



By the KING'S Order the name of
Lieutenant Granville Murray Ball, R.N.R.,
H.M.S. Shoreham,
was published in the London Gazette on
23 November, 1943.
as mentioned in a Despatch for distinguished service.
I am charged to record
His Majesty's high appreciation.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'W. Alexander', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

First Lord of the Admiralty



FROM: COMMANDING OFFICER, H.M.S. SHORHAM.
 DATE: 15th August 1943.
 TO: COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, LEVANT,
 (Copies to:-
 Flag Officer Commanding, Gibraltar,
 R.A.L., Alexandria,
 Comodore (D)).

SHORHAM sailed from Alexandria at 08300/3 as S.O.E. of Convoy M.W.S. 39/M.K.S. 21 consisting of 34 ships.

Escort, 11 ships, was disposed as follows, SHORHAM "A", GAWLER "B", WHITEHAVEN "C", IPSWICH "D", RYE "F", LISMORE "L", MARYBOROUGH "N", HYTHE "P", KINGSTON CORAL and M.L. 286 astern. RAMSEY who was to join the following morning was allocated position M. Diagram C.C.I. of A.C.I. refers, all escorts decreasing distances laid down by a 1000^x during the dark hours and during the twilight hours forming a close A/A screen around convoy.

Convoy was late forming up and at nightfall only 27 ships were in station though others could be seen approaching. Kingston Coral was detached to escort any stragglers independently and at daylight it was observed GALWAY Coast was not in company and my 040705 was made.

At 205080 in Lat. 31 15 N Long 28 41 E two R.D.F. contacts were obtained ahead. These were investigated and no answer being received to the challenge star shells were fired, revealing H.M.T. BREEM escorting one Merchant Vessel. They were successfully diverted clear of Convoy and BREEM's 032039 giving his P.C. and S. was not received until two hours later.

At 03550/4 in Lat. 3125N Long 2745 E an Asdic contact was obtained by SHORHAM and being doubtful attacked with one charge. A similar contact was attacked at 05100/4. LISMORE and GAWLER both obtained contacts at the same time on different bearing and it is assumed it was a shoal of large fish.

Convoy experienced the usual set-in off RAS AZZA. This was detected by R.D.F. and Comadore informed at 22080/4 and convey hauled off clear of the land.

At 22570 in Lat. 3202¹/₂N Long. 2457 E a surface Rahe, similar to a Submarine, was detected at a Range of 2,300^x. Alarm was given by R/T and SHORHAM went into attack, simultaneously firing Star Shell which failed. The gunfire brought an immediate reply from Z Lighter No. 17 who had previously not answered challenge. She was right ahead of convoy and in view of the likelihood of her silhouette being mistaken by Convoy for that of a S/M I ordered her to burn navigation lights until convoy was clear.

H.M.S. LISMORE was consuming 16% of her fuel daily as compared with 8% for the remainder of her class. I therefore decided to send her into Bengazi in accordance with paragraph B of your 0233400 when that section of the convoy detached at 0600B on the 6th. that she might top up with fuel and so leave me with an adequate screen off Malta when the four Banger Class Sweepers were detached to refuel. LISMORE rejoined at 1015B on the 7th and took up position S as the M.L. had been detached. SHORHAM took position L.

Sicily section was detached in position 35 20 N 15 20 E.

M.K.S. 21 had been routed from position 281 to 212 direct, this took convoy across minefield G.K.B. 6. I therefore re-routed them informing C.in.C. Med. in my 051802. This diversion made us somewhat late contacting ships from Malta but R.D.F. contact with them was made at 0514 nearing 052⁰ 15 miles and ships for Malta proceeded at 0556B under escort of the four Bangers (S.G. in WHITEHAVEN)

and 7 ships from Malta escorted by Three Hunts joined M.K.S. 21 which even with the joiners were now only 11 ships.

Weather deteriorated badly on this day, 8th August, and as WHADDON had to rendezvous north of Pantellaria at 2000 with G.T.L. 5 permission was requested, and approved for Destroyers to part company at 1400B/8. Convoy was proceeding at a signalled speed of 7 knots but some of the ships were making heavy weather of it particularly JABE and VELOX who were straggling. At 1622B L.S.T. 407 damaged her bow doors and hove to to try to secure them. JANE also hove to, and fearing the consequences to L.S.T. 407 in the heavy seas then running should she be unable to secure her doors I detached LISMORE to stand by her. At 2000B a signal was received from LISMORE saying the three ships had got under way again at 1845 and as convoy had been proceeding so slowly it was hoped to see them again at daylight. Weather continued boisterous throughout the night and it was probably owing to this that the R.D.F. operators failed to pick up a contact ahead at the usual range, for at 0012B/9 in position 36 57 N 12° 00 E a contact was reported bearing 315 degrees 9,800^X. Full spread was rung (14 knots) and the alarm given and contact investigated. At 3,000^X I sighted a large Merchant Vessel ahead, then another and simultaneously had a report from the R.D.F. that it was another convoy. I immediately signalled M.K.S. 21 to switch on navigation lights, illuminated converging convoy with my searchlight and they too switched on lights, and carried out an emergency turn to port. At 0050 a signal was received from the Commodore that No.41 "CITY OF DURBAN" had been in collision with an unknown ship and had stopped. I detached MARYBOROUGH at 0055 to stand by the disabled ship but at 0300B she reported she had searched the area with R.D.F. and had been unable to find her and was ordered to rejoin. At daylight "CITY OF DURBAN" was seen to be in company and reported having only slight damage to her collision with the S.S. LUCREIA MOTT of the other convoy. She also reported that the other ship had damaged one plate above the water line.

There was no sign of LISMORE and the two stragglers at daylight on the 9th but at 0745B a signal was received from LISMORE stating she had lost contact during the night and was looking for her. She was ordered to give them the route to Bizerta and rejoin. At 1030 the four Bangors were sighted rejoining after fuelling at Malta and the straggler JABE was coming up astern. On detaching GAWLER and IPSWICH to Bizerta to refuel at 1217B I sent in a signal time of origin 0931Z to N.O.L.C. Bizerta reporting damage to L.S.T. 407 and aircraft were detailed to search the area but at 1810B a signal was received from SYE covering the rear of the convoy in the swept channel, to say the missing L.S.T. was 7 miles astern of her and my previous signal was cancelled.

Bizerta ships detached and joined at 1830B on the 9th and as ROMNEY had a defective circulating engine she anchored in Bizerta Roads to effect repairs.

By daylight on the 10th all escorts were back in company and BONE ships detached and joined at 0800B and Phillipville ships at 1400 B. Of the latter two were unable to maintain convoy speed and LISMORE was detached to escort them to Algiers and rejoin. Convoy now 15 ships, arrived at Algiers at 1500B on the 11th and joiners and leavers gave a total of 22 ships which anchored off Oran at 1800B on the 12th. Convoy, now 30 ships, left Oran for Gibraltar at 0800B on Friday 13th.

At 2050B Friday 13th when on a mean course of 288 speed of advance 8 knots Lat 36 13 N 02 20 W; 37 aircraft were sighted on the Northern horizon flying on a parallel course distant about 15 miles. The aircraft were just visible in fact at first the O.C.W. thought they were the roofs of houses on the Spanish Coast, but no time was lost in hoisting the black flag, a warning shot was fired in the direction of the aircraft, air raid warning red passed to Commodore by 10 and a Help message transmitted. Unfortunately the R/T set was temporarily out of action.

The aircraft turned in, in line abreast, when on a bearing of 290 flying at a height of about 40 feet weaving in and out and SHORHAM opened barrage fire when they were at an estimated range of 6,000^X and the formation broke up and attacked the convoy from ahead and both bows. It is possible that the size of the minesweepers

who formed the remainder of the escort deluded them into thinking SHORHAM was a larger ship than is the case, for three aircraft carried out torpedo attacks on SHORHAM but as they dropped their torpedoes at a range of between 2,000 and 3,000 yards avoiding action was successful. Close range fire was held, both by escorts and convoy until the aircraft were very near and the volume of fire that suddenly broke out must have come as a most unpleasant surprise. Of the first wave, Heinkel 111s, I personally saw four shot down, one at 2055, one at 2058, one at 2103 and one at 2118 one of these disintegrated in mid air over the convoy. The Heinkels appeared to carry two torpedoes each, some at least were seen to drop two, and also small bombs which they released as they flew down through the convoy lines. They also opened fire with machine guns but as far as SHORHAM is concerned this fell short.

Two ships in the convoy S.S. EMPIRE HAVEN and F.W. PETTYGROVE were hit in this attack. I ordered the four rear escorts to cover the rear of the convoy in anticipation of a second attack from the east as a Junkers 88 was now above the convoy at about 12000 feet. This attack developed at 2135 and was carried out by J.U. 88s with some Heinkels (about 8 JU 88s) and was even less successful than the first two being brought down several being hit and no ships damaged.

All was quiet by 2140 and I detached HYATT and RYE to stand by the damaged ship which due to excellent work on the part of the sweepers both arrived at their destination 12 hours after the convoy.

H.M.S. SPEEDY, who formed part of the convoy requested permission to reinforce the screen. This was gratefully accepted until she had to part company at 0730B/14.

7 planes were brought down for certain during the attack, 5 in the first wave, and two in the second and as S.S. J.C. BLANE picked up survivors from another at 2200 and as aircraft saw the survivors of another the following morning two at least, of the damaged planes failed to return.

It is difficult in such melee to assess claims of individual ships to aircraft. All the escorts scored hits with close range weapons and near misses with H.E. but the greatest volume of close range fire came from the convoy. It was magnificent.

In SHORHAM the conduct of the following specially deserves mention. Lieutenant C.M. Hall, R.N.R.,
Chief Petty Officer W.D. Bennet, J/CX 137954
J.G. Brand, A.B. C/SSX 27492
P. Mellow, A.B. D/SSX 24601
P.G. Trott, A.B. F/JX 325539.

Apart from the damage to the ships torpedoed casualties were suffered from machine gun fire as follows:-

H.M.S. GAWLER (1), S.S. ANNE BRADSTREET (3), S.S. ELDER (3),
S.S. PORT ALMA (1), S.S. WILLIAM GERHARD (1).

It is submitted that the attack though boldly pressed home was badly timed and executed, and the light favoured the escorts and convoy. Even if the Junkers 88s that were in the second wave were in addition to the 37 in the first wave giving a total of about 45, 9 planes down for no ships sunk makes it a very unprofitable attack from their point of view.

EXTRACT OF THE GERMAN NEWS IN ENGLISH.

NAVY NEWS.

Convoy Battle.

A Squadron of German torpedo planes under the command of Major Kluemper in the evening hours of Aug. 13th. directed a surprise attack East of Gibraltar against a large convoy entering the Mediterranean.

In daring attacks the German planes scored hits with their aerial torpedoes on 32 ships. Two destroyers, and 4 large fully laden vessels, including a tanker, went down immediately, while 8 further vessels remained lying motionless, burning and listing heavily. Due to darkness falling and strong A.A. defences the result of the other torpedo hits could not at once be ascertained. Continuous reconnaissance, however, confirmed that at least 170,000 G.R.T. of the convoy have been sunk or devastatingly hit. Seven German planes failed to return.

The following details are now available concerning the convoy battle:- The battle began on August, 13th. at 20.00hrs. when the convoy was 110 sea miles East of Gibraltar in the neighbourhood of Alboran. Even before dusk the convoy consisting of 70 ships was attacked. As in the case with all enemy convoys this one was also protected by numerous destroyers and corvettes. The attacking German torpedo planes were met with heavy defensive fire from all the war-ships and the armed merchantmen.

At the same time the corvettes tried to lay a smoke screen round the convoy but in spite of the heavy A.A. barrage of the destroyers in particular, our machines were able to drop their torpedoes from very close range. In low level attacks they continuously broke through the A.A. barrages and selected large merchantmen and a tanker as targets.

All the ships of the Anglo-American convoy were fully laden and had the Sicilian theatre of war as their destination. Our squadrons went in to the attack with incomparable courage. A great strain was put on every crew because the convoy could only be reached after a flight of many hours. After the attack which was carried out in several waves, the sea was covered with wrecks of burning ships; thick black clouds of smoke lay over the burning tanker and everywhere numerous life-boats were to be seen. A number of the ships which had been hit sank after heavy explosions and large patches of oil covered the water.

By this attack by German torpedo planes on August, 13th. the enemy has suffered very heavy losses in shipping space, and supplies for the Sicilian front have suffered. Only a few days ago the following sinkings by the German Luftwaffe were reported against Mediterranean targets since the beginning of the Sicilian battle. In four weeks of bitter fighting during the period July, 10th. to August, 10th. 1943 more than 325 transports totalling more than 1,2 million G.R.T.'s were hit by bombs and aerial torpedoes. In this connection the sinkings of 33 freighters totalling 154,000 G.R.T. and numerous medium and small ships has been definitely ascertained. In addition 58 merchant ships totalling 273,750 G.R.T. were so severely damaged that their destruction can be considered as certain.

Those significant sinkings which cost the Anglo American tonnage which is difficult to replace and also irreplaceable war material, increased on August, 13th. by the successful attack of the torpedo planes under the command of Major Kluemper.