

The captains of "Ocean" and "Irresistible," after reporting to the Vice-Admiral Commanding, returned to the Dardanelles to join the destroyers, which, with six mine sweepers, had been ordered to enter the Straits after dark to endeavour to tow "Irresistible" into the current and prevent "Ocean" drifting out of it. No trace of either ship could be found; this was confirmed by "Jed" at 11 p.m. after an exhaustive search. "Canopus" at daylight also reconnoitred, and found no trace of either. There is no doubt both ships sank in deep water.

The squadron anchored at Tenedos for the night, "Canopus" and "Cornwallis" being on patrol with destroyers at the entrance of the Straits.

The damaged ships were dealt with as follows:—

"Inflexible" anchored north of Tenedos.

"Gaulois" grounded on north of Drepano Island—damage due to gunfire.

On the morning of the 19th instant, Contre Amiral Guépratte informed me that the "Suffren" was leaking forward; it had been necessary to flood the fore magazine on account of fire, and a heavy shell had started a leak.

"Inflexible," "Suffren," and "Gaulois" will therefore require to go to Malta for repairs.

J. M. DE ROBECK,

Vice-Admiral.

March 24, 1915.

DESTROYER OPERATIONS, MARCH 17 AND 18, 1915.

(All times are local.)

"Basilisk," "Grasshopper," "Raccoon" and "Mosquito" covered the operations of the mine sweepers on the night of the 17th-18th March, being engaged during this service with shore batteries on both sides of the Straits.

At 6 a.m. on the 18th March, "Mosquito" saw and sunk three carbonite mines floating near Morto Bay—none exploded.

10 a.m.—"Colne" and "Chelmer" sweeping ahead of line "A." During this time "Colne's" whaler was struck by a 4-inch shell.

"Wear" was in attendance on "Queen Elizabeth" throughout the day, being in consequence frequently under fire. When "Bouvet" sank, "Wear" closed and lowered whaler to pick up survivors, being under fire at the time. "Basilisk," "Grasshopper," "Raccoon," "Mosquito," "Ribble," "Kennet," "Colne," and "Chelmer" also closed, but were too late to pick up any survivors.

2.45 p.m.—Destroyers closed "Gaulois," who was in distress outside the Straits, "Colne," "Chelmer," "Mosquito," and "Kennet" transferring some of her crew to "Suffren," "Dartmouth" and "Lord Nelson."

4.10. — When "Irresistible" was observed to be in distress, "Wear" was ordered to close her. "Wear" went alongside and took off practically the whole crew under heavy fire, transferring them at 4.50 p.m. to "Queen Elizabeth."

She then returned and, after sounding round the "Irresistible," remained in the vicinity of the damaged ships until nightfall, when she rejoined "Queen Elizabeth" to report.

"Colne," "Chelmer," "Raccoon," "Mosquito," "Kennet," and "Jed" stood by "Irresistible," having come in from entrance of Straits.

6.5. — When "Ocean" struck a mine, "Raccoon," "Mosquito," "Colne," "Chelmer," "Jed," "Kennet," and "Wear" stood by under heavy cross fire, "Colne," "Chelmer," "Jed," and "Kennet" going alongside to remove the crew.

7.15. — "Colne" found no signs of "Ocean"; enemy still firing on "Irresistible."

8.30 to 11.30 p.m.—"Jed" carried out a thorough search, but could find no trace of "Ocean" or "Irresistible."

Damage sustained by destroyers:—

"Chelmer," while alongside "Ocean," struck and holed by centre stokehold, which was flooded. She went alongside "Lord Nelson," where her own mat and that belonging to "Lord Nelson" were placed over the hole. She shortly afterwards proceeded to Tenedos, escorted by "Colne."

"Raccoon," while standing by "Irresistible," was damaged by concussion of large shell under starboard quarter and some shrapnel bullets.

J. M. DE ROBECK, *Vice-Admiral.*

March 24, 1915.

MINE SWEEPING OPERATIONS, MARCH 17 AND 18, 1915.

Night of March 17 and 18.

British and French mine sweepers continued sweeping area below the line Suandere River-Kephez Light.

They reported: "No mines found."

March 18.

Mine sweepers ordered to enter and commence sweeping at 2 p.m. Of these two pairs got sweeps out, when abreast of White Cliffs, about 3.30 p.m.; they were under fire.

No progress was made beyond this point, as it was not considered advisable to leave heavy ships inside the Straits to cover their operations, "Inflexible" having already struck a mine.

J. M. DE ROBECK, *Vice-Admiral.*

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