



SECOND SUPPLEMENT  
TO  
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FRIDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER, 1917.

*Admiralty, 21st September, 1917.*

The following despatch has been received from Vice-Admiral Sir Rosslyn E. Wemyss, K.C.B., C.M.G., M.V.O., late Commander-in-Chief, East Indies Station, covering a report by Captain Wilfrid Nunn, C.M.G., D.S.O., R.N., on the operations of H.M. Gunboats in Mesopotamia from December, 1916, to March, 1917:—

*7th May, 1917.*

SIR,—

Be pleased to submit to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty the enclosed report on the recent operations in Mesopotamia rendered to me by Captain Wilfrid Nunn, C.M.G., D.S.O., R.N.

2. I take this opportunity of specially bringing to Their Lordships' notice the excellent conduct of Captain Nunn during the whole period that he has commanded the Flotilla on the Tigris. Through force of circumstances this command devolved upon an officer of less standing than might have been otherwise expected, and he has shown himself under all circumstances not only to have been worthy of his responsible position, but to have carried out

his duties with a zeal and dash worthy of the best traditions and to have shown a very remarkable capacity for command.

I am, Sir,  
Your obedient Servant,

*R. E. Wemyss,*  
Vice-Admiral,  
Commander-in-Chief.

*H.M.S. "Mantis,"*  
21st March, 1917.

SIR,—I have the honour to submit the following report on the operations on the Tigris during the months of December, 1916, and January, February, and March, 1917, which led to the capture and occupation of Baghdad by our forces on 11th March, 1917.

2. Our advance on the right bank of the Tigris began on 13th December, 1916, when our troops established themselves on the Shatt al Hai.

The general situation early in January was as follows:—

On the left bank our forces were held up by the Turks in the extremely strong Sannaiyat position, while on the right bank, we had ad-

vanced much further up the river. The Turks opposed to us were commanded by Khalil Pasha. They were well dug in in strong positions.

Very large improvements have been effected in the Transport department, railways have been constructed, and a large number of river craft arrived.

A number of these, and also barges, were put together at Abadan and Basra, and the facilities for repairs much increased, and wharves constructed.

3. The gunboats at the Tigris front have co-operated with the Army in many intermittent bombardments of the enemy positions, and some very good results have been obtained, besides frequently engaging enemy aircraft.

We have at all times received great help from the Army, the Artillery officers and Staff being indefatigable in rendering the Navy every assistance.

The 14th Kite Balloon Section, R.N.A.S., commanded by Commander Francis R. Wrottesley, R.N., marked for us on many occasions, besides the useful work it has done keeping look-out for the Army.

Aeroplanes have also been frequently put at the disposal of the Royal Navy for spotting.

While keeping some gunboats at the Tigris front, I have also always, at the request of the military authorities, stationed others at various points on the line of communication, and two have been stationed in the Euphrates, in touch with the troops at Nasiriyah.

The following of H.M. Ships have been engaged in the operations at various times:—

H.M.S. "Tarantula," Commander Henry G. Sherbrooke.

H.M.S. "Mantis," Commander Bernard Buxton.

H.M.S. "Moth," Lieutenant-Commander C. H. A. Cartwright.

H.M.S. "Gnat," Lieutenant-Commander E. H. B. L. Scrivener.

H.M.S. "Butterfly," Lieutenant-Commander G. A. Wilson.

H.M.S. "Sawfly," Commander G. F. A. Mulock, D.S.O.

H.M.S. "Snakefly," Lieutenant R. P. D. Webster.

H.M.S. "Greenfly," Lieutenant-Commander A. G. Seymour, D.S.O.

H.M.S. "Gadfly," Commander E. K. Arbuthnot.

H.M.S. "Grayfly," Lieutenant C. H. Heath-Caldwell, D.S.C.

H.M.S. "Stonefly," Lieutenant M. Singleton, D.S.O.

H.M.S. "Mayfly," Lieutenant R. H. Lilley, D.S.C.

H.M.S. "Waterfly," Act. Commander Charles T. Gervers.

H.M.S. "Firefly," Lieutenant-Commander C. J. F. Eddis.

H.M.S. "Flycatcher," Lieutenant Hugh Lincoln, R.N.R.

H.M.S. "Scotstoun," Lieutenant S. E. Nicolle.

4. Operations proceeded in a most satisfactory manner, and early in February our forces were in possession of the right bank as far as to the westward of Kut el Amara, with bridges over the Hai, large numbers of prisoners having been taken, guns captured, and heavy loss inflicted on the enemy.

After intense bombardment, in which the gunboats co-operated, a successful assault of the Sannaiyat position was made on 22nd February, and a footing obtained in the Sannaiyat position. During the night of the 22nd-23rd dummy attempts were made to cross the river in various places above Sannaiyat, and just before daybreak of the 23rd covering parties were rowed across the Tigris near Shumran in pontoons, a surprise landing effected, and a bridge thrown across.

By evening the infantry of one division had crossed, and another followed, the enemy trying ineffectually to stem the British advance on the Shumran peninsula.

Meanwhile our troops were pushing forward boldly through the Sannaiyat position.

The whole Turkish position was manifestly becoming untenable, and they commenced a general retreat, which developed later into a rout.

5. I was present at the operations on board H.M.S. "Tarantula," and later on on board H.M.S. "Mantis," other of H.M. Ships present being "Moth," "Butterfly," "Greenfly," "Gadfly," "Snakefly," "Waterfly," "Flycatcher," and "Scotstoun" were also present at the front from time to time, and H.M.S. "Gnat" rejoined me on 4th March.

6. On the forenoon of 24th February I moved up river with "Tarantula," "Moth," "Mantis," "Butterfly," "Gadfly," and arrived at Kut el Amara at 9.30 p.m., where I landed and hoisted the Union Jack.

The town was deserted and in ruins. Early on the morning of the 25th I moved on up river and communicated with our troops near Shumran.

Floating mines had been seen in the river, but were easily avoided.

7. During the morning I received a message from the Army Commander asking me to co-operate in pursuing the retreating Turkish Army, and I pressed on up river. We were abreast of our leading Infantry at about 9.30 a.m. and in sight of the Turkish rearguard, on which we at once opened with rapid fire, inflicting heavy casualties. This the enemy soon returned, opening an accurate fire on us with field batteries, and several 5.9 howitzers from a prepared position among the sand hills in the neighbourhood of Imam Mahdi. Our troops were advancing, and some of our field artillery considerably relieved the situation by the rapidity with which they came into action.

The battle continued during the day—all ships being hit by splinters of shell, but luckily no serious damage was done.

Lieutenant John H. Murdock, R.N.R., of H.M.S. "Mantis," was somewhat severely wounded in the afternoon.

8. The enemy evacuated their position during the night, and we pushed on with the Army in pursuit on the morning of 26th February.

It soon became evident that the Turkish Army was much demoralised, and I received a message by W/T from General Sir F. S. Maude during the forenoon to push on and inflict as much damage as possible.

We proceeded at full speed in "Tarantula," leading "Mantis" and "Moth," H.M. ships "Gadfly" and "Butterfly" following at their utmost speed.

My flotilla passed the small town of Bghailah at 2 p.m. White flags were flying over the town, and later on Commander Ernest K. Arbuthnot, of "Gadfly," hoisted the Union Jack over the town, bringing in also about 200 prisoners and some trench mortars.

9. Just above Bghailah we now began to come up to numbers of Turkish stragglers on the left bank of the Tigris, and some guns partially submerged in the river, where they had been abandoned. We opened fire on all who did not surrender.

The smoke of steamers had been seen ahead, and we were soon able to distinguish several steamers, including H.M.S. "Firefly," which we had to abandon on 1st December, 1915, when her boiler was disabled by a shell during the retreat from Ctesiphon and we were surrounded by the Turkish Army.

We shortly afterwards got into gun range of the small shipping and opened a heavy fire, particularly on "Firefly" and the armed enemy ship "Pioneer," who both replied. The "Firefly" made some good shooting at us with her 4-inch gun.

10. The Turks retreating on the left bank were becoming more numerous; they now had our cavalry division in pursuit of them on their right flank and the gunboats on their left.

The enemy were firing at us from three directions, and on approaching Nahr Kellak bend I observed a large body of enemy on the left bank at the head of the loop in the river, and gave orders for all guns to be fired on them.

They proved to be a strong rearguard, and opened on us with field and machine guns and heavy rifle fire. At this close range there were casualties in all ships, who were all hit many times, but our guns must have caused immense damage to the enemy, as we were at one time firing six-inch guns into them at about 400 to 500 yards.

Besides the Turkish Artillery there were a large number of enemy with rifles and machine guns behind the bend at a range of about 100 yards from the ships.

In the act of turning round the bend shot-came from all directions, and casualties of "Moth," which came last in the line, were particularly severe.

There were casualties in all three ships, "Moth," which was magnificently handled by Lieutenant Commander Charles H. A. Cartwright, who was himself wounded, had three officers wounded—all severely—out of four, and two men killed and eighteen wounded, which is about 50 per cent. of her complement.

She was hit eight times by shell—one from ahead hit the fore side of stokehold casing, burst, and pierced the port boiler, both front and back, but luckily missed the boiler tubes. The after compartment was holed below the water line, and the upper deck and funnels of all ships riddled with bullets.

The quartermaster and pilot in the conning tower of H.M.S. "Mantis" were killed, but the prompt action of her Captain saved her from running ashore. I consider that the excellent spirit of the men and skilful handling of the ships by their Captains in a difficult and unknown shallow river were most praiseworthy.

11. We thus passed the enemy rearguard, and large numbers of the retreating Turkish Army were on our starboard beam. I opened rapid fire from all guns that would bear (this in-

cluded heavy and light guns, pom-poms, maxims, and rifles), and at this short range we did enormous execution, the enemy being too demoralised to reply, except in a very few cases.

We were also able to shoot down some of their gun teams, which they deserted, and several guns thus fell into the hands of our forces when going over this ground.

12. The vessels ahead were now in easy range, and several small craft stopped and surrendered, including the armed tug "Sumana," which we had left at Kut during the siege, and had been captured at the fall of that place.

About 5.20 p.m. the large Turkish steamer "Basra" stopped and surrendered when brought to by a shell from H.M.S. "Tarantula," which had, I was afterwards informed, killed and wounded some German machine gunners. The "Firefly" kept up a heavy fire from her 4-inch gun, but our reply began to tell on her, and having been hit several times she ran into the bank and fell into our hands about 6.15 p.m. in the north-west part of the Zaljah reach, to westward of Umm al Tubul.

The "Pioneer" having been badly hit by "Mantis," was in flames near her, and some barges laden with munitions in the vicinity.

The Turks had endeavoured to set fire to the "Firefly's" magazine, but we were able to put it out and took possession of her at once, and I put a prize crew on board and hoisted the White Ensign.

Darkness now came on, and I considered it inadvisable to go on further, as we were far ahead of our troops.

I placed Lieutenant John P. Bradley, R.N.R. (of H.M.S. "Proserpine") in temporary command of H.M.S. "Firefly," with a small crew, and we moved out of the way of the burning "Pioneer," anchored for the night, and buried our men who had been killed.

13. We remained in the vicinity the following day, and I sent the "Moth" back to Basra for repairs, and the prizes down river. The advance of our Army continued, and we reached Aziziyah on 1st March. Here the Turks had abandoned more guns and again retreated. I was joined here by H.M.S. "Waterfly."

The pursuit was continued on 5th March, and our cavalry again engaged the enemy rearguard near Lajj, but we were unable to distinguish anything owing to a dense sandstorm.

14. We arrived at Ctesiphon on the 6th, finding the strong position there deserted, and next day arrived in gun-range of the enemy position on the north bank of the Dialah River, which joins the Tigris on the left bank about eight miles below Baghdad.

In attacking this position we again came under heavy fire from the Turkish guns, to which we briskly replied. During the night of the 10th-11th the enemy evacuated the position, as some of our troops had crossed the Dialah, and others were carrying out a wide flanking movement on the right bank to the south-west and west of Baghdad.

An attempt had also been made to send two motor lighters full of troops to land them on the left bank above the Dialah on the night of 10th March. One of them, however, grounded in the shallow river in gun range of the enemy.

I sent H.M. Ships "Tarantula" and "Snakefly" to assist, and "Tarantula" rendered valuable assistance by extricating the motor lighter from her dangerous position before daylight.

15. The Baghdad railway was seized early on the 11th March.

I proceeded up river with the gunboat flotilla, which included H.M.S. "Firefly," Lieutenant-Commander C. J. F. Eddis in command, during the day, with minesweepers ahead, and arrived at the Citadel at Baghdad in H.M.S. "Mantis" at 3.40 p.m., on Sunday, 11th March. Paddle Steamer No. 53, having on board Sir F. S. Maude and Staff, being in company with the Flotilla.

The pursuit of the enemy was continued up river, and two iron barges captured.

16. I have much pleasure in bringing to your notice the excellent behaviour and spirit of the Captains, Officers, and men under my command during these operations, which were, in my opinion, worthy of the great traditions of His Majesty's Service.

In conclusion, I desire to express how greatly the Naval Forces serving in Mesopotamia have always been indebted to the Military and Political services for never-failing help and assistance on all occasions.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

*Wilfrid Nunn,*

Captain and S.N.O., Mesopotamia.

I have the honour to submit the following for special mention, promotion, honours or awards:—

*Officers.*

*H.M.S. "Tarantula."*

Commander Henry G. Sherbrooke, R.N.

For skilful handling of his ship, and especially on 26th February, when he contributed largely to the success of the operations.

Lieutenant J. P. Bradley, R.N.R.

For coolness under fire on all occasions. Lieutenant Bradley did very good work by personally taking the captured Turkish steamer "Basra" down the river laden with enemy wounded.

Sub-Lieutenant G. A. Feilman, R.N.V.R.

For coolness and resource under very heavy fire, in firing with machine guns on the Turkish infantry and machine guns, when all other men were employed in working the main armament of 6-in., 12-pdr. and pom-poms.

Surgeon J. C. Kelly, R.N.

Attended to wounded whilst fire was at its hottest in an exposed position.

*H.M.S. "Mantis."*

Commander Bernard Buxton, R.N.

For good work done on all occasions. His prompt action under heavy fire on 26th March saved H.M.S. "Mantis" from running aground in a critical position.

Surgeon James P. Shorten, R.N.

Continued to dress and attend to the wounded in the open while under very heavy fire.

Sub-Lieutenant E. C. W. Vane Tempest, R.N.V.R.

Was in charge of the gunnery of the ship, and while under hot fire he did his duty with coolness. At one time he personally worked a maxim though wounded.

*H.M.S. "Moth."*

Lieutenant-Commander Charles H. A. Cartwright, R.N.

For excellent handling of his ship and gallant conduct on all occasions under fire, and particularly on 26th February, 1917. I submit that this officer is fully worthy of special promotion.

Surgeon Frederick G. E. Hill, R.N.

Who, finding a man wounded on the battery deck, gallantly, under heavy fire, carried him into the sick bay to dress his wounds. Whilst doing this, the man received another wound through his throat, and Surgeon Hill himself received a nasty wound in his forearm. Nevertheless, although in considerable pain, and until his arm became too stiff to use it, he proceeded to dress and attend to all the wounded on board.

Lieutenant John H. A. Wood, M.C., R.N.V.R.

Who was severely wounded while firing a machine gun in a totally exposed position.

*H.M.S. "Snakefly."*

Lieutenant R. P. D. Webster, R.N.

Has shown judgment and resource on many occasions under fire.

*H.M.S. "Flycatcher."*

Lieutenant Hugh Lincoln, R.N.R.

For good work while in command of H.M. ships "Comet" and "Flycatcher," and he has carried out the duty of forward observing Officer under fire in a very satisfactory manner.

*H.M.S. "Gadfly."*

Commander Ernest K. Arbuthnot, R.N.

During the recent advance to Baghdad I have found this officer's knowledge and experience of great benefit, and he has shown great coolness under fire on all occasions.

Temporary Surgeon Robert G. Elwell, R.N.

Has rendered valuable service under fire on many occasions.

*H.M.S. "Proserpine."*

Lieutenant Cecil G. Hallett, R.I.M.

Has given me most valuable help throughout the campaign, and has carried out the gunnery duties for the Squadron. His experience, particularly of spotting the enemy gun positions, is of great value, and he has frequently done this under fire.

MEN.

*H.M.S. "Tarantula."*

- Chief Petty Officer W. R. Ayre, O.N. 171045 (Ch.).  
 Chief Engine Room Artificer H. Lovell, O.N. 268831 (Ch.).  
 Leading Seaman H. M. J. Thompson, O.N. 236295 (Ch.).  
 Able Seaman W. Stephenson, O.N. 234863 (Ch.).

*H.M.S. "Mantis."*

- Chief Engine Room Artificer, 2nd Class, Alexander Greig, O.N. M.17441 (Ch.).  
 Petty Officer James Revell, O.N. 208740 (Ch.).  
 Petty Officer William H. Saunders, O.N. J5200 (Ch.).  
 Stoker Petty Officer Edward S. Crossman, O.N. 287047 (Ch.).  
 Leading Telegraphist Sydney W. Boulter, J15349 (Ch.).

*H.M.S. "Moth."*

- Acting Chief Engine Room Artificer, 4th Class, William J. Hollies, O.N. M.12130 (Ch.).  
 Stoker Petty Officer George T. Hasler, O.N. K1366 (Ch.).  
 Signalman Charles Poulter, R.N.V.R., O.N. London Z/3247 (Ch.).  
 Telegraphist Herbert W. Prior, O.N. J.32080 (Ch.).  
 Able Seaman Alfred E. Lucas, O.N. J.15975 (Ch.).  
 Able Seaman Percy W. Dean, R.F.R., Chatham B.3950 O.N. 209195 (Ch.).  
 Stoker John Farrell, R.N.R., O.N. S.8533.

*H.M.S. "Snakefly."*

- Stoker Petty Officer John W. Mallinson, O.N. 303741 (Dev.).  
 Leading Telegraphist Martin L. Elliott, O.N. J.29215 (Dev.).

*H.M.S. "Gadfly."*

- Petty Officer, 1st Class, Ronald Godfrey Robinson, O.N. 198809 (Po.).  
 Engineer Room Artificer, 2nd Class, Leonard Ernest Brown, O.N. 271864 (Po.).

The following are recommended for good services at the base, which contributed largely to the successful operations:—

- Captain Cathcart R. Wason, C.M.G., R.N.  
 Staff Surgeon Thomas W. Jeffery, R.N.,  
*H.M.S. "Proserpine."*  
 Staff Surgeon George G. Vickery, R.N.,  
*H.M.S. "Dalhousie."*  
 Engineer Lieutenant-Commander Stanley W. Cooke, lately of *H.M.S. "Proserpine."*  
 Paymaster Herbert G. Cavanagh, R.N.,  
*H.M.S. "Dalhousie."*  
 Lieutenant A. H. B. Gray, R.I.M., *H.M.S. "Dalhousie."*  
 Chief Gunner Patrick J. O'Connor, R.N.,  
*H.M.S. "Dalhousie."*  
 Carpenter William Brown, R.N., *H.M.S. "Proserpine."*

(Sgd.) W. NUNN,  
 Captain and S.N.O., Mesopotamia.

CENTRAL CHANCERY OF THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD.

*Lord Chamberlain's Office,  
 St. James's Palace, S.W.,  
 21st September, 1917.*

The KING has been graciously pleased to give orders for the following appointment to the Most Honourable Order of the Bath in recognition of the services mentioned in the foregoing despatch:—

*To be Additional Member of the Military Division of the Third Class, or Companions, of the said Most Honourable Order:—*

Captain Wilfrid Nunn, C.M.G., D.S.O., Royal Navy.

*Admiralty,  
 21st September, 1917.*

The KING has been graciously pleased to give orders for the following appointments to the Distinguished Service Order and for the award of the Distinguished Service Cross to the undermentioned Officers in recognition of their services as mentioned in the foregoing despatch:—

*To be Companions of the Distinguished Service Order.*

Commander Bernard Buxton, R.N.  
 Commander Henry G. Sherbrooke, R.N.  
 Commander Ernest K. Arbuthnot, R.N.  
 Surgeon Frederick G. E. Hill, R.N.

*To receive the Distinguished Service Cross.*

Lieut. Robert P. D. Webster, R.N.  
 Act. Lieut. John P. Bradley, R.N.R.  
 Lieut. Hugh Lincoln, R.N.R.  
 Lieut. John H. A. Wood, M.C., R.N.V.R.  
 Sub. Lieut. (act. Lieut.) Ernest C. W. Vane-Tempest, R.N.V.R.  
 Sub-Lieut. Gerald A. Feilmann, R.N.V.R.  
 Lieut. Cecil G. Hallett, R.I.M.  
 Surgeon James C. Kelly, R.N.  
 Surgeon James P. Shorten, R.N.  
 Surgeon Robert G. Elwell, R.N.

The following awards have also been made:—

*To receive the Distinguished Service Medal.*

Chief Petty Officer W. R. Ayre, O.N. 171045 (Ch.).  
 Petty Officer, 1st Class, Ronald G. Robinson, O.N. 198809 (Po.).  
 Petty Officer James Revell, O.N. 208740 (Ch.).  
 Leading Seaman H. M. J. Thompson, O.N. 236295 (Ch.).  
 Able Seaman Alfred E. Lucas, O.N. J.15975 (Ch.).  
 Able Seaman W. Stephenson, O.N. 234863 (Ch.).  
 Signalman Charles Poulter, R.N.V.R., O.N. London Z/3247 (Ch.).  
 Leading Telegraphist Sydney Boulter, O.N. J.15349 (Ch.).

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Leading Telegraphist Martin L. Elliott, O.N. J.29215 (Dev.).  
Telegraphist Herbert W. Prior, O.N. J.32080 (Ch.).  
Chief E.R.A. H. Lovell, O.N. 268831 (Ch.).  
Chief E.R.A., 2nd Class; Alexander Greig, O.N. M.17441 (Ch.).  
Act. Chief E.R.A., 4th Class, William J. Holliss, O.N. M.12130 (Ch.).  
E.R.A., 2nd Class, L. E. Brown, O.N. 271864 (Po.).  
Stoker P.O. Edward S. Crossman, O.N. 287047 (Ch.).

Stoker P.O. George T. Hasler, O.N. K.1366 (Ch.).  
Stoker P. O. John W. Mallinson, O.N. 303741 (Dev.).  
Stoker John Farrell, R.N.R., O.N. S.8533.

The following Officers are mentioned in despatches for service on the Euphrates:—  
Lieut.-Commander Alexander R. Chalmer, R.N.  
Lieut. Aubrey C. Thursfield, R.N.  
Lieut. Richard J. A. Harding, R.N.V.R.

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