

from land, the day being thick and foggy, she was attacked by two Heinkel III's which appeared from the South-East out of low-lying cloud, flying about 150 feet above the water. Both circled the ship once and attacked from the West. The Master at once began to zigzag. He mustered the crew and placed them behind sandbags on the fore part of the bridge. It would, he said, have been murder to expose them. He was alone at the helm throughout the attacks, which lasted 35 minutes. Both the aircraft flew over the ship at about 75 feet. They were so low that their crews could be seen laughing. One circled the bows, machine-gunning the bridge; the other flew in a figure of eight over the stern and dropped bombs. 31 were dropped in all; two only scored direct hits. These fell on the starboard side, just beneath the boat, right on the water-line. The explosions burst the boiler and wrecked the engine-room, which filled with water in about 10 minutes. A great cloud of steam escaped through the ship's side. The starboard boat was launched, though leaking; the Master put six men in it and the rest remained on board till picked up by a boat from the Danish ship "England," which had turned back from her course. "Gowrie" sank within less than an hour, without any of her crew of eleven being hurt.

Throughout a prolonged and merciless attack, to which he could make no reply, the Master did all he could to embarrass the enemy and save his ship.

*Commended:—*

Captain Matthew Hunter, Master, s.s. "Horsted" (Messrs. Stephenson, Clarke and Associated Companies, Limited, London).

S.S. "Horsted" was armed with one 12-pounder and one Lewis gun. She was in convoy. The wind was fresh to strong south-west; there was heavy rain in the evening and throughout the night. The sea was rough. She was suddenly holed some 10 feet above the waterline by a heavy explosion on the starboard side. The order was given to lower lifeboats. The Master noticed that the after tackle fall of the port lifeboat had been let go. The boat had been lowered about 10 feet and was hanging by the forward fall. Nine men had been thrown in the water. Meanwhile, the starboard boat had been lowered. The Master had gone to get papers from the cabin but was prevented by jammed bulkheads and doors. He returned to the port boat, let go the forward falls and cut the after ones, got into the boat, which was half full of water, and with the help of one sailor, who swam to the boat, rescued the nine men who would otherwise have drowned.

*To be an Additional Officer of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire:—*

Captain Cyril Gilford West, Master, s.s. "Keynes" (Messrs. Stephenson, Clarke and Associated Companies, Limited, London).

*To be an Additional Member of the Civil Division of the said Most Excellent Order:—*

Charles Augustus Coleman, Esq., Radio Officer, s.s. "Keynes" (Messrs. Stephenson, Clarke and Associated Companies, Limited, London).

*Awarded the Medal of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, for Meritorious Service:—*

Samuel Leonard Brown, Able Seaman, Gunner, s.s. "Keynes" (Messrs. Stephenson, Clarke and Associated Companies, Limited, London).

S.S. "Keynes" was armed with one Lewis gun. She was attacked by enemy aircraft twice in one day. On a fine clear morning, a single aircraft was observed coming from the East, flying low. He was recognised as a Heinkel III. An S.O.S. was sent out. As soon as he was within range, the Lewis gun opened fire. The enemy dropped one bomb, circled the ship and came in again from the starboard quarter, flying at about 100 feet. He dropped three more bombs, which missed, circled to port, attacked again from the starboard quarter with the sun behind him and dropped another three bombs, this time using his front and rear machine-guns before and after passing over the ship. He circled again across the ship, but dropped no bombs. His fore machine-gun had, it seems, been put out of action by the Lewis gun, but the rear gun scored hits. Three Spitfires now appeared and drove away the Heinkel, who dropped some 40 more bombs into the sea and retired with his tail smoking. The attack lasted some ten minutes, during which the Master swung his ship so that the Lewis gun could be trained on the aircraft. The gunner took all his chances and the Master reckons that some 300 of the 388 tracer bullets fired hit the enemy at close range.

In the middle of the afternoon, the day being still fine and clear, another aircraft swept down from the South-East about a mile and a half on "Keynes's" beam, flew round about a mile to the Northward, 50 feet above the water, turned sharply and came in from ahead. At about 300 yards, the Master, realising that it was an enemy aircraft, open fire. The enemy climbed steeply to avoid "Keynes's" masts. He dropped three bombs, one of which hit and put the steering gear out of action so that the Master could no longer use his helm. Three more bombs were dropped, one hitting in much the same place as the first. The ship caught fire, her engines stopped and she was out of control. Her port side had been blow clean away and she took on a list. Her whole deck was aflame, and as there was no way of quenching the fire, the order was given to abandon ship. The crew were picked up by one of H.M. ships.

The Gunner, on an exposed and open bridge in most trying conditions, showed great courage.

The Radio Officer, though severely wounded, tried again and again to send out signals.