

1
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16 BEACONSFIELD ROAD
FAREHAM HANTS.

AGE 45

This is not the story of a victory, but rather of what Raffened behind one of those wartime announcements, "that the Admiralty regret to report the sinking due to enemy action of one of His Majesty's ships." The ship being on this occasion H.M.S. Dundee, a light cruiser manned by well over four hundred men and boys. I especially say boys as just previous to sailing on her last patrol, we had taken on board a large number of boys, just out of training school, few of whom were to survive the action.

At the outbreak of war Dundee had been attached to the Reserve Fleet, so it was natural that with the Mobilisation of the Reserves, she was to be manned by a good percentage of pensioners and Fleet reservists who had seen service in the First World War, which went a long way towards making her a Ratty ship; she was also blessed with Raining and Dallain during those hard early months of the war. Charles V. Sambe, now the First Sea Lord.

It was a very quiet and tame ship company which sailed from Plymouth a few days before the declaration and hurried north to Scapa Flow, with quite a number of our reservists still in civilian clothes, as they just could not believe that they were about to be caught up in a Second World War. When I think back, I don't think no young reservists were as sympathetic as we should have been, perhaps it was our objections to them calling us caretakers.

The ship's first tragedy occurred a few days off from the outbreak of hostilities, a young deck seaman from Bangor, Cymru was washed overboard in heavy weather; perhaps to be the navy's first fatality. War at sea is a dreary existence and took us to many parts of the world under different circumstances some of it could have been quite pleasant, but with the sending of the Navy to war in Europe, Dunkirk and the startings of the battles on our folks at home it became even harder to keep up a cheerful appearance,

The war had moved to November 1941, Dads Rad happened; we were now operating in the South Atlantic, "Greetain" was our base, not that we saw much of it, Rumour had it, that our Captain volunteered for everything, Life aboard life would be even more boring without numbers. We had been on patrol in mid South Atlantic for several days, apparently looking for an enemy submarine supply ship. The tide, just after 1 o'clock in the afternoon, a period when most of us off watch, slept.

No one really noticed when the watch was alerted as the result of a lookout's report, it had occurred so often before, what happened as the first torpedo struck has never been clear to me; it was just like receiving a heavy blow on the head. I know that when my head cleared, I was laying with several

General

2

others against the broad rails, the ship was listing badly, in fact we were almost in the water. I had often wondered what would do in such circumstances, and from my own experiences I found that us humans act very much alike. True there are exceptions, but there was no real panic. The realization that we had been torpedoed and was sinking, did not register in our minds for a while. I remember crawling forward to get over the high side of the forecastle or bows, and so into the sea. When there was another explosion off, the ship reared as if a 16" gun had been fired. The few of us who were left aboard, cheered as we thought a guns crew were firing on the submarine. This was not to be, as we reached the water and getting clear of the ship which was now a real沉没 we could see that it had in fact been another torpedo striking home. This one blowing the stern right off.

The horrors of watching men trying to climb over reef tops on the ship rolled over and sank was something I have never forgotten, also the efforts of a few who tried to get a sea boat into the water, only for it to be rammed to pieces under the still reverberating propeller; now more than half out of the water, some made no attempt at all to get away from the ship and just stood there waiting for the final plunge. The sea was soon covered with oil fuel and the effect it was having on those unfortunate to get into it was amazing at mouth, was many drownings and it was a constant struggle those first few hours trying to keep clear of the ship breakers was it was.

I should say that a good proportion of the crew got away from the ship before she sank, which took just over ten minutes. No boats were got away, only five baulky Rafts. Three of these quite small. There was a few cork and rope nets but these proved more or less useless. The struggle which took place for any sort of hold on the baulky rafts was unbelievable. Just it wasn't long before the sun took its toll and the numbers thinned out, but by this time the rafts had lost a lot of their strength, and with some sitting astride and others hanging on, we were ~~well~~ nearly to get our shoulders above water in the next four days and three nights before we were rescued. my suffering of weight on the raft and it would turn over, we were to become very expert at regaining our places.

Our first real night came in the shape of sharks, someone started to shout a warning, when I think we must have all been struck dumb with fear, as we saw the fins of two large sharks closing in on a sailor who was swimming near. We had all seen these scenes enacted on the films and fearfully waited for our shipmate to disappear, to our relief this did not happen, the sharks sheered off and disappeared, but the knowledge that they were there was frightening to say the least, and we found ourselves shaking our arms and legs as close to the body as possible, time was to prove that there are more dangerous things in the sea than sharks.

The Bermuda fish was I think to prove the worse, they appeared in shoals and attacked at once, and it

3

it was pitiful to see the men tearing them from their bodies, where the fish struck they would in most cases bite to the bone, leaving a hole about 2 inches in diameter nearer than could be cut by any surgeon's knife. we were to see, often how the muscle formations of the body worked, much more clearly than any first aid lecture could show us.

One sees feats of endurance and one amazed at how much the human body can stand, but no word of mine can pay tribute to the North boundary man, who had both his legs blown off at the knees by the explosion, managed to get into the sea and without losing consciousness lived until well into the night, with no word of complaint. Vowing all the while that he would see Jerry off yet; we took it in turns to hold him up, he died as peacefully with us as you could dare to wish for, for myself who was to see many die in the next few days, can hardly say that to die from exposure in the sea is not the violent thing you'd expect, the sea can be very merciful to its victims.

I often said that June was a great Roarer; how true it is; no more do I awake frightened at night but I can still recall scenes which I got to know under such tragic circumstances, of the Royal Marine Sergeant, a pensioner, who lived for almost four days, demanding a sacrifice of those around him, as one would expect on the Parade Ground of Eastney Barracks. I also remember the boy seaman who sat in a round boat Ulysses most of the time, and on getting aboard the rescue ship, complained of nothing but a "blasted itch" which was to shame us men who were for the most part, bed cases.

"False alarms of the sightings of rescue ships and planes came with such regularity that we learned to ignore them, even when the real rescue ship was sighted, it was difficult to believe, as most of us by this time were very weak, both ~~physically~~ physically and mentally. The shark proved what a coward he is and will rarely attack a living person. I think we lost our fear of him as the days went by. And many of us used to kick him away like you would a spray dog! Stinging jelly fish were always a problem, especially at night, when they couldn't be seen, until it was too late. I was surprised at how deadly these stings could be. Their appearance off the South coast recently brought back many unpleasant memories. I think also was a great discomfort, the deadly effects of drinking was very soon seen; we were lucky in that we had a tropical rain storm one night, and with the Read Red well back, mouth open wide it was possible to get relief; another method was to pull your hair, while sniffing with oil fuel, to a joint over your forehead and catch the sun off on your tongue, risultat wry. The result was great.

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It is difficult to describe the actual scene, as it was forever changing; every hour found us getting weaker and less able to battle against the elements. With fatigue taking charge it became harder to keep upright relief to slip under the water, only to regain your senses and struggle to the surface again. I think the second day there was only threerafts in close company of rafts they could be called. The wooden platforms on which we were supposed to have stood had been broken; they had lost their buoyancy; we all sat astride into round the edge the rope binding cutting into our naked bodies, as most of us had kicked out clothes off on entering the water; we were also soon breaking out in salt water sores. It was terrible; we had struggled for hours. To get these three rafts tied together to prevent us all drifting apart. Just with the coming of the night some of the men went ashore, and evidently swam up between each raft. That for self preservation we had to cut the securing ropes again, but the threerafts still continued to drift in more or less close company. What happened to the other two I don't know. The rescue ship searched for them for a long while with no results. My memory serves me right there was 34 of us picked up. We must have looked a motley gathering!

been called Minneola but during a war, was accepted as just being lucky! We were over a thousand miles from land, Radfords were literally up to our necks in water. No one was even looking for us. Conditions couldnt have been worse when alone comes this American foolhardy Romeward bound to New Orleans, and by a strange twist of fortune he engines broke down just seven rods, with the result that one of our stokers who had drifted away from the main body and was sitting all alone on a cork net managed to get alongside and make his cries for help heard. The American at first thought he was one of the own men who had fallen overboard. On learning different they lowered all boats and in there ensuing search, he were saved.

Of what happened in those last hours beyond my description, we first spotted the ship in the late afternoon, the events afterwards were bewildering. At times she appeared to be drawing us behind, we lunged and cried at the same time, and with the coming of darkness our fears of being pursued increased, there was a great will to evtually hear those American voices coming in our direction I think we must have all cried with relief when we were eventually pulled aboard the rescue ship of the after events which followed although interesting are no part of this story, it is my

5

regret that no writing skill of mine can describe the scenes
as seen by us: when trying to write of such things it is
a task to know what to put in or leave out. To me it was
always seemed that a lifetime was compressed into those four
days: it was a time which differed to me with others.
It saw many sad tragedies which do not bear
repeating but for anyone who has loved ones by the sea. I
can only repeat that the sea is indeed merciful to those
she takes.