

*Admiralty, 20th November 1918.*

With reference to announcements of the award of the Victoria Cross to naval officers and men for services in action with enemy submarines, the following are the accounts of the actions for which these awards were made:—

(1) Action of H.M.S. "Q.5" on the 17th February 1917.

On the 17th February 1917, H.M.S. "Q.5," under the command of Commander Campbell, D.S.O., R.N., was struck by a torpedo abreast of No. 3 hold. Action stations were sounded and the "panic party" abandoned ship. The engineer officer reported that the engine-room was flooding, and was ordered to remain at his post as long as possible, which he and his staff, several of whom were severely wounded, most gallantly did. The submarine was observed on the starboard quarter 200 yards distant, watching the proceedings through his periscope. He ran past the ship on the starboard side so closely that the whole hull was visible beneath the surface, finally emerging about 300 yards on the port bow. The enemy came down the port side of the ship, and fire was withheld until all guns could bear at point-blank range. The first shot beheaded the captain of the submarine as he was climbing out of the conning tower, and the submarine finally sank with conning tower open and crew pouring out. One officer and one man were rescued on the surface and taken prisoner, after which the boats were recalled and all hands proceeded to do their utmost to keep the ship afloat. A wireless signal for assistance had been sent out when (but not until) the fate of the submarine was assured, and a destroyer and sloop arrived a couple of hours later and took "Q.5" in tow. She was finally beached in safety the following evening.

The action may be regarded as the supreme test of naval discipline. The chief engineer and engine-room watch remained at their posts to keep the dynamo working until driven out by the water, then remaining concealed on top of the cylinders. The guns' crews had to remain concealed in their gun houses for nearly half an hour, while the ship slowly sank lower in the water.

(The award of the Victoria Cross to Commander Gordon Campbell, D.S.O., R.N., was announced in London Gazette, No. 30029, dated the 21st April 1917.)

(2) Action of H.M.S. "Prize" on the 30th April 1917.

H.M.S. "Prize," a topsail schooner of 200 tons, under command of Lieutenant William Edward Sanders, R.N.R., sighted an enemy submarine on the 30th April 1917. The enemy opened fire at three miles range and approached slowly astern. The "panic party," in charge of Skipper William Henry Brewer, R.N.R. (Trawler Section), immediately abandoned ship. Ship's head was put into the wind, and the gun's crews concealed themselves by lying face downwards on the deck. The enemy continued deliberately shelling the schooner, inflicting severe damage and wounding a number of men. For 20 minutes she continued to approach, firing as she came, but at length,

apparently satisfied that no one remained on board, she drew out on the schooner's quarter 70 yards away. The white ensign was immediately hoisted, the screens dropped, and all guns opened fire. A shell struck the foremost gun of the submarine, blowing it to atoms and annihilating the crew. Another shot demolished the conning tower, and at the same time a Lewis gun raked the survivors off the submarine's deck. She sank four minutes after the commencement of the action in clouds of smoke, the glare of an internal fire being visible through the rents in her hull. The captain of the submarine, a warrant officer and one man were picked up and brought on board the "Prize," which was then herself sinking fast. Captors and prisoners, however, succeeded in plugging the shot holes and keeping the water under with the pumps. The "Prize" then set sail for the land, 120 miles distant. They were finally picked up two days later by a motor-launch and towed the remaining five miles into harbour.

(The award of the Victoria Cross to Acting Lieutenant William Edward Sanders, R.N.R., was announced in London Gazette No. 30147, dated the 22nd June 1917.)

(3) Action of H.M.S. "Pargust" on the 7th June 1917.

On the 7th June 1917, while disguised as a British merchant vessel with a dummy gun mounted aft, H.M.S. "Pargust" was torpedoed at very close range. Her boiler-room, engine-room, and No. 5 hold were immediately flooded, and the starboard lifeboat was blown to pieces. The weather was misty at the time, fresh breeze and a choppy sea. The "panic party," under the command of Lieutenant F. R. Hereford, D.S.C., R.N.R., abandoned ship, and as the last boat was shoving off, the periscope of the submarine was observed close before the port beam about 400 yards distant. The enemy then submerged, and periscope reappeared directly astern, passing to the starboard quarter, and then round to the port beam, when it turned again towards the ship, breaking surface about 50 yards away. The lifeboat, acting as a lure, commenced to pull round the stern; submarine followed closely and Lieutenant Hereford, with complete disregard of the danger incurred from fire of either ship or submarine (who had trained a maxim on the lifeboat), continued to decoy her to within 50 yards of the ship. The "Pargust" then opened fire with all guns, and the submarine, with oil squirting from her side and the crew pouring out of the conning tower, steamed slowly across the bows with a heavy list. The enemy crew held up their hands in token of surrender, whereupon fire immediately ceased. The submarine then began to move away at a gradually increasing speed, apparently endeavouring to escape in the mist. Fire was reopened until she sank, one man clinging to the bow as she went down. The boats, after a severe pull to windward, succeeded in saving one officer and one man. American destroyers and a British sloop arrived shortly afterwards, and the "Pargust" was towed back to port. As on the previous occasions, officers and men displayed the utmost courage and confidence in their captain, and the action serves as an example of what perfect discipline, when coupled with such confidence, can achieve.