

26th May, 1940

ENCLOSURE No. 29 TO DOVER LETTER OF 27th July 1940

H.M.S. WINDSOR

B14/0/1046

Return to H 014793/40

Sir,

I have the honour to report that, in accordance with orders received from Commander in Chief NORE, I left Sheerness at 1700, Tuesday, 21st May and arrived at Dover at 1945.

2. At 1100, 22nd May, I left Dover and carried out Patrol O.C.1.

3. At 2300/22 I received orders to proceed to Calais and assist in repelling enemy tanks which were in the town.

4. Arriving at 0001/23 I berthed alongside Venetia who was secured to the CITY OF CHRISTCHURCH. I learned that the signal reporting enemy tanks had been made at the instigation of a priest who told him that the enemy were in the town, that he must not unload his cargo of tanks but must clear the harbour as soon as possible. He had actually let go his wires when the Sea Transport Officer, Major Attwood R.M., saw him, stopped him and made him start unloading, but the signal had gone addressed to Admiralty from the Commanding ~~Officer~~ Officer, Calais.

5. At Major Attwood's request I left the Harbour with VENETIA and patrolled close inshore with the intention of shelling enemy tanks approaching Calais from Boulogne.

6. By 0600/23 nothing was seen so I left Venetia on patrol and reentered Calais, berthing on the City of Christchurch.

7. I then went ashore with Major Attwood and called on the Military C.O., Colonel Holland, at his headquarters in the town. He informed me that he did not require any assistance except the bombardment of any columns approaching Calais.

8. I then returned on board and reported the situation to the Vice Admiral, Dover stating that the City of Christchurch would be cleared by noon and that it was completely feasible to land more troops and vehicles.



9. I remained in harbour until noon, 23rd to see how the situation developed and then proceeded to sea to make room for fresh transports. During the forenoon enemy bombers appeared but were driven off by our fighters before dropping any bombs.
10. Renewing the patrol with Venetia, at 1340 I saw a column of vehicles come over the hill from Boulogne and make its way towards Sangatte and Calais. I ordered both ships to open fire and quite soon the column was stopped and most of the vehicles set on fire.
11. At 1610/23 Venetia left me and at 1630 I found a boatload of English soldiers drifting about who had escaped from Boulogne after being driven out of their positions. Hearing that there were more of them on the beach I sent a boat in under SubLieutenant Collar who could however find only two French soldiers whom he brought off. Considering that the soldiers reported that machine gun fire was to be expected from the cliff SubLieutenant Collar carried out this operation very well indeed.
12. The patrol was resumed at 1800/23 and continued until I received orders to enter Boulogne and assist in the evacuation.
13. Before entering the harbour at ~~2140~~ 2230 I put my armament into local control and gave orders to open fire on the North side of the town at any targets that could be found. My chief concern was the navigation as I had not been to Boulogne before and it was quite dark.
14. I expected to find Wild Swan still in and in looking for her I went too far into the harbour and alongside the South Side. Seeing that Wild Swan was not there and that there was no sign of activity, I went astern and round a bend in the jetty and alongside the correct place where I found the soldiers.
15. The ship was under fire the whole time but owing to the very low tide and also to fires between me and the enemy the ship was not hit.

16. The fire from the ship was most effective and silenced several enemy positions.

17. Meanwhile the soldiers including about 30 wounded were embarked and when everywhere between decks was full and there was no standing room left on the upper deck I considered the ship to be scarcely stable and cast off.

18. It was difficult to control the embarkation as my ships company were fully occupied at their action stations and 30 civilians managed to get on board.

19. It was not easy to get out astern as there was not much water and the heavily loaded ship was very sluggish.

20. I cleared the ~~harbour~~/ outer harbour at 2320/23, exactly 50 minutes after entering it.

21. After consulting the Brigadier and Commander WELMAN who were among the party I informed Vice Admiral Dover that two more destroyers were needed to complete the evacuation but that it must be done before daylight. I considered it was an easy operation in the circumstances which were prevailing at the time.

22. After clearing the harbour I gradually increased to 20 knots but in altering course 15° using 10° of wheel I realised that the ship was scarcely stable. After that I reduced speed to slow for all alterations of course and used 5° of wheel.

23. Arriving at Dover at 0050/24 I went alongside Admiralty Pier and disembarked my party.

24. After careful consideration I find it impossible to mention any officer or man by name as each individual carried out his allotted task calmly and efficiently, in somewhat unfamiliar circumstances.

25. At 0330/24 I secured alongside the oiler.

26. At 0600/24 a military demolition party was embarked and with Wolsey in company I took them to Havre, landed them and returned to Dover by 2300/24.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your obedient servant,

R. P. Bly
VICE ADMIRAL
30 MAY 1940
C. V. B. B.

Lieutenant Commander.

Vice-Admiral, Dover.
Copy to:- Commander-in-Chief, Nore
Captain (D) Plymouth