was completed on the night of the 17th/18th December, and, from the absence of any unusual shelling of the beaches during these nights, it was apparent that the enemy had no idea of the movement in progress.

Some forty-four thousand personnel, nearly 200 guns, numerous wagons, and 3,000 animals, were evacuated during this period, together with a large amount of stores and ammunition.

The final stage commenced on the night of the 18th/19th December, and was completed on the night of the 19th/20th December. The fixing of the date for this stage had been a question of some discussion. On the one hand, it was deemed most advisable that the operation should be carried on with the utmost despatch and without loss of time for fear of the weather breaking; on the other hand, the moon on the 18th was very near its full. It was considered, however, that this fact might not altogether be a disadvantage, as the benefit accruing to us would probably counteract any advantage gained by the enemy. The weather conditions, however, proved to be ideal. An absolutely smooth sea, no wind, and a cloudy sky caused grey nights which were of the utmost benefit to the work on the beaches, and were apparently not sufficiently light to enable the enemy to get an idea of what was taking place.

On each of the two nights of the final stage it was necessary to evacuate rather more than ten thousand personnel from each beach, and for this special arrangements were necessary. The chief possible difficulties to contend with were two:—Firstly, the bad weather to be expected at this season; secondly, interference by the enemy.

After some heavy winds, fine weather set in with December, and, except for a strong northeasterly wind on the 15th, continued until 24 hours after the completion of the evacuation. This prolonged period of fine weather alone made possible the success which attended the operation. It enabled light piers, and improvements of a temporary nature to existing piers, to be carried out. A southerly wind of even moderate force at any time during this period must have wrecked piers, and have caused very considerable losses among the small craft assembled for the operations, and would have necessitated the embarkation being carried out from the open beaches. Such loss of small craft would have made anything in the nature of rapid evacuation an impossibility, and would have enormously increased the difficulties. To cope with such an eventuality a reserve of small craft up to 50 per cent. would not have been too great; actually the reserve maintained had to be very much smaller.

Interference by the enemy would have been most serious, as the beaches were fully exposed

to shell fire, and the damage inflicted to personnel, small craft, piers, &c., might have been most serious, as he would have had no inducement to husband his ammunition.

Under such conditions it was most improbable that anything beyond personnel could have been evacuated. Casualties would also have been heavy, and removal of wounded out of the question. To meet the latter possibility, arrangements were made to leave the hospital clearing stations intact, with a proportion of medical staff in attendance, and thus ensure that our wounded would not suffer from want of attention, which the enemy, with all the good will in the world, might have been unable to supply. It was also arranged that in such circumstances an attempt would have been made to negotiate an armistice on the morning after the evacuation to collect and, if possible, bring off our wounded. Fortunately neither of these two dangers matured, but the probability of either or both doing so made this stage of the operations most anxious for all concerned.

The final concentration of the ships and craft required at Kephala was completed on the 17th December, and in order to prevent enemy's aircraft observing the unusual quantity of shipping, a constant air patrol was maintained to keep these at a distance.

Reports of the presence of enemy submarines were also received during these two days: patrols were strengthened, but no attacks by these craft were made.

The evacuation was carried out in accordance with orders. No delays occurred, and there were no accidents to ships or boats.

On the night of the 18th/19th December, when I embarked in H.M.S. "Arno," accompanied by General Sir William Birdwood, the embarkation was finished at Suvla by 3 a.m., and at Anzac by 5.30 a.m., and by daylight the beaches and anchorages at these places had resumed their normal aspect.

The second night's operations, as far as the Navy was concerned, differed in no wise from the first; precisely the same routine being adhered to. The weather conditions were similar and could not have suited our purpose better. On this night I hoisted my flag in H.M.S. "Chatham," and was accompanied by General Sir William Birdwood and members of our two Staffs.

The last troops left the front trenches at 1.30 a.m., and I received the signal that the evacuation was complete at 4.15 a.m. at Anzac and 5.39 a.m. at Suvla.

A large mine was exploded at about 3.15 a.m. by the Australians, and at Suvla all perishable stores which had not been taken off and which were heaped up in large mounds with petrol poured over them, were fired at 4 a.m., making a vast bonfire which lighted everything round for a very long distance.

In spite of all this, the enemy seemed perfectly unaware of what had taken place. As day dawned, soon after 6.30, the anchorages of both places were clear of all craft, except the covering Squadrons, which had been ordered up during the night, and when the sun had sufficiently risen for objects to be made out, the bombardment of the beaches commenced with the object of destroying everything that remained. At Suvla this consisted only of some water tanks and four motor lighters, which, I regret to say, had been washed ashore in the gale of 28th of November

and which had never been recovered, owing principally to lack of time. At Anzac it had been deemed inadvisable to set a light to the stores which had been found impossible to embark, so that here the bombardment was more severe and large fires were started by the bursting shell.

A curious spectacle now presented itself, certain areas absolutely clear of troops being subjected to a heavy shell fire from our own and the enemy's guns.

It seems incredible that all this work had taken place without the enemy becoming aware of our object, for although the utmost care was taken to preserve the beaches and offing as near as possible normal, yet it proved quite impracticable to get up boats and troop carriers in sufficient time to carry out the night's work, and yet for them not to have been visible from some parts of the Peninsula.

The morning bombardment lasted but a very short time, for I felt that the use of much ammunition would merely be a waste; moreover the risk of submarines appearing on the scene of action had never been absent from my mind at any time during the whole operation. Consequently at 7.25 a.m., I ordered the Squadron to return to Kephalo, leaving two specially protected cruisers to watch the area. These subsequently reported that they had caused a good deal of damage amongst the enemy when they eventually swarmed down to take possession of the loot, the realisation of which, I trust, was a great disappointment to them.

All the arrangements were most admirably carried out, and the time table previously laid down was adhered to exactly.

Before closing this despatch, I would like to emphasise the fact that what made this operation so successful, apart from the kindness of the weather and of the enemy, was the hearty co-operation of both services. The evacuation forms an excellent example of the cordial manner in which the Navy and Army have worked together during these last eight months.

For the Army the evacuation was an operation of great probable danger, shared by the naval beach personnel; it was also, specially for the former, one of considerable sadness. Throughout the whole proceedings nothing could have exceeded the courtesy of Generals Sir William Birdwood, Sir Julian Byng, and Sir Alexander Godley, and their respective Staffs, and this attitude was typical of the whole Army.

The traditions of the Navy were fully maintained, the seamanship and resource displayed reaching a very high standard. From the Commanding Officers of men-of-war, transports, and large supply ships, to the Midshipmen in charge of steamboats and pulling boats off the beaches, all did well.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient Servant,
R. E. WEMYSS.

"Lord Nelson,"
26th January, 1916.

SIR,—

I have the honour to forward the following despatch dealing with the withdrawal of the Army from the Gallipoli Peninsula.

In considering the evacuation of the

Helles position it was laid down by Sir Charles Monro, for the guidance of the Army, that—

(a) The withdrawal should be conducted with the utmost rapidity, the final stage being limited to one night.

(b) Every effort should be made to improve embarkation facilities at as many points on the coast as could be used, other than W and V beaches.

(c) Every endeavour should be made to evacuate as many as possible of the following:—

British:

18-pdr. guns.
4.5-inch howitzers.
60-pdr. guns.
6-inch guns.

French:

75 mm. guns.
Heavy guns.

Also artillery ammunition and such small-arm ammunition as could safely be withdrawn before the final stage.

(d) The period of time which must elapse before the final stage could be undertaken would be determined by the time required to collect necessary shipping and to make essential preparations ashore (work on beaches, pathways, &c.) taken in conjunction with the necessity for evacuating the superfluous personnel and as much as possible of the material mentioned in (c).

(e) During the "intermediate stage," the duration of which would be determined by the foregoing considerations, such other animals, material, stores and supplies as could be embarked without prolonging this period would also be evacuated.

Forty-eight hours before the evacuation was completed the number of men remaining on the peninsula was to be cut down to 22,000.

Of these 7,000 were to embark on the last night but one, leaving 15,000 for the final night; at the request of the military the latter number was increased to 17,000.

As few guns as possible were to be left to the final night and arrangements were made to destroy any of these which it might be found impossible to remove or which, by reason of their condition, were considered not worth removing.

The original intention was to use Gully, "X," "W" and "V" beaches for the embarkation of troops on the final night; this was deemed advisable in consequence of the very accurate and heavy fire which the enemy could bring to bear on "W" and "V" beaches, on to both of which their guns were carefully registered.

The decision not to use "X" beach and to use Gully beach only to embark the last 700 men was arrived at on the 6th January.

This alteration of plan was recommended by General Sir Francis Davies, commanding the 8th Corps; he based his objections to the use of "X" and Gully beaches to:—

(a) The probability of bad weather. Embarkation from these beaches, even in a moderately strong northerly blow, was impossible.

(b) "X" and Gully beaches had not been used for a considerable time as landing places; and should the movements of ships and boats off the beaches be observed by the enemy, it might awaken their suspicions as to what was taking place.

The essence of the operation being secrecy, the

second of these reasons decided me to concur in this change of plan almost at the eleventh hour.

The preliminary stage commenced on the night of the 30th/31st December and terminated on the night of the 7th/8th January.

During this stage all personnel except 17,000 were removed, as well as the majority of the guns and a great quantity of animals, stores, &c.

The amount of stores remaining on shore after the preliminary stage was greater than was anticipated or intended; this was almost entirely due to the unfavourable weather conditions and, as men were evacuated, to a shortage in working parties.

On 1st January the weather showed signs of breaking; on the 2nd and 3rd strong north-easterly winds blew all day; the morning of the 4th was calm, but the weather broke at 7 p.m. and by 11 p.m. it was blowing a gale from the N.E., which, however, moderated on the evening of the 5th; on the 6th and 7th the weather conditions were favourable.

Fortunately the wind remained in the north to north-east which permitted work to continue on "V" and "W" beaches. The transfer of guns, animals and stores, &c., from motor lighters to transports and supply ships lying off the beaches was a matter of great difficulty under such conditions of weather.

During the whole of this period "V" and "W" beaches were subjected to a heavy and accurate shell fire from the enemy's batteries mounted on the Asiatic shore and also from guns firing from positions to north of Achi Baba.

All these guns were accurately registered on to the beaches, and the shelling continued day and night at frequent and uncertain intervals; that the actual loss of life from this fire was very small borders on the miraculous; the beach parties were completely exposed, and piers and foreshore constantly hit by shells while officers and men were working on them; even when resting in the dug-outs security from enemy's fire could not be assured, and several casualties occurred under these conditions.

The work on the beaches was practically continuous; during the day time motor lighters, &c., were loaded up with stores, &c., to be transferred to store ships at night; by night the work was most strenuous.

During the whole time there remained the paramount necessity of preventing the enemy gaining intelligence of what was in progress; this added greatly to the difficulties of work during daylight. Enemy aircraft paid frequent visits to the peninsula; on these occasions, whilst the "Taube" was in evidence, animals and transports approaching the beaches were turned and marched in the opposite direction, and stores and horses already in lighters were even unloaded on to the beaches to give the appearance of a disembarkation.

On the afternoon of the 7th the enemy delivered a very heavy artillery attack against certain portions of our advanced position, probably the most intense bombardment our trenches in the Helles area have ever been subjected to.

Attempts were made by the enemy to follow up this bombardment by an infantry attack, but the few Turks who could be persuaded to quit their trenches were instantly shot down, and the infantry advance was a complete failure.

This bombardment and attack most fortunately took place at a time when our forward position was fully manned and when there were still about sixty guns in position on the peninsula, with a very large supply of ammunition.

The ships supporting the left flank opened a heavy fire on the Turkish position. H.M.S. "Grafton" (Captain Henry E. Grace), H.M.S. "Raglan" (Captain Cecil D. S. Raikes), and H.M. Destroyer "Wolverine" (Lieutenant-Commander Adrian St. V. Keyes), were on duty in position to support the army, which they did most ably, undoubtedly inflicting heavy loss on the enemy. They were reinforced by H.M.S. "Russell," H.M.S. "Havelock," and H.M. Destroyer "Scorpion."

Arrangements were also made to reinforce Helles with one brigade of infantry from Imbros, should such a step become necessary.

The principal reasons the enemy did not discover that the evacuation was taking place were, I consider:—

(a) The excellent arrangements made by the military and the beach parties to prevent the enemy noticing any change in the landscape or any undue activity on the beaches.

(b) The probable unexpected force encountered in their attack on the 7th. It appears reasonable to suppose that the enemy, having thus convinced himself that the peninsula was still held in force by us, was satisfied that no evacuation would take place for some days.

(c) The fact that on the 8th the wind was in the south and blowing on to "W" and "V" beaches, and that by 9 p.m. it had freshened so considerably as to render any evacuation a most difficult and hazardous proceeding.

The enemy were certainly deceived as to the date of our final departure from his shores, and his artillery fire on the final night of the evacuation was negligible.

The decision arrived at on the 6th to evacuate practically all the personnel of the final night from "W" and "V" beaches necessitated some rearrangement of plans, as some 5,000 additional troops had to be embarked from these beaches.

To use motor lighters from the already crowded piers would have lengthened the operation very considerably, and it was therefore decided to employ destroyers to embark 5,200 men from the blockships, which were fitted with stagings and connected to the shore; thus existing arrangements would be interfered with as little as possible. The result was excellent. The destroyers which were laid alongside the blockships, in spite of a nasty sea, being handled with great skill by their commanding officers, once more showing their powers of adaptability.

The necessary amendments to orders were issued on the morning of the 7th, and, in spite of the short notice given, the naval operations on the night of the 8th/9th were carried out without confusion or delay, a fact which reflects great credit on all concerned, especially on the beach personnel, who were chiefly affected by the change of plan.

On the 8th January the weather was favourable except that the wind was from the south; this showed no signs of freshening at 5 p.m., and orders were given to carry out the final stage.

The actual embarkation on the 8th com-

menced at 8 p.m., and the last section were to commence embarking at 6.30 a.m.

By 9 p.m. the wind had freshened considerably, still blowing from the south; a slight sea got up, and caused much inconvenience on the beaches.

A floating bridge at "W" beach commenced to break up, necessitating arrangements being made to ferry the last section of the personnel to the waiting destroyers.

At Gully beach matters were worse, and, after a portion of the 700 troops had been embarked in motor lighters and sent off to H.M.S. "Talbot," it was found impossible to continue using this beach (one motor lighter was already badly on shore—she was subsequently destroyed by gunfire), and orders were given for the remainder of the Gully beach party to embark from "W" beach; this was done without confusion, special steps having been taken by the beachmaster to cope with such an eventuality.

After a temporary lull the wind again increased, and by 3 a.m. a very nasty sea was running into "W" beach.

It was only by the great skill and determination displayed by the beach personnel that the embarkation was brought to a successful conclusion, and all the small craft except one steamboat (damaged in collision) got away in safety.

The last troops were leaving at 3.45 a.m., after which the beach personnel embarked.

Great difficulty was experienced in getting the last motor lighters away, owing to the heavy seas running into the harbour.

This was unfortunate, as the piles of stores which it had been found impossible to take off, and which were prepared for burning, were lit perhaps rather sooner than was necessary, as were also the fuses leading to the magazine.

The latter blew up before all the boats were clear, and, I regret to report, caused the death of one of the crew of the hospital barge, which was amongst the last boats to leave.

It was fortunate that more casualties were not caused by the explosion, debris from which fell over and around a great many boats.

The success of the operations was due principally to—

(a) Excellent staff work.

(b) The untiring energy and skill displayed by officers and men, both Army and Navy, comprising the beach parties.

(c) The good seamanship and zeal of the officers and crews of the various craft employed in the evacuation of the troops.

(d) The excellent punctuality of the Army in the arrival of the troops for embarkation at the different beaches.

The Navy has especially to thank Generals Sir William Birdwood and Sir Francis Davies for their forethought and hearty co-operation in all matters.

The staff work was above reproach, and I hope I may be permitted to mention some of those military officers who rendered special assistance to the Navy. They are:—

Major-General the Hon. H. A. Lawrence,
Brigadier-General H. E. Street, and
Colonel A. B. Carey, R.E.

the latter of whom performed work of inestimable value in the last few days by improving piers and preparing means of rapid embarkation from the blockships.

The programme and plans as regards the naval portion of the operations were due to the work of my chief of staff, Commodore Roger J. B. Keyes, to whom too great credit cannot be given; to Captain Francis H. Mitchell, R.N., attached to General Headquarters; Major William W. Godfrey, R.M.L.I., of my staff; Captain Cecil M. Staveley (principal beach master at Cape Helles); Captain Henry F. G. Talbot, in charge of the vessels taking part; and Acting Commander George F. A. Mulock (chief assistant to Captain Staveley).

The organisation of the communications, on which so much depended, was very ably carried out by my Fleet Wireless Officer (Commander James F. Somerville) and my Signal Officer (Lieutenant Hguh S. Bowlby). The arrangement by which H.M.S. "Triad" (on board of which was the General Officer commanding Helles Army) was anchored close in under Cape Tekeh, and connected with the shore telephone system by two cables, thus leaving her wireless installation free for communicating with the ships of covering squadron, &c., was especially good.

The naval covering squadron was under the command of Rear-Admiral Sydney R. Fremantle in H.M.S. "Hibernia," who had a most able colleague in Captain Douglas L. Dent, of H.M.S. "Edgar," whose ability had done so much to improve the naval gun support to the Helles Army.

The work of this squadron was conducted with great energy, and was in every way satisfactory. It controlled to a great extent the enemy's guns firing on to the beaches.

Whenever the enemy opened fire, whether by day or night, there were always ships in position to reply, a result which reflects much credit on the officers named.

The Army Headquarters gave us again the invaluable assistance and experience of Lieutenant-Colonel C. F. Aspinall in arranging details, and I cannot help laying special stress on this officer's excellent co-operation with my staff on all occasions.

I now have the pleasure of bringing to your notice the loyal support and assistance we received, now, as always, from our French friends.

Contre Admiral de Bon was responsible for the French naval programme of evacuation, and on its completion he rendered us every assistance with his beach parties, who were under the immediate command of a most able and gallant officer—Capitaine de Frégate Bréart de Boisanger—an officer whom I have already brought to your Lordships' notice in a previous despatch.

There are many officers and men who have performed meritorious service in connection with this evacuation; their names will be forwarded in due course in a separate letter.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

J. M. DE ROBECK,

Vice-Admiral.

Admiralty, 11th April, 1917.

In addition to the honours notified in the Supplements to the London Gazette dated 14th March, 15th May (3rd Supplement), and 31st May, 1916 (3rd Supplement), The KING

has been graciously pleased to give orders for the following appointment to the Distinguished Service Order and for the award of the Distinguished Service Cross to the undermentioned officers, in recognition of their services in the Eastern Mediterranean up to the 30th June, 1916:—

To be Companion of the Distinguished Service Order.

Captain Alexander V. Campbell, M.V.O., R.N.

Performed meritorious service whilst in command of H.M.S. "Prince George," which took part in the actions of 25th February and 18th March, 1915. "Prince George" supported the Army from inside the Straits between 25th April and 10th May, 1915, and also at Suvla for several weeks continuously under fire. Captain Campbell also did good service during the evacuation.

To receive the Distinguished Service Cross.

Lieutenant Kenneth Edwards, R.N.

Performed good service at the landing and at the evacuation of Helles. Set a fine example to his men whilst assisting at salvage operations on Monitor M.30 under fire from enemy's guns.

Lieutenant Charles Leonard Fawell, R.N.V.R.

For consistent good service, often under heavy fire, whilst in command of motor gun-boat in the Smyrna inner patrol.

The following awards have also been made:—

To receive the Distinguished Service Medal.

Chief Petty Officer Arthur James, O.N. 142389 (Po.).

Petty Officer Walter Alger, O.N. 162321 (Ch.).

Leading Seaman Harry T. Coleman, O.N. 231247 (Ch.).

Chief E.R.A. Samuel Fletcher, O.N. 269985 (Ch.).

Armourer's Mate Charles H. Hazel, O.N. M.4491 (Dev.).

First Writer Walter J. V. Keeble, O.N. 231499 (Dev.).

Ship's Steward William H. Bromidge, O.N. 345206 (Dev.).

Chief Motor Mechanic T. Thurburn, O.N., M.B.369.

Sergeant Albert V. Proctor, No. R.M.A./5508.

The following officers and men have been mentioned in despatches:—

Captain Michael H. Hodges, M.V.O., R.N.

Captain Francis Clifton Brown, R.N.

Captain Edmund C. Carver, R.N.

Commander Morton Smart, R.N.V.R.

Lieutenant-Commander (now Commander) Basil H. Piercy, R.N.

Lieutenant-Commander Claude P. Champion de Crespigny, R.N.

Lieutenant Commander Henry C. Summers, R.N.V.R.

Mr. Hugh F. Bevan, Gunner, R.N.

Mr. Charles E. A. W. Cox, Gunner (now Mate), R.N.

Mr. Leonard W. Brock, Gunner, R.N.

Mr. Philip J. Jones, Signal Boatswain.

Petty Officer Thomas Hoban, O.N. 192417 (Po.).

Petty Officer James Mather, O.N. 213655 (Ch.).

Petty Officer Lawrence V. Parsons, O.N. 191341 (Po.).

Leading Seaman Thomas G. Maylor, O.N. 238210 (Dev.).

Yeoman of Signals Samuel R. J. Hillier, O.N. 224951 (Ch.).

Chief E.R.A., 2nd Class, David Thompson, O.N. 272337 (Ch.).

Chief Stoker James W. French, O.N. 282587 (Ch.).

Chief Writer H. J. W. Gains, O.N. 343680 (Ch.).

Private John Gollop, R.M.L.I., No. Ply./12330.