

to pass the track of the Zenit Flight* at a time when it was least likely to be operating. ADVENTURE's departure was accordingly delayed to conform with the new programme. This also gave me time to oil SUFFOLK in addition to DEVONSHIRE, FURIOUS and the four destroyers, INTREPID, ESCAPADE, ANTELOPE and ACTIVE.

13. At midnight ACHATES, in tow of ANTHONY, arrived in harbour and berthed alongside DEVONSHIRE. Before sailing next day all possible assistance was given to her, arrangements were made for the accommodation of her ship's company, and such measures were taken as were necessary until the Salvage Officer arrived. In this the local military authorities gave great assistance.

26th July.

14. In addition to the destroyer patrol an A/S air patrol was arranged, using SUFFOLK's and DEVONSHIRE's Walruses.

15. ADVENTURE sailed at 1745 on the 26th July with ANTHONY in company. In view of the possible presence of an enemy submarine in the neighbourhood I considered it unsafe to send her unescorted, at 15 knots. ADVENTURE had orders to send ANTHONY back after 24 hours. An air A/S patrol from SUFFOLK was also told off to accompany her to the limit of its endurance.

16. Force "P" sailed from Seidisfiord at 2300 on the 26th July at 20 knots. An A/S air patrol had been asked for from the Admiral Commanding, Iceland, and on leaving Seidisfiord this was provided by a Northrop. The patrol was later to have been taken over by a Catalina, but as the weather closed down the Catalina was not seen.

27th July.

17. At 0345 the Force ran into fog. This continued, except for short intervals, until the afternoon, after which the visibility varied from two to ten miles with low cloud overhead.

28th July.

18. Position "B", where ADVENTURE should have been overtaken, was reached at 0200 on 28th July. Some time previously the Force had been spread five miles apart with the R.D.F. cruisers† on the flanks, thus covering a front of about 30 miles. Nothing was seen of ADVENTURE until 0550, and the Squadron proceeded at 15 knots towards Position "X". During the period of thick fog I had come to the conclusion that my orders for Force "Q" might produce an uncomfortable situation if there was fog at "X".

I had accordingly at 2012 on 27th signalled amended instructions to ECLIPSE regarding the use of D/F‡ procedure in such weather conditions.

Force "P" was a little ahead of its programme and I expected to meet Force "Q" about 1200. Up till this time no sights had been obtained, and not only was the position of Force "P" doubtful but I knew that Force "Q's" would also be very doubtful.

Admiralty footnotes:—

* The Zenit Flight—a routine German meteorological aircraft reconnaissance.

† R.D.F. cruisers—those fitted with radar equipment.

‡ D/F—direction finding by W/T.

19. On arrival in the vicinity of Position "X" a search was commenced. While so doing the sun appeared and sights were obtained, and the search was re-arranged. The Squadron was spread to cover a front of about 40 miles, with aircraft patrolling on the wings and ahead. At 1515 Force "Q" was sighted some twenty miles ahead. With Force "Q" was Captain (D), 3rd Destroyer Flotilla, in INGLEFIELD and ICARUS, who had been sent to replace ACHATES and ANTHONY.

20. Oiling then took place as follows. DEVONSHIRE gave 60 tons each to ECHO and ECLIPSE who had been the escort for Force "Q" and had filled up recently from BLACK RANGER. SUFFOLK oiled ESCAPADE and INTREPID with 150 tons each, and BLACK RANGER was ordered to oil ADVENTURE. Oiling commenced at about 1820 but unfortunately the wind was from the south-west and the oiling course was therefore directly opposite to the future course. During oiling FURIOUS and VICTORIOUS acted independently and maintained an A/S patrol in the air.

29th July.

21. I estimated from the time taken to oil the first destroyer that SUFFOLK would complete oiling at 0130. ADVENTURE had only 310 tons to take, but at 0022 she reported she had received only 150 tons and that it would take another 16 hours at her present rate of oiling to complete. She put down the slow rate to the cooling of the oil. The temperature of the sea was 50 degs. I did not consider that I could afford this time and I therefore told her to discontinue oiling at 0130. At 0058 FURIOUS reported fog ahead and I immediately gave orders for ADVENTURE to cast off. She was then 130 tons short.

22. At that time the Force was spread about, DEVONSHIRE was close to BLACK RANGER and ADVENTURE, SUFFOLK seven or eight miles away to the south-westward, FURIOUS and VICTORIOUS with two aircraft up were five miles to the southward. Thick fog was met almost immediately. Previous to this the carriers and ADVENTURE had been told that the Force would be turned to 050 degs. at 15 knots at 0130. On entering the fog I made by syren "course 050 degs.", and turned to that course myself. I also made course and speed by low power W/T. As I was uncertain of the reception of this signal, which was broadcast, I also made a wireless signal to shore addressed Force "P" giving a rendezvous at 0300 on 30th July in Position "C", allowing a speed of 15 knots to that position.

23. Nothing more was seen of the Squadron until 0900 on the 29th when the aircraft carriers formed up, followed by SUFFOLK and 6 destroyers at 1047. At that time visibility was only about 1 mile but it shortly increased to about four or five miles. I was glad to learn that VICTORIOUS had succeeded in landing on her aircraft. The Force had been largely kept together by R.D.F.* and this showed of what immense value R.D.F. can be in such a situation. ADVENTURE was not sighted until 2150 that night by which time visibility had increased to ten miles. She was some distance astern.

Admiralty footnote:—

* R.D.F.—radar.