

16. It was fairly certain that the enemy had at least one submarine operating directly with him, and he had ample destroyers to interpose between the convoy and my approach—well advertised as I knew it would be.

I had therefore no hesitation in withdrawing what remained of the striking force and ordering them to the pre-arranged rendezvous after night action—Tanjong Priok.

(Signed) H. M. L. WALLER,

Captain, R.A.N.

ENCLOSURE 2.

H.M.S. ELECTRA—REPORT OF ACTION 27TH FEBRUARY, 1942, BY SENIOR SURVIVING OFFICER.

No attempt is made in this narrative to plot the course of action. It is assumed that better details have been forwarded by the cruiser force. Any courses, speeds or times are approximate as my action station was O.O.Q.* on the torpedo tubes.

2. At about 1520, Striking Force received an enemy report that two cruisers and five destroyers were 20 miles West of Bawean Island. Striking Force was then inside Sourabaya swept channel, but turned Northwards. ELECTRA took station 4 miles ahead of cruisers with JUPITER and ENCOUNTER on port and starboard beam, 5 miles.

3. About 1600 enemy was sighted ahead on the starboard bow and action was joined. ELECTRA appeared to be acting as flank marking ship, and was engaged by the enemy force at once; I assume that enemy destroyers only were firing at us at a range of 14,000 yards. The first and second salvos were straddles, and correct for line, falling roughly in line with the tubes. No hits were obtained however. Enemy then turned 90° to starboard and we turned on parallel course. Salvos continued to fall close, but missing astern, short and over. This was undoubtedly due to the magnificent handling of the ship by the Captain; Commander C. W. May, R.N. About 1640 the enemy turned away to the North and the Allied force gave chase. This left the destroyers out of range for a while but the cruisers carried on the action.

4. About 1700, we appeared to run into a superior force and the Allied force turned 180° to the Southward. From my position, the enemy appeared to have at least two heavy cruisers or battleships, and several cruisers or destroyers. This is only a personal estimate, and it is realised that from deck level, with all the smoke and confusion of battle, that this estimate may well be inaccurate.

5. About 1715, EXETER was hit. She appeared to maintain speed but was having trouble with steering. Destroyers then made smoke.

6. At 1730, ELECTRA was ordered to counter-attack. Smoke was very thick and visibility in a very large area was reduced to about half a mile, although it is probable that the bridge personnel could see over the smoke.

As we cleared the smoke, an enemy unit consisting of three heavy destroyers was sighted on opposite courses going into the smoke. Range about 6,000 yards. We immediately

engaged and claimed hits from four salvos on the leading ship. ELECTRA did not fire torpedoes. Conditions seemed fairly favourable from the tubes, but as we were still in communication with the bridge, I thought we were going for bigger game.

8. As the enemy unit disappeared into the smoke, a lucky shell hit us in number 2 boiler room, port side. This shattered the boiler and carried away telemotor pipes from the steering gear. Steam dropped and in spite of the efforts of the engine room staff, steam was lost. This was in a large measure due to the fact that water ran from No. 3 boiler to the damaged one. ELECTRA then stopped, with a slight list to port, and the order was given "Prepare to abandon ship."

9. Shortly after, a single enemy heavy destroyer emerged from the smoke. We engaged immediately, the guns firing in local control, as all communication with the bridge was dead. A single fast destroyer is a pretty poor target from a stopped ship, but it was worth a chance. The enemy commenced hitting with the second salvo, silencing our guns one by one and causing heavy fires forward and an increased list to port. With only Y gun left firing, the order was given "Abandon ship." The injured men were put in the first whaler, the only boat left whole. The whaler had about 25 men on board when it left the ship. Nos. 4 and 5 Carley-floats were got away and I saw another broken float drift by.

10. Everybody appeared to have left the ship that could do so, except Leading Steward Gretton who came to ask what we should do with two wounded on the quarterdeck. With Gretton's aid, I put them into the water, one with a Kinsbie lifebuoy, and the other with a grating. Both appeared to be making for a Carley-float.

11. The enemy was still firing, having closed so that he could use his pom-poms. About this time, a shell fell among the men in the water. I then went round with Gretton, throwing floatable things in the water amongst them, two ammunition boxes, smoke floats and a T.S.D.S. float.

12. The ship then sighed, listed heavily to port and down by the bows. There were no live men left in the after part of the ship, so I took Gretton and left.

13. Once clear of the ship, I saw someone, presumably the Captain, come to the starboard side of the bridge and wave to the men in the water who cheered lustily. The Captain then appeared to leave by the port side.

14. The ELECTRA then settled more sleepily, turned over and slowly sank until her screws and about six feet of the quarterdeck were showing.

15. She remained in this position for some time before finally sinking slowly out of sight, about 1800.

16. In the nature of things, casualties on board were very high. The ELECTRA and her ship's company stood up to the punishment in the best traditional manner. She was a grand ship, and I am proud to have served in her with such a fine crowd of men.

(Signed) T. J. CAIN,

Gunner (T).

Admiralty footnote —

* O.O.Q.—Officer of Quarters.