

naturally under difficulties, one crashed so badly that the pilots were both severely injured.

The monitors, too, did good and useful work—particularly "Prince Eugene." Captain Ernest Wigram, D.S.O., led his division well inside range limits, in order that guns of the secondary armament might play a part as well as the big guns. This they did with good effect, and it is really rather wonderful that his division escaped without injury, for his front rank position put him inside the enemy's long-ranged star shells, and brought his division under a heavy fire from the shore batteries.

The R.M.A. siege guns, under Colonel Pryce Peacock, also maintained a valuable fire on the enemy's heavy coast batteries throughout the operation.

22. To return to Ostend. 2 a.m., i.e., "Vindictive's" programme time to arrive at the piers, was signalled by a heavy cannonade of quick-firers and machine-gun fire near the entrance. The enemy had now almost certainly realised the nature of the attack, and since the smoke screens and fog prevented him aiming at definite objectives, except when the small craft ran close alongside to fire torpedoes at, or engage, the pier-heads with their machine guns, he concentrated his effort in a continuous barrage fire across the entrance from the whole of the exceedingly formidable array of batteries in the neighbourhood of Ostend.

23. For the next twenty minutes, the critical period during which "Vindictive" must succeed or fail, the off-shore destroyer forces were ordered to fire star shell over the entrance, and shell at the enemy's batteries—the former to light up the pier-heads for "Vindictive," and the latter to divert the enemy's attention further seaward. This firing was useful; the in-shore forces were encouraged by having audible proof of our support close behind them, and the enemy diverted a small proportion of his fire. Very few shells came near us, however, either at this time or later; there were no casualties either to material or personnel among the off-shore forces. I attribute this mainly to the fog and smoke screens.

24. Meanwhile, "Vindictive," after passing our calcic-phosphide buoy, had arrived "on time" at where she expected to find the entrance. The fog, and apparently also some of the smoke borne on an easterly draught of air (the result of wind impinging on the tall houses on the sea front), had reduced the sea-shore visibility to two or three hundred yards at the most, and nothing could be seen.

"Vindictive" accordingly reduced speed, turned about, and searched to the westward. Still finding nothing, she again turned about, steered slowly eastward, and gave the "last resort" signal to her C.M.B. escort. This signal was obeyed by lighting a million candle-power flare close inshore to the westward of the entrance. In most circumstances, the illumination of the whole sea front by this intensely brilliant flare would probably have brought very heavy casualties to the inshore craft and "Vindictive" herself, through placing them under accurate gunfire, but on this occasion the fog, hitherto our enemy, now proved our friend, for while the flare showed "Vindictive" the piers, the small craft still remained ill-defined or invisible, except at closest range.

25. "Vindictive" now became clearly visible to the enemy's batteries, who concen-

trated all efforts on her, but she had only two hundred yards to go, and Commander Godsall immediately turned up for the entrance.

Communication between the conning tower and the after control soon failed, and, the entrance being passed, Commander Godsall went outside the conning tower and gave the necessary orders for placing the ship in her blocking position.

At this moment a very heavy shell burst, either on the conning tower or close to it. This must have killed Commander Godsall, for he was seen no more; and later, after the ship had been sunk in the channel, careful search failed to reveal his body.

This very gallant officer must have known before being killed that his efforts were crowned with success. Lieutenant Sir John Alleyne was knocked out, severely wounded in the stomach, and all the occupants of the conning tower were badly shaken by this shell. Lieutenant Victor Crutchley then took command, and endeavoured to place the ship across the channel. The sinking charges were fired by Engineer Lieutenant-Commander William A. Bury, and preparations made to abandon ship.

26. All this time "Vindictive" was continuously fired at, both by heavy and machine guns, and repeatedly hit; the after control had been completely demolished, killing Sub-Lieutenant Angus MacLachlan and all with him, and the whole upper deck was a mass of debris.

Notwithstanding this, perfect order was maintained, and a careful search for wounded was made before embarking in the two M.L.'s (Nos. 254 and 276), who had run in through the fire zone to effect the rescue.

27. Motor Launch 254 (Lieutenant Geoffrey H. Drummond, R.N.V.R.), coming alongside "Vindictive's" inshore side, embarked Lieutenant Crutchley, Engineer Lieutenant-Commander Bury, and thirty-seven men. With his First Lieutenant (Lieutenant Gordon Ross, R.N.V.R.) and Deckhand J. Thomas killed, his coxswain wounded, and himself wounded in three places, Lieutenant Drummond backed his now heavily laden motor launch out of the harbour, still under a tremendous fire, cleared the entrance, and made straight to seaward.

Arriving outside the fire zone, Lieutenant Drummond found his launch gradually filling forward from her injuries. Standing on at slow speed through the fog, and contriving somehow or other to pass close to the offshore destroyers without either getting in touch, M.L. 254 was most fortunately picked up in a sinking condition about forty minutes after leaving Ostend by your flagship "Warwick." Rescuers and rescued were quickly taken on board, and M.L. 254 then sank.

28. M.L. 276 (Lieutenant Rowland Bourke, R.N.V.R.), having followed "Vindictive" into Ostend (engaging both piers with his machine guns *en route*), went alongside "Vindictive" after M.L. 254, with her first-rescued party, had shoved off.

After much search and shouting, and still under a very heavy fire, Lieutenant Bourke and Sub-Lieutenant Petrie managed to find and embark the last three of "Vindictive's" survivors (Lieutenant Alleyne and two ratings), all badly wounded, in the water clinging to a capsized skiff.

This fine rescue effected, M.L. 276, hit in fifty-five places and with three of her crew killed or wounded, cleared the harbour, and was able to continue steering to the westward