



SERVICE HISTORIES of ROYAL NAVY
WARSHIPS in WORLD WAR 2
by Lt Cdr Geoffrey B Mason RN (Rtd) (c) 2003

HMS KING GEORGE V - King
George V-class 14in gun
Battleship including Convoy Escort
Movements

Editing & Additional Material by Mike Simmonds

HMS King George V (Maritime Quest, [click to enlarge](#))

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KING GEORGE V-Class battleship ordered on 29th July 1936 under 1936 Build Programme from Vickers Armstrong shipyard at Newcastle and laid down on 1st January 1937. She was launched on 21st February 1939 as the second major RN ship to carry this name, previously carried by a 1911 battleship sold in 1926. Six minor warships had been named KING GEORGE, one being a trawler hired during WW1. Build was completed on 11th December 1941. Following a successful WARSHIP WEEK National Savings campaign in November 1941 this ship was adopted by the civil community of the city of Birmingham.

Battle Honours

JUTLAND 1916 - ATLANTIC 1941 - BISMARCK Action 1941 - ARCTIC 1942-43 - SICILY 1943 - OKINAWA
1945 - JAPAN 1945

Heraldic Data

Badge: On a Field Blue, the Royal Cypher of HM King George V
ensigned by the Imperial Crown proper.

Details of War Service

(for more ship information, go to [Naval History Homepage](#) and type name in Site Search

1940

October

1st - Commissioned for trials at Vickers Armstrong, Newcastle on Tyne. Commanding officer Captain W. R. Patterson CVO RN.

(At the time of commissioning she was incomplete and was to be taken to Rosyth for completion)

17th - At 0745 hours KING GEORGE V cast off from Vickers Armstrong and proceeded down the Tyne.

(Because of the importance of KING GEORGE V special measures were taken to ensure her safety on the passage from the Tyne to Rosyth. Anti-aircraft cruisers NAIAD (Rear Admiral CS 15) and BONAVENTURE and destroyers FAME, ASHANTI, MAORI, SIKH, ELECTRA, BRILLIANT were ordered to escort her.

The orders for the operation were that the NAIAD and BONAVENTURE were to wait near 20C Buoy off the Tyne, and that destroyers were to proceed at twenty-three knots towards the Tyne pierheads, there to meet KING GEORGE V. The object of proceeding at speed was to explode any acoustic Mines that might be in the channel. 20C Buoy in the war channel was not sighted [it was out of position and the situation was made more difficult by heavy drizzle and poor visibility] and the next one to the southward, 20Q was mistaken for it by the FAME [senior officer of destroyers]. The FAME then turned out of the war channel to make the entrance to the Tyne at high speed. The result was that in position 54-57-05N, 1-21W, FAME and ASHANTI grounded at the top of high water spring tides causing serious damage, MAORI was

slightly damaged and the other three destroyers narrowly escaped the same fate)

At 0900 hours off the entrance to the Tyne she was met by anti-aircraft cruisers NAIAD and BONAVENTURE and destroyers MAORI, SIKH, BRILLIANT and ELECTRA, course was then set for the Firth of Forth.

At 1000 hours destroyers BEAGLE, WESTMINSTER and WALLACE joined the screen.

At 1030 hours destroyer FEARLESS joined the screen

At 1440, the force reached the Oxcars Boom off Rosyth and KING GEORGE V entered Rosyth for the fitting of her outer propellers, strengthening her rudder and to complete installation of armament and radar fit.

(On 14/10/40 the SS PERTH 2208grt was requisitioned by the Admiralty for service as an accommodation ship at Rosyth for the shipyard workers who were to carry out the finishing work on KING GEORGE V. On completion of the battleship, PERTH was taken over by the Ministry of War Transport and allocated for service as a Convoy Rescue Ship. After conversion she made her first voyage in Convoy OG 61)

23rd - KING GEORGE V was visited by the Prime Minister Winston Churchill.

November

At Rosyth undergoing completion works.

30th - KING GEORGE V was visited by the First Lord of the Admiralty and the CinC Home Fleet.

December

2nd - At 1445 hours KING GEORGE V escorted by destroyers SOMALI (D6), MASHONA, BEAGLE and BULLDOG departed Rosyth for Scapa Flow to carry out 'First of Class' and builders acceptance trials, to test her aircraft warning radar Type 279 and fire control radar Type 284 for main armament, and to commence working up exercises.

4th - At 1500 hours KING GEORGE V with destroyers ESCAPADE, BRILLIANT, BEAGLE and BULLDOG arrived at Scapa Flow after gun trials west of the Orkneys. The gun firing trials exposed various defects with operation of the loading mechanisms.

5th to 9th - Carried out steaming and gunnery trials off the west Orkney's.

10th - Carried out full power trial in the Minches.

11th - KING GEORGE V officially joined the Home Fleet.

At Scapa where working up continued along with trials and remedial work on her main armament.

(Nominated for special duty to take Lord Halifax, British Ambassador Designate to take up his appointment in USA)

1941

January

At Scapa where working up continued along with trials and remedial work on her main armament.

8th - The CinC Home Fleet sent the results of KING GEORGE V's first main armament shoot to the Admiralty.

15th - At 1240 hours destroyer NAPIER (D7) with Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Lord Halifax embarked came alongside KING GEORGE V. Winston Churchill and Lord Halifax boarded KING GEORGE V. The minesweepers SHARPSHOOTER and SPEEDY followed with Halifax's staff and luggage. The visitors then had lunch aboard.

After lunch Winston Churchill disembarked and visited the canteen and buildings at Flotta.

At 1630 hours KING GEORGE V with Lord Halifax and staff embarked and escorted by destroyers SOMALI (D6),

MATABELE, BEDOUIN and TARTAR sailed from Scapa on Operation PARCEL.

(Operation PARCEL was the transport of Lord Halifax to the USA to take up his appointment as British Ambassador)

17th - At 1000 hours in approximate position 56- 30N, 26W destroyers SOMALI (D6), MATABELE, BEDOUIN and TARTAR detached to carry out an anti-submarine search along the latitude of 58 N, north of Rockall.

24th - KING GEORGE V arrived in Chesapeake Bay escorted by US destroyer USS LANSDALE. The US President Franklin Roosevelt came out in his yacht POTOMAC to welcome the new British ambassador. Lord Halifax disembarked at Annapolis to take up his duties.

Whilst at Annapolis KING GEORGE V was visited by a number of US naval officers and naval cadets from Annapolis Naval Academy.

25th - In the morning KING GEORGE V sailed from Annapolis to return to the UK. Embarked was a US army and naval delegation of Cypher specialists and a copy of a Japanese Cypher machine (PURPLE) for Bletchley Park.

(In November 1940 a top-secret agreement was concluded between Britain and the US to provide for 'a full exchange of cryptographic systems and cryptanalytical techniques, direction finding, radio interception, and other technical communication matters pertaining to the diplomatic, military, naval, and air services of Germany, Japan, and Italy'. The US Army SIS had cracked the Japanese PURPLE cipher machine and produced PURPLE analogue machines to read it and the despatch of the delegation with the PURPLE cipher machine was the start of the US collaboration on code breaking)

29th - In the morning in approximate position 43-30N, 52-30 W KING GEORGE V joined the armed merchant cruiser ALAUNIA escorting convoy BHX 104. This was an important convoy consisting of 36 mercantiles of which 25 were tankers that had sailed from Bermuda on 21/1/41.

(BHX 104 was the only BHX convoy that did not join up with the corresponding HX convoy, but proceeded directly to the U.K. as a separate convoy)

During the eastward passage several days of severe weather were experienced. This provided a good test of KING GEORGE V's ability to deal with heavy weather and she stood up well.

February

3rd - At 1600 hours in position 62N, 25W the convoy was met by destroyers SOMALI, ECLIPSE, ESKIMO and NAPIER. KING GEORGE V then detached from the convoy escorted by SOMALI, ECLIPSE, ESKIMO and NAPIER and steered for Scapa Flow.

6th - At 0715 hours north of the Minches, destroyer NAPIER was detached to the Clyde.

At 1300 hours KING GEORGE V and destroyers SOMALI, ECLIPSE and ESKIMO arrived at Scapa. On arrival the US delegation disembarked and proceeded to Bletchley Park.

KING GEORGE V rejoined Home Fleet and resumed work-up.

(At 0618/8/2/41 hours the German battlecruiser SCHARNHORST, who was in company with the GNEISENAU, made radar contact at 17200 metres with convoy HX 106. On closing the convoy SCHARNHORST, at 0947 hours, sighted a battleship, which was the RAMILLIES. On sighting her the Germans broke off.

At 1150Z/8/2/41, the Admiralty received a report from RAMILLIES, in position 52- 55N, 34- 00W, some 900 miles west of Slyne Head, that she had had a brief glimpse of the mast and top of a ship which was possibly a German Hipper class cruiser estimated to be steering a course of 030 degrees. Following the encounter, SCHARNHORST and GNEISENAU headed for refuelling point Blue in approximate position 53-55N, 57W, arriving on 14/2/41 and refuelled from German tankers SCHLETTSTADT (8028grt) and ESSO HAMBURG (9847grt).

The Admiralty appreciation was that the Hipper class cruiser seen in dock at Brest between 2nd January and 1st February had not been located there on 4th February, and if she was the ship seen by the RAMILLIES she might well have been attempting to return to Germany by the northern passages. At twenty-five knots she could have reached a position by dusk on 9th

February to the westward of the Iceland-Faeroes channel appropriate for a night passage through the gap which would have taken her well clear to the eastward by dawn the following day. At twenty knots she would have been too far to the westward before dusk to give a reasonable chance of interception if she attempted a night passage, but she might conveniently be caught to the eastward at daylight. Ships at Scapa were accordingly sailed and disposed to meet either of these contingencies.

At 1947/8/2/41 the Admiralty ordered the cruiser EDINBURGH (CS 18), who was in the Clyde ready to sail with convoy WS 6A, and destroyers KELLY (D5), KIPLING, KASHMIR and JACKAL from Plymouth, to proceed to Scapa for orders. At 2331/8/2/41 the CinC HF requested that EDINBURGH and destroyers RV with RODNEY at 1100/10/2/41 in position 64-15N, 9W)

9th – During the forenoon battleships RODNEY and KING GEORGE V and destroyers INGLEFIELD (D3), BEDOUIN, MAORI, ZULU, BRILLIANT and BOREAS sailed from Scapa Flow for position 65N, 8-30W.

10th – At 1100 hours in position 64-15N, 9W, light cruiser EDINBURGH (CS18) Rved with the RODNEY force. At 1640 hours, there having been no further developments, EDINBURGH and the RODNEY force were ordered to return to Scapa.

11th – At 2045 hours RODNEY, KING GEORGE V with destroyers INGLEFIELD, BEDOUIN, ZULU, MAORI and BRILLIANT arrived at Scapa Flow.

During her time at Scapa KING GEORGE V embarked two Walrus amphibians equipped with ASV 11N radar. These were the first naval front line aircraft to be fitted with radar.

(On the morning of 1/2/41 German cruiser ADMIRAL HIPPER sailed from Brest on her second raiding mission with orders to join up with battlecruisers GNEISENAU and SCHARNHORST. At 0440/9/2/41 in position 35-53N, 13-13W the 21 ship convoy HG53, with only the sloop DARTFORD as escort, was attacked by U 37,; following the attack U 37 made a sighting report. On receipt of the report Doenitz sensed an opportunity to mount a combined U boat, air and surface attack on the convoy. Doenitz ordered U 37 to shadow the convoy and transmit beacon signals. At 1600/9/2/41 in 35-54N, 14-41W five FW 200's made a low level bombing attack on HG 53 sinking 5 ships. At first the Oberkommando der Marine [OKM] was reluctant to release ADMIRAL HIPPER, but at 1140/10/2/41 when in approximate position 45N, 30W, ADMIRAL HIPPER was ordered to attack HG 53. ADMIRAL HIPPER missed HG 53 but found the 19 unescorted ships of convoy SLS 64. At 0925/12/2/41 in position 37-10N, 21 20W, ADMIRAL HIPPER opened fire and in 80 minutes, sank 7 and damaged 3. [250 seamen from convoy SLS 64 were lost. Their deaths have not been acknowledged in convoy loss statistics as the Admiralty regarded these ships as independents]. In the engagement ADMIRAL HIPPER expended a large amount of ammunition and set course to return to Brest, arriving on 15/2/41. The Admiralty were aware of HIPPER's arrival at 1115/15/2/41.

A RRR raider report from the SS WARLABY in SLS 64 was picked up at 0930/12/2/41 by SS EGYPTIAN PRINCE in convoy HG 53 .

When the Admiralty received the raider report, part of their response was the decision to provide close escort for all ocean convoys as far as possible. This would require detachments from the Home Fleet)

March

2nd - At 1425 hours battleships NELSON (Flag CinC Home Fleet) and KING GEORGE V, light cruisers EDINBURGH and NIGERIA and destroyers INGLEFIELD (D3), ECHO, ECLIPSE, MAORI and PUNJABI sailed from Scapa for position 65-40N, 05-00E, approx 200 south west of the entrance to Vestfjord to provide cover for ships carrying out Operation CLAYMORE.

(Operation CLAYMORE was a Commando Raid on the Lofoten Islands. The objectives were the destruction of fish oil factories that produced glycerine the Germans used in the manufacture of explosives, and a morale boost for the home front. There was also a top secret mission to be carried out by the RN, called a 'pinch' by Bletchley Park; this was to attempt to seize an ENIGMA machine.

The landing force comprised LSI (M)'s QUEEN EMMA [with No 4 Commando embarked] and PRINCESS BEATRIX [with No 3 Commando]; they also carried 52 Norwegians of the Norwegian Independent Company and demolition teams from 55th Field Squadron Royal Engineers. The escort was destroyers SOMALI (D6 Captain Caslon), BEDOUIN, TARTAR, ESKIMO and LEGION. Submarine SUNFISH was positioned in approximate position 67-37N, 12-45E as a beacon at the entrance to Vestfjord)

3rd - At 0900 hours the Battle Fleet was in position 62-59N, 3-15W

At 1045 hours the Battle Fleet was sighted by German reconnaissance aircraft and reported as two heavy cruisers and five destroyers, course north.

At 1200 hours the Battle Fleet was in position 63-38N, 3-00W.

At 1700 hours, EDINBURGH and NIGERIA were detached to stand off the entrance to Vestfjord, RV with the returning Landing Force, and provide close cover for the return passage.

At 1900 hours the Battle Fleet was in position 64-00N, 3-00W and sailing northerly for position 65-40N, 5-00E.

4th - At 0001 hours the Battle Fleet was south westerly of Vestfjord.

(At 0001 hours, under ideal weather conditions, the Landing Force entered Vestfjord. At 0445 hours the Force split in two groups, for the attack on the two most important targets. QUEEN EMMA, SOMALI, BEDOUIN and TARTAR made for Svolvær; PRINCESS BEATRIX, ESKIMO and LEGION made for Stamsund. At 0500 hours the first attacks took place; in total 4 targets were attacked, Stamsund, Svolvær, Henningsvær and Brettesnes)

At 1200 hours the Battle Fleet was in position 66-24N, 7-16E and steering 048½.

At 1230 hours EDINBURGH and NIGERIA were sighted ahead.

(At 1300 hours the Commandoes re-embarked, the Landing Force sailed down Vestfjord and course was set to RV with EDINBURGH and NIGERIA. The raiding force had destroyed 11 factories, 800,000 gallons of oil and five ships had been sunk (including fish factory ship SS HAMBURG 5470grt). A party from SOMALI boarded the German trawler KREBS and seized Enigma paraphernalia. The Force returned with 314 volunteers (including 8 women) for the Norwegian forces, 60 Quislings, 225 German prisoners and the English manager of Messrs Allen & Hanbury, chemists, who had been caught there in the war; all for the cost of one accidental self-inflicted wound to an officer's thigh)

At 1356 hours in position 66-45N, 8-18E the Battle Fleet altered course to 260½.

At 1414 hours KING GEORGE V, DFed a radio station bearing 162½ that appeared to be vectoring aircraft.

At 1620 hours the Battle Fleet was in position 67-22N, 12-38E steering 225½, speed 20 knots, when it was located by enemy aircraft.

5th - At 0900 hours the Battle Fleet was in position 65-28N, 2-08W steering 210½.

At 0913 hours course was altered to 140½ to return to Scapa.

At 1047 hours enemy aircraft in sight.

At 1050 hours AA fire was opened on the enemy aircraft. This was first use of her AA armament in anger.

At 1301 hours the CinC Home Fleet ordered KING GEORGE V to attempt to bluff the enemy aircraft by calling up 'non existent fighter' to attack the enemy aircraft.

Between 1450 and 1541 hours AA fire was opened on the enemy aircraft.

At 1800 hours Battle Fleet was in position 63-35N, 4-51W.

(At 1800 hours the Landing Force was in position 64-25N, 3-04W, course 190½, speed 20 knots)

6th - At 0800 hours the Battle Fleet was in position 59-57N, 4-29W.

At 1015 hours a RAF Hudson was sighted on the port beam.

At 1400 hours battleships NELSON and KING GEORGE V, light cruisers EDINBURGH and NIGERIA, LSI (M) QUEEN EMMA and PRINCESS BEATRIX and destroyers INGLEFIELD, ECHO, ECLIPSE, MAORI, PUNJABI, SOMALI, BEDOUIN, TARTAR, ESKIMO and LEGION arrived at Scapa.

9th – At 0058 hours the Admiralty signalled the CinC Home Fleet, 'Request you sail two battleships in company to Halifax. These ships should be routed so as to afford NORFOLK with HX 112 as much support as possible'.

(This followed the receipt of a signal from the MALAYA stating, 'two German ships, probably the battlecruisers SCHARNHORST and GNEISENAU, sighted at 1600Z/8/3/41 in position 21-37N, 20-21W'. Following their sighting the German ships moved off in a north westerly direction)

At 0740 hours battleships RODNEY and KING GEORGE V escorted by destroyers SOMALI, BEDOUIN, PUNJABI, TARTAR, MATABELE and ESKIMO departed Scapa Flow. They were routed through 59N, 07-30W, 62N, 11W, 62N, 25W, 58N, 30W, and thence to Halifax. RODNEY and KING GEORGE V to provide ocean escort for convoys HX 115 and 116.

11th - At 1400 hours in position 58N, 30W destroyers SOMALI (D6), BEDOUIN, PUNJABI, TARTAR, MATABELE and ESKIMO detached and returned to Scapa.

15th - At 1000 hours KING GEORGE V arrived at Halifax.

(At 0038P/16/3/41 in position 42N, 43-25W, tanker MV ATHELFOAM 6554grt, in ballast en route from Liverpool to Pastelillo, Columbia, from the dispersed convoy OB 294, was shelled and sunk by the SCHARNHORST. Before going down, ATHELFOAM sent off a raider RRR report. Further raider reports were received from vessels being attacked by GNEISENAU and SCHARNHORST)

16th - At 1130Q hours KING GEORGE V sailed from Halifax, ordered to proceed with all despatch to position 41-12N, 49-00W and/or with all convenient despatch to 42-40N, 45-20W, subsequently sweeping to south westward unless further information on raiders was received.

At 1729Q hours the Admiralty signalled the KING GEORGE V; 'We are inclined to think that ships which have been raiding in Newfoundland area are returning to North Sea. If this is so there is a danger that they may come across a wave of ships originally belonging to OB 295 but now proceeding independently. These ships were probably within 100 miles of 56N, 35W at 1200Z/16/3/41, mean course 210¼. Failing any further information regarding raider you are to proceed at best speed to cover these ships assuming you will ultimately proceed to Scapa'.

17th - At 1400Z hours the Admiralty signalled KING GEORGE V; 'Subject to no enemy information being received you are required to proceed to Scapa but may refuel at Hvalfjord if necessary. On above basis it is desired you first join HX 115 and escort the convoy to UK. If you cannot join HX 115 you should report accordingly and join CinC HF as directed by him'.

20th - At 0828Q hours in position 42-30N, 51-45W, KING GEORGE V joined AMC CALIFORNIA escorting convoy HX 115. The convoy consisted of 30 mercantiles, including 9 tankers. The convoy proceeded on base course 033¼ at a speed of 8½ knots.

Not much of note occurred whilst KING GEORGE V was with the convoy.

26th - At 1741 hours the CinC Home Fleet signalled KING GEORGE V, 'Intend to transfer my flag to KING GEORGE V after your arrival at Scapa'.

27th - At 1115 hours KING GEORGE V received the signal, repeated to D4, 'COSSACK (D4), MAORI and ZULU are to RV with KING GEORGE V in position (X), 61N, 25W at 0730Z/29 and then to provide A/S screen to Scapa'.

28th - At 1250 hours in position 60-49N, 26-00W, tanker MV COWRIE 8198grt with a cargo of Admiralty bunker oil, detached from HX 115 for Reykjavik.

At 1930 hours in position 60-56N, 24W KING GEORGE V detached from convoy HX 115 for Scapa. After detaching, KING GEORGE V sailed north towards Iceland and launched her Walrus aircraft. The aircraft were to wait at Iceland to be embarked by NORFOLK.

(Late on the afternoon of 28/4/41 the Admiralty had confirmation that German battlecruisers SCHARNHORST and GNEISENAU were at Brest. The evidence came from photographs taken by a RAF Spitfire PR 1 aircraft of No 1 PRU that had flown from RAF Thorney Island)

29th - At 0730 hours in position 61N, 25W, KING GEORGE V RVed with destroyers COSSACK (D4), MAORI and ZULU; following which course was set easterly.

At 1852 hours in position 60-15N, 19-53W, KING GEORGE V signalled, 'One submarine bearing 066¼, ten miles, identity unknown'.

At 2332 hours KING GEORGE V received a signal from the CinC Home Fleet, reference Admiralty message 2106/29, which stated that D/F indicated a possible surface ship in vicinity of convoys HX 115 and OB 302; 'Reliable report. Possible the ADMIRAL SCHEER homeward bound. Endeavour to intercept if fuel permits'.

30th - At 0929 hours the CinC Home Fleet signalled KING GEORGE V, 'My 2332/29, if no further information is received by 1200 hours today, proceed to Scapa'.

31st - At 1416 hours KING GEORGE V and destroyers COSSACK, MAORI and ZULU arrived at Scapa.

April

1st - At Scapa, where at 0900 hours the CinC Home Fleet transferred his flag to KING GEORGE V from the QUEEN ELIZABETH.

(At 2115/1/4/41 the CinC Home Fleet received Admiralty message 1930/1; 'Situation at Brest necessitates our maximum effort being disposed in best manner to engage the two German battle cruisers should they leave harbour. HOOD, NIGERIA and FIJI leave Bay of Biscay area on 4/4/41 to refuel in United Kingdom. REPULSE and FURIOUS leave Gibraltar on about 4/4/41 for United Kingdom. Submarines on Bay of Biscay patrol will require to be withdrawn on 5/4/41. It is requested you will sail KING GEORGE V with such cruisers as you think fit in company to the area in which HOOD has recently been operating')

2nd - At 1145 hours KING GEORGE V (Flag CinC Home Fleet), heavy cruiser LONDON and destroyers SOMALI (D6), BEDOUIN, MATABELE and MASHONA departed Scapa for the Bay of Biscay.

At 1800 hours position was 58-42½N, 6-37W, course 267¼, speed 19 knots.

At 1831 hours clocks put back one hour to GMT (Zulu time)

3rd - At 0800 hours position 56-30N, 13-04W, course 250¼, speed 18 knots.

At 1600 hours position 55-42N, 17W.

4th - At 0715 hours, HOOD passed by seven miles on the starboard beam, northbound.

At 0800 hours position 52-28N, 21-57W, course 190¼, speed 19 knots.

At 1900 hours in approximate position 50N, 21W; destroyers SOMALI (D6), BEDOUIN, MATABELE and MASHONA detached to Londonderry to refuel, where they arrived at 0600/6/4/41.

At 2359 hours estimated position was 49N, 20-10W.

5th - At 0800 hours position was 47-16N, 18-33W.

At 1600 hours position 45-32N, 17-02W, course 180¼, speed 16½ knots.

At 2125 hours the CinC HF received Admiralty message 2154/5; 'There are indications that probably six German destroyers passed through Straits of Dover at about 1900/5. It is possible they may be proceeding to Brest'.

6th - At 0140 hours the CinC HF received Admiralty message 0041/6; 'Movements of German destroyers down Channel indicate that battle cruisers may sail shortly, earliest probable time being night of 6/4/41'

At 0900 hours position 45-30N, 18-24W, course 045¼, speed 16½ knots.

At 1800 hours position 45-26N, 16-06W, and course 200 ¼.

At 1900 hours LONDON detached to RV with REPULSE.

At 2330 hours clocks advance by one hour to BST (Z+1)

(At 0420/6 a 22 Squadron RAF Beaufort 1, OA-X [N1016], flown by Flying Officer Kenneth Campbell took off from RAF St Eval. The aircraft was one of six tasked to attack the German battleships in Brest harbour; in the event only four aircraft actually took off. They were to RV off Brest but poor weather prevented this. Aircraft X/22 was the only aircraft to reach the target and attack. At approximately 0530 hours FO Campbell flew through a wall of flak at mast head height and torpedoed the GNEISENAU, almost immediately X//22 was shot down and all four crew killed. The attack, together with a further successful one by RAF bombers on the night of 10/11 April, put the GNEISENAU out of action for six months. When the details of FO Kenneth Campbell's attack became known he was awarded the VC)

7th - At 0800 hours position 45-31N, 16-06W, course 330¼, speed 16½ knots.

At 1800 hours position 45-31N, 16-06W, course 330¼, speed 16½ knots.

At 2300 hours position 48-28N, 18-44W, course 315¼, speed 16½ knots.

8th - At 0500 hours light cruiser KENYA joined from Scapa.

At 0945 hours destroyers SOMALI (D6), BEDOUIN, MATABELE and MASHONA rejoined from Londonderry

At 1200 hours position 50-01N, 20-03W, course 120¼, speed 16½ knots.

At 1800 hours position 49-15N, 18-35W.

At 2000 hours KENYA detached to RV with HOOD.

9th - At 0800 hours position 52-34N, 16-41W, course 031¼, speed 20 knots.

(At 1044 hours the Admiralty issued an aircraft report of a very large ship escorted by three destroyers leaving Goulet de Brest at 0830/9. It is not confirmed this is a man of war. This turned out to be a merchant ship of about 3000grt with and escort of three vessels which were definitely not destroyers. At 1804/9 the group was attacked by RAF torpedo bombers in position 49-25N, 3W)

10th - At 0600 hours in position 56-35N, 7-49W destroyer MATABELE detached for Barrow to refit.

At 0730 hours position 56-48N, 7-09W, course 014¼, speed 20 knots.

At 1519 hours in position 58-42N, 4-35W destroyer BEDOUIN was detached to proceed to the assistance of a merchant vessel reported on fire in position 58-42N, 09-41W with survivors in the water.

At 1811 hours KING GEORGE V with destroyers SOMALI and MASHONA arrived at Scapa.

13th - At 0107 hours KING GEORGE V, light cruiser NIGERIA, and destroyers MASHONA, ELECTRA and ESCAPADE departed Scapa Flow for position 46-30N, 18-10W to mount patrol off the Bay of Biscay.

At 1800 hours position 57-48N, 9-35W.

14th - At 0515 hours unidentified aircraft sighted passing from port to starboard.

At 0611 hours sighted a large group of unidentified aircraft passing from starboard to port.

At 0618 sighted destroyers HMCS SAGUENAY and RESTIGOUCHE bearing 110¼.

At 1039 hours radar reported single aircraft bearing 282¼, 14 miles.

At 1130 hours position 54-44N, 12-39W.

15th - At 0800 hours position 50-30N, 19-14W, course 227¼, speed 19 knots.

At 1045 hours destroyers MASHONA, ELECTRA and ESCAPADE were detached to refuel at Londonderry.

16th - At 0900 hours position 46-28N, 18-01W, course 220¼, speed 18 knots.

At 0925 hours speed reduced to 17 knots due to heavy weather.

At 1900 hours position 46-56N, 18-40W, and course 090¼.

17th - At 0800 hours position 44-05N, 17-07W and course 320¼.

18th - At 0800 hours position 44-37N, 17-48W, course 270¼, speed 18 knots.

(Late on the 18/4/41 the Admiralty received a report that German battleship BISMARCK, two cruisers, cruiser Leipzig class and three destroyers passed the Skaw early morning of 18/4/41 steering north west. This report was false, as at the time the BISMARCK was in the Baltic)

19th - At 0001 hours position 45-31N, 17-21W and speed 21 knots.

At 0150 hours altered course to 000¼ and increased speed to 20 knots to return to Scapa.

At 0900 hours position 46-39N, 18-12W.

20th - At 0900 hours position 49-46N, 20-53W, course 060¼, speed 17 knots. KING GEORGE V and NIGERIA was joined by destroyers ESCAPADE, ELECTRA and MASHONA from Londonderry.

At 1342 hours position 49-24N, 20-49W, course 043¼, speed 17½ knots.

21st - At 0350 hours received a report from CinC Western Approaches 0303/21; 'One Catalina aircraft missing.

Following received at 0210/21 from Sunderland aircraft, begins: Distress flares seen in position 53-42N, 13-24W. No further news, searching, ends'. (This was Catalina AH 532 of 210 Squadron that was on an Atlantic Patrol from Loch Erne, N.I.)

At 0628 hours altered course to 051¼ to search for missing Catalina.

At 0900 hours altered course to 090¼.

0914 hours received Admiralty message 0909/21; 'Blue air raid message'.

At 1213 hours KING GEORGE V opened fire with her 5.25in at aircraft identified as German.

22nd - At 0700 hours position 58-37N, 7-37W, course 085¼, speed 17½ knots.

At 1552 hours KING GEORGE V, light cruiser NIGERIA and destroyers ESCAPADE, ELECTRA and MASHONA arrived at Scapa.

May

9th - At Scapa where the Home Fleet including KING GEORGE V was visited by HRH The Duke of Kent. The Duke of Kent slept on board KING GEORGE V.

10th - HRH The Duke of Kent slept on board KING GEORGE V.

(From about the 14/5/41 the CinC Home Fleet and the Admiralty became aware that the Luftwaffe had increased its reconnaissance of Scapa Flow. Also Luftwaffe Enigma decrypts revealed that FW 200's were carrying out reconnaissance flights between Jan Mayen island and Greenland checking out the ice conditions. This intelligence led to the possibility that German ships were intending to break out into the Atlantic)

(At 1200/19/5/41 off Ruegen Island in the Baltic, battleship BISMARCK [Flag Admiral Luetjens] and heavy cruiser PRINZ EUGEN joined forces and with destroyers Z 16 and Z 23, set course west on Operation RHEINUBUNG. [This was an Operation to break into the North Atlantic to attack British shipping for a period of several months]. At 2230 hours destroyer Z 10 joined the Force.

At 1300/20, the German ships were sighted by the Swedish cruiser GOTLAND which reported the sighting to Stockholm. Luetjens assumed this ship would report his position, and at 1737 radioed this incident to Group North, the German Naval command station based in Wilhelmshaven. GOTLAND had reported the sighting and then it was leaked to the British Naval Attache, Captain Henry W. Denham RN. Later in the day, from the British embassy in Stockholm, Denham transmitted the following message to the Admiralty in London: 'Kattegat, today 20 May. At 1500/20, two large warships, escorted by three destroyers, five ships and ten or twelve planes passed Marstrand to the northeast. 2058/20'.

On receipt of this information the Admiralty requested photographic reconnaissance of likely harbours in southern Norway.

At 1100/21 two Spitfire PR 1 aircraft of No 1 PRU, took off from Wick, one flown by Flight Lieutenant Michael Suckling sighted and photographed the two German ships in Korsfjord, near Bergen. BISMARCK was in Grimstad Fjord, near Haakonssvern and PRINZ EUGEN in Kalvanes Bay, near Agotnes, 9¼ miles north west of the BISMARCK. At 1420/21 Flight Lieutenant Suckling landed back at Wick and the photographs were rushed to the Admiralty.

At 1830/21, all available Home Fleet warships came to two hours' notice for sailing.

On 22/5/41, the weather worsened and RAF attacks failed due to the weather or because the enemy had sailed.

The Admiralty were desperate to know if BISMARCK had sailed but as the weather was now 10/10 cloud at 100 feet, the RAF were unable to provide a reconnaissance flight.

Captain Henry St John Fancourt, CO of HMS SPARROWHAWK, RNAS Hatson near Kirkwall thought it might be possible for a single aircraft to get through to Bergen to ascertain the situation. Lieutenant Noel Goddard RNVR volunteered to fly one of 771 squadron's Martin Marylands, which were used for training and target towing. Three other crew members volunteered - these were Commander G A Rotherham RN [executive officer of HMS SPARROWHAWK] observer, Leading Airmen J W Armstrong, radio operator and J D Milne air gunner.

At 1800/22 the Maryland [serial number AR720] took off from Hatson and was flown as close to the surface of the sea as possible in the poor visibility and strong winds. However due to Rotherham's superb navigation, the plane arrived directly over the location where the German ships had last been photographed. After several low runs over the fiord in the face of heavy AA fire, Rotherham decided that the ships were gone. They flew on to Bergen, again in the face of heavy AA fire, to find the roadstead there also devoid of the battleship and cruiser. Armstrong then signalled on an emergency frequency 'Battleship and Cruiser have left'. Goddard was

awarded a DSC, Rotherham a DSO and Armstrong a DSM.

At 2200/22 Admiral Tovey had this signal in his hand and was then able to put in motion his forces to counter the threat from the BISMARCK)

22nd - At 2307 hours KING GEORGE V (Flag CinC Home Fleet), aircraft carrier VICTORIOUS, light cruisers GALATEA (Flag CS2), AURORA, KENYA, and HERMIONE, and destroyers ACTIVE, PUNJABI, NESTOR, LANCE, WINDSOR, INGLEFIELD (D3) and INTREPID sailed from Scapa and set course westerly.

23rd - At 0100 hours destroyer LANCE detached due to boiler problems and returned to Scapa.

At 0710 hours in approximate position 60N, 7W the Home Fleet was joined by battlecruiser REPULSE and destroyers LEGION, SAGUENAY and ASSINIBOINE. Course was then set north westerly towards Iceland.

(At 1922/23/5/41 AB Alfred Newell the starboard lookout of heavy cruiser SUFFOLK sighted the BISMARCK at a distance of 7 miles to the NNE, and shortly afterwards, astern of BISMARCK, the PRINZ EUGEN. SUFFOLK's approximate position was 66-44N, 26-45W, BISMARCK's 66-51N, 26-38W. At 1923 hours SUFFOLK made a sighting report, but because her aerials were iced-up this was only picked up by heavy cruiser NORFOLK. At 2032 hours NORFOLK, who was in company with the SUFFOLK, sent a sighting report, 'one Battleship, one cruiser in sight' which was picked up by the CinC Home Fleet, Admiral Holland and Admiralty)

At 2032 hours the Home Fleet was in approximate position 60-20N, 13W when the CinC Home Fleet received NORFOLK's sighting report.

At 2045 hours the battlefleet altered course to 280¼ and increased speed to 27 knots.

24th - At 0410 hours the Home Fleet was in approximate position 61N, 18-30W.

(At 0537 hours battleship PRINCE OF WALES who was in company with battlecruiser HOOD signalled, 'Emergency to Admiralty and C in C Home Fleet. One battleship and one heavy cruiser, bearing 335, distance 17 miles. My position 63-20 North, 31-50 West. My course 240. Speed 28 knots')

(At 0601/24/5/41 in approximate position 63-22N, 32-17W HOOD was sunk by the BISMARCK. Just before the HOOD blew up and sank, BISMARCK was hit on her port side by three 14in shells from PRINCE OF WALES. One was amidships under the armoured belt, a second in her bows [this hit caused her to take on water forward and caused a 9-degree port list and a trim down by the bow of 2 meters. Also since the manifolds for the fuel distribution system were located in one of the flooded compartments, BISMARCK was immediately deprived of the use of more than 1,000 tons of fuel oil that was in the forward oil tank] and the third which passed through a boat. Because of the list BISMARCK's starboard propeller was coming out of the water Her CO, Captain Lindemann ordered counter flooding aft to restore the trim, causing maximum speed to be reduced to 28 knots. After the action, SUFFOLK reported that BISMARCK had been hit by three shells, but of course this could not be confirmed.

At 0600 hours a RAF Sunderland L5798/Z of 201 Squadron, pilot Flight Lieutenant Vaughan, happened upon the scene. The Sunderland had taken off from Reykjavik and had been searching for the BISMARCK for 6 hours 15 minutes in extremely poor weather conditions. When the Sunderland arrived on the scene she was fired on by PRINZ EUGEN with her 105mm AA battery. After HOOD was sunk, BISMARCK was observed emitting a lot of smoke, which subsequently ceased and losing a large quantity of oil. The aircraft approached within 5 miles of the enemy ships on the starboard beam at an altitude of 2500 feet and identified them as BISMARCK and SCHEER. Sunderland aircraft Z remained on the scene shadowing the enemy force for about 3 hours, signalling its course and speed to the British warships, before setting course for Reykjavik where the aircraft landed at 12.03 hrs, having been airborne for 13 hours and 38 minutes.

At 0801/24/5/41 BISMARCK reported to Group North:

1. Loss of Electric plant No. 4.
2. Port Boiler Room No. 2 is taking water, but can be held. Water in forecastle [BISMARCK shipped 2000 tons of water]
3. Maximum speed 28 knots.
4. Denmark Strait 50 miles of floating mines. Enemy has radar instruments.
5. Intention is to put into St. Nazaire. No losses of personnel.

However because Bletchley Park at this time was not able to read the naval Enigma, none of the above signal was read)

At 0600 hours the Home Fleet was in approximate position 60N, 22W. This was about 350 NM south easterly of the position of HOOD's sinking.

At 0800 hours the Home Fleet altered course to 260¼ and later to 240¼.

At 1509 hours, VICTORIOUS, GALATEA, AURORA, KENYA and HERMIONE were detached to steer the best course to get within 100 miles of the enemy and carry out an air strike on BISMARCK.

(At 1840/24/5/41 the BISMARCK emerged from mist on SUFFOLK's starboard beam at a range of 10 miles and heading straight for SUFFOLK. BISMARCK immediately opened fire on SUFFOLK, firing 7 salvos. This manoeuvre was to allow the PRINZ EUGEN to detach to the south, which she did at 1814 hours. SUFFOLK replied with 9 broadsides, most of which fell short. PRINCE OF WALES came up from astern and fired 12 salvos from 15 miles, following which two of her guns were put out of action.

At 1856 hours, BISMARCK broke off the action and turned west then south.

At 1914 hours, BISMARCK reported to Seekriegsleitung: brief fight with King George without results. PRINZ EUGEN released for oiling. Opponent keeps up surveillance.

At 2056 hours BISMARCK reported to Group West and Seekriegsleitung: shaking off contacts impossible due to enemy radar. Due to fuel shortage will proceed direct to St. Nazaire.

At 2400/24/5/41 BISMARCK was attacked by nine Swordfish of 825 Squadron from the VICTORIOUS armed with 18in torpedoes. Three Fulmars of 800Z Flight followed the Swordfish with orders to observe the attack and then maintain contact at all costs. One torpedo hit was achieved on the starboard side; no significant structural damage was caused, but the shock of the impact caused one casualty. Also the increase in speed and manoeuvring had dislodged the collision mats that had been put over the two shell holes in the bows and she again started to take in water again. BISMARCK had to slow down to 16 knots to reposition the collision mats.)

(Following BISMARCK's 2056 signal, to Group West. Bletchley Park reported to Admiralty OIC that the operational control of BISMARCK had been transferred from Wilhelmshaven to Paris and this was a good sign that she was moving south. OIC did not pass on this information until late on the 25th)

By 2400 hours all the Home Fleet escorting destroyers had detached to refuel at Hvalfjord.

25th – At 0013 hours the CinC Home Fleet in KING GEORGE V signalled to RA CS1 in NORFOLK that he hoped to engage the BISMARCK, with KING GEORGE V and REPULSE at about 0900/25/5/41, which was about Sunrise, and from the eastward.

The CinC then signalled REPULSE, whose armour was inferior to HOOD's, that in the engagement she was to keep 5000 yards outside of him and not to engage until KING GEORGE V had opened fire.

(At 0310/25/5/41, BISMARCK's CO, Captain Lindemann having decided there was a chance that BISMARCK's shadowers could be shaken off, turned to starboard and described a huge arc, passing astern of SUFFOLK.

At 0500 hours BISMARCK settled on a course of 130¼.

Also at 0500 hours SUFFOLK, now to the south of BISMARCK, signalled that she had lost radar contact)

(During the period that SUFFOLK had been in contact, BISMARCK had made 22 signals to Germany. Although GC and CS were unable to read any of BISMARCK's signals until 28/5/41, the Admiralty OIC plotted the bearings of her DFed signals against the positions reported by SUFFOLK. This enabled any DF errors to be analysed which assisted in verifying the accuracy of bearings DFed after SUFFOLK lost contact)

At 0401 hours SUFFOLK reported the loss of contact.

At 0600 hours, the CinC Home Fleet working on the assumption that BISMARCK was still steering southerly, continued steering south westerly in KING GEORGE V with REPULSE, and crossed about 100 miles ahead of the new track of BISMARCK who was now steering south easterly.

At 1000 hours in approximate position 54N, 36W, REPULSE, who was short of fuel, detached for Conception Bay,

Newfoundland.

(Between 0852 and 0928 hours, BISMARCK reported to Group West and Seekriegsleitung: 'Possession of radar equipment by opponent, effective range at least 35,000 meters, adversely affects to the highest degree the operations in the Atlantic. Ships were located in the Strait of Denmark in dense fog and were continuously tracked. Disengagement failed even in favourable weather conditions. Oil replenishment is generally no longer possible, if disengagement of opponent cannot be accomplished with higher speed. Running battle between 20,800 and 18,000 meters. Opponent HOOD concentrates fire on BISMARCK. After five minutes, HOOD is destroyed by an explosion; thereafter, change of target to King George who then turns away in black smoke caused by definitively observed hits. He remains out of sight for several hours. Own munitions expenditure: 93 rounds. Later, King George took on the fight only at extreme distances. BISMARCK received two hits from King George; of those one hit below the side armour belt at sections XIII-XIV. Hit in compartment XX-XXI impaired speed and caused a 1¼ bow burying forward and destruction of oil cells. Release of PRINZ EUGEN possible by engagement of cruisers and battleship by BISMARCK. Own EM-2 [radar] instrument prone to failures, especially during firing.'

This signal was DFed by various Y stations who feed their bearings to the Admiralty OIC, who were then able to plot a fairly accurate fix at 55-30N, 30 to 32W.

On the specific orders of the CinC Home Fleet the Admiralty only supplied the bearings and not the fix calculated by the OIC. The staff of the CinC Home Fleet then calculated BISMARCK's position incorrectly at 57N, 30W)

At 1047 hours KING GEORGE V reversed course and at the same time, CinC Home Fleet advised all ships, including battleship RODNEY, to search northwards of BISMARCK's last known position. The bearings plotted on a gnomonic chart in OIC showed the BISMARCK to be in a position that would suggest she was heading south east for Brest. However, Admiral Tovey had specifically requested that the OIC send the bearings only. When the bearings were plotted on a Mercator projection chart onboard KING GEORGE V, it appeared that BISMARCK was heading northerly home to Germany. So Tovey turned to the North and for a while was actually steaming away from the enemy.

Captain Dalrymple-Hamilton, RODNEY's CO, realised the error and did not conform with the CinC Home Fleet's wishes believing that the error would be quickly corrected by the Admiralty.

(At 1158 hours the Admiralty signalled RODNEY to act on the assumption that BISMARCK was heading to a Bay of Biscay port and also supplied the latest DFed bearing fixes. From these fixes Dalrymple-Hamilton decided that RODNEY was now to the south of BISMARCK's track, so he turned north east and worked up to 21 knots.

At 1428 hours the Admiralty ordered RODNEY to act on the assumption that BISMARCK was proceeding to Norway via the Iceland-Faeroes passage and to conform to the movements of the CinC HF. Why the Admiralty sent this signal remains a mystery since at the time the opinion of the OIC and the Directors of the Plans and Operations Divisions at the Admiralty was that BISMARCK was heading for France. Dalrymple-Hamilton ignored the order.

At 1810 hours Dalrymple-Hamilton decided that BISMARCK was making for Brest.

At 1805 hours the Admiralty signalled RODNEY stating that BISMARCK was making for the west coast of France)

(At 1812 hours the Admiralty signalled all ships of the Home Fleet to confirm their 1805 that BISMARCK was definitely heading for the west coast of France. This signal was based on information from the GAF Enigma that GC and CS had been reading for some time).

At 1815 hours KING GEORGE V turned on to a south easterly course and was now sailing in the same direction as the BISMARCK but about 170 miles astern.

At about the same time the CinC Home Fleet signalled the Admiralty requesting the provision of a destroyer escort for KING GEORGE V and RODNEY.

(The Admiralty had also become concerned about the lack of anti-submarine escorts, particularly as they were aware that Doenitz had ordered several U-Boats to go to BISMARCK's aid. So after due consideration the Admiralty ordered Destroyer escort of convoy WS 8B to detach.)

26th - KING GEORGE V continued on a south easterly course.

(At 0200 hours in approximate position 49N, 21W destroyers COSSACK (D4), SIKH, ZULU, MAORI and PIORUN detached from convoy WS 8B and headed north to join the CinC Home Fleet)

(At 0300 hours a RAF Coastal Command Catalina Mk. 1 [US PBV-5] of 209 squadron took off from Castle Archdale on Lough Erne and flew through the Donegal corridor to commence a search for BISMARCK. Catalina WQ Z209 was piloted by Flying Officer Dennis Briggs and his co-pilot was Ensign Leonard 'Tuck' Smith USN. The search pattern they were to fly had been selected, with Admiralty approval, by the CinC Coastal Command Air Marshal Sir Frederick Bowhill, who believed the BISMARCK would be steering a more southerly course than that predicted by the Admiralty.

At about 1010 hours Smith who was piloting Z209 at the time sighted BISMARCK at a bearing of 345¼, definite recognition was not immediately possible due to poor visibility. Whilst closing the BISMARCK at 2000 feet to confirm contact, Z209 came under fire. Biggs sent off the following signal, 'one battleship bearing 240¼ 5 miles, course 150¼, my position 49-33N, 21-47W. Time of origin 1030/26.' The position given for Z209 was 25 miles out)

(At 1051 hours the CinC HF signaled the Admiralty; 'Request a check that contact was not RODNEY'. The Admiralty confirmed that the sighting was not RODNEY)

(At 1115 hours Swordfish 2H of 810 Sqd, flown by Sub Lieut. Hartley, from ARK ROYAL sighted BISMARCK, but reported her as a cruiser.

At 1122 hours Swordfish 2F of 810 Sqd, flown by Lieut. Callander, from ARK ROYAL sighted the BISMARCK and reported her as battleship and sent an accurate position)

At approximately 1515 hours the CinC HF in KING GEORGE V caught up with the RODNEY, TARTAR and MASHONA. The CinC signalled Dalrymple-Hamilton, what is your maximum speed; Dalrymple-Hamilton replied, 22 knots. This suited Tovey as he wanted to reduce speed to conserve KING GEORGE V's fuel which was causing concern. So KING GEORGE V and destroyers TARTAR and MASHONA set off at 22 knots. However despite the best endeavours' of her engine room staff, RODNEY started to fall behind.

At 1815 hours Dalrymple-Hamilton was forced to signal the CinC; 'I am afraid that your 22 knots is a bit faster than ours'.

(At 1821 hours the CinC signalled the Admiralty and the CinC Force H; unless BISMARCK's speed had been reduced by midnight he would have to return to harbour for lack of fuel; RODNEY could continue until 0800/27)

(At 2050 hours a strike force of 15 torpedo armed Swordfish from ARK ROYAL commenced their attack on the BISMARCK.

By 2100 hours the attack was over. Two, possibly three hits were achieved, the significant one being the hit on the stern that jammed both rudders at 12¼ to port, following which she carried on turning to port.

At 2115 hours SHEFFIELD, who was in contact with BISMARCK, reported BISMARCK's change of course. When Tovey received the signal, he uttered the deadly insult, 'SHEFFIELD has joined the reciprocal club' – meaning of ships that have steered a course 180 degrees off true. But SHEFFIELD had not.

At 2105 hours Luetjens reported to Group West; 'Square BE 6192. Have sustained torpedo hit aft.' [BE 6192 indicated approximate position 47-40N, 14-50W]

At 2115 hours Luetjens reported to Group West; 'Torpedo hit amidships.'

At 2140 hours Luetjens reported to Supreme Command of the Navy (O.K.M.) and Group West; 'Ship unable to manoeuvre. We will fight to the last shell. Long live the Fuehrer'.)

When BISMARCK's change of course was confirmed, KING GEORGE V, RODNEY, TARTAR and MASHONA changed course to the south to close her. With a closing speed of 30 knots, there was a chance of action before the light was lost.

At 2205 hours Captain Patterson addressed the crew of KING GEORGE V and ordered, hands will go to action stations in five minutes.

At 2235 hours ARK ROYAL reported that a second hit had most probably been obtained aft.

Following this report Tovey went to his sea cabin for a few minutes and when he returned to the bridge he walked the bridge wing and looked thoughtfully astern and appreciated that while the BISMARCK was almost invisible in the murk, our ships would be clearly silhouetted against the streak of light running across the western horizon. He therefore took the decision to postpone an attack until the morning. It was an astonishing decision, made without any consultation even with his Chief of Staff, Commodore Brind, who was amazed by it. But he had complete faith that Vian's destroyers would shadow throughout the night.

Admiral Tovey having made his decision KING GEORGE V, RODNEY, TARTAR and MASHONA turned on to a NNE course.

27th - At 0005 hours Captain Patterson again addressed the crew of KING GEORGE V and told them that action was now expected at 0700/27, meantime hands were to remain at action stations.

(Prior to the engagement the CinC Home Fleet issued orders for RODNEY and KING GEORGE V to manoeuvre independently. Thus he would give the BISMARCK two different targets to think about; also he avoided Admiral Holland's error of maintaining too close formation between the HOOD and PRINCE of WALES)

At 0715 hours Captain Patterson again addressed the crew of KING GEORGE V and told them that they would soon be engaging the enemy, take it steady and treat it as a battle practice.

At 0730 hours KING GEORGE V, RODNEY, TARTAR and MASHONA commenced a long slow turn eastwards so as to be in position to open the engagement from the west of BISMARCK. This manoeuvre would place BISMARCK to their east where she would silhouetted against the rising Sun.

(Sunrise was at 0722 hours and when it came the wind was blowing force 8 to 9 from the north west with a rising sea and swell, visibility was 12 to 13 miles with rain squalls and the cloud base about 2000 feet)

At 0800 hours destroyers TARTAR and MASHONA detached due to lack of fuel and set course northerly.

At 0805 hours Wake-Walker in the NORFOLK, who had just sighted KING GEORGE V, signalled Tovey; 'Enemy bears 130¼ 16 miles'.

(At 0700 hours the NORFOLK had closed to within 16500 yards of BISMARCK and signalled her believing she was KING GEORGE V)

At 0848 hours, with the BISMARCK sailing directly towards the flagship, KING GEORGE V opened fire at a range of about 25,500 yards. The gunnery department at first had a difficult task in obtaining the range because of BISMARCK's head-on approach and the squally weather.

At 0853 hours the operator of the Type 284 radar finally obtained an accurate range of 20,500 yards and KING GEORGE V obtained her first straddle.

At 0859 hours, when the range had reduced to 16,000 yards, KING GEORGE V turned to starboard on to a course of 175¼ and opened her 'A' arcs.

At 0905 hours, when the range had reduced to 14,000 yards, KING GEORGE V opened fire with her port 5.25in guns.

At 0910 hours BISMARCK scored her only near miss on KING GEORGE V when a salvo fell 400 yards over.

At 0913 hours, when the range had reduced to 12,400 yards, her Type 284 radar was put out of action through blast damage.

At 0914 hours KING GEORGE V commenced a turn to port.

At 0920 hours, when the range had reduced to 12,000 yards, KING GEORGE V settled on a course of 000¼.

At 0921 hours KING GEORGE V opened fire with her starboard 5.25in guns.

At 0922 hours her 14in guns, which since first opening fire had operated faultlessly started to give problems. The loading mechanism of A-turret jammed putting all four guns out of action and a similar fault occurred in Y-turret. A-turret was out of action for ten minutes and Y for seven minutes.

At 0951 hours with the range down to 6,000 yards, KING GEORGE V had an almost stationary BISMARCK on her starboard beam. The flagship then commenced a 360¼ turn.

At 1005 hours the CinC ordered Captain Patterson to close the BISMARCK and attempt to finish her off.

At 1015 hours the CinC Home Fleet signalled the Admiralty, 'The BISMARCK is a wreck, without a gun firing, on fire fore and aft and wallowing more heavily every moment. Men can be seen jumping overboard, preferring death by drowning in the stormy sea to the appalling effects of our fire. I am confident that the BISMARCK, will never get

back to harbour and that it was only a matter of hours before she sinks'.

At 1021 hours KING GEORGE V fired her last salvoes from Y-turret; these salvoes not only caused damage to the enemy but also blast damage to the flagship. KING GEORGE V in company with the RODNEY now set course north easterly; both battleships were dangerously low on fuel. During the action the Admiralty had signalled all ships, warning that U-Boats were en route to the area, so this was a further reason for the ships to withdraw. In the action KING GEORGE V had fired 339 x 14in shells and 660 x 5.25in shells. Gunnery performance was below the expected standard because of design deficiencies in the interlock system to protect against explosions during loading of the 14in guns. For 7 minutes she was firing at only 80% efficiency and at 40% for 23 minutes. Only B-Turret, the twin, was 100% trouble free. In addition the low freeboard forward caused significant flooding of shell rooms in the heavy weather.

At 1023 hours a Swordfish approached KING GEORGE V to request her to cease fire so that the Swordfish could make another torpedo attack on BISMARCK, but the Swordfish was fired at by the flagship's AA battery.

(As he withdrew the CinC made a signal to ships in company; 'Any ship with torpedoes to close the BISMARCK and torpedo her'. The only ship in contact with torpedoes was the DORSETSHIRE, whose CO, Captain Martin had already anticipated the order. Closing to 2600 yards on BISMARCK's starboard beam, she fired two torpedoes, both of which hit. She then went round the other side, and from 2000 yards fired another, which also hit)

At 1035 hours the BISMARCK sank in approximate position 48-10N, 16-12W.

.At 1039 hours Tovey signalled the Admiralty, 'BISMARCK has sunk'.

KING GEORGE V and RODNEY now retired northerly at an economical speed of 17 knots to conserve fuel (a contingency plan was for them to refuel in Eire) escorted by destroyers COSSACK, SIKH, ZULU and JUPITER.

At 1137 hours the Admiralty signalled the CinC Home Fleet; 'We cannot visualise the situation from your signals, BISMARCK must be sunk at all costs and if to do this it is necessary for KING GEORGE V to remain on the scene, then she must do so, even if it subsequently means towing KING GEORGE V'. This extraordinary signal had been sent at the behest of Churchill. Tovey considered it the stupidest and most ill-considered signal ever made.

At 1230 hours the Force was joined by DORSETSHIRE and MAORI.

At 2359 hours destroyers VANQUISHER, COLUMBIA, RIPLEY, SHERWOOD and ST CLAIR had joined from Londonderry.

28th - At 0800 hours destroyers SHERWOOD and ST CLAIR were detached to go to the aid of destroyers TARTAR and MASHONA who were under air attack.

(Destroyers TARTAR and MASHONA were slowly, at a speed of 12 knots, sailing north, both being low on fuel. At 0730 hours they came under sustained air attack from Ju 88A bombers of KG 77. These aircraft had been sent out to attack the battlefleet but having failed to find them, 'gave their all' to TARTAR and MASHONA. After a long fight, MASHONA was hit port side, the bomb exploded in No 1 boiler room and eventually she had to be abandoned. At this time, SHERWOOD and ST CLAIR hove on the scene and were able to assist with the rescuing of MASHONA's crew. Seven officers and one hundred and twenty ratings were picked up by TARTAR. The SHERWOOD picked up two officers and fifty four ratings and ST CLAIR picked up four officers and eight ratings. TARTAR attempted to sink the hulk by torpedo but failed. MASHONA was finally sunk at 1200 hours by gunfire from SHERWOOD and ST CLAIR in position 52-58N, 11-36W)

By 1600 hours when the Force was in approximate position 55-30N, 9W, NORFOLK and a further six destroyers had joined - SOMALI, ESKIMO, PUNJABI, NESTOR, INGLEFIELD and LANCE.

At 1630 hours, RODNEY with NORFOLK and destroyers MAORI, SIKH, LEGION and COLUMBIA detached for Greenock. RIPLEY detached for Londonderry.

29th - At 0300 hours in The Minches off Loch Ewe, DORSETSHIRE detached to proceed to Newcastle for refit.

At 0400 hours KING GEORGE V with destroyers SOMALI, COSSACK, ESKIMO, PUNJABI, NESTOR, LANCE and JUPITER arrived at Loch Ewe.

At 1100 hours destroyer INGLEFIELD arrived at Loch Ewe.

30th - At 0300 hours KING GEORGE V with destroyers SOMALI, ZULU, ESKIMO, PUNJABI, NESTOR, LANCE, COSSACK, JUPITER and INGLEFIELD departed Loch Ewe for Scapa Flow.

At 1100 hours KING GEORGE V with destroyers SOMALI, ZULU, ESKIMO, PUNJABI, NESTOR, LANCE, COSSACK, JUPITER and INGLEFIELD arrived at Scapa Flow.

June

1st - At Scapa Flow.

6th - At Scapa where a meeting was held on board to discuss the minelaying policy in Northern waters. Present were CinC Home Fleet, RA Minelaying and RA CS1.

(On 6/6/41 the Operationsabteilung [1/Skl] ordered heavy cruiser LUTZOW to commence Operation SOMMEREISE. On the afternoon of 10/6/41, LUTZOW sailed from Gotenhafen for Norwegian waters. From very early on 11/6/41, from decrypts of Enigma signals to the Luftwaffe and LUTZOW's escorts, Bletchley Park was aware of this movement. This information led to the OIC to determine that the LUTZOW was going to attempt a breakout into the North Atlantic. At 0430/11/6/41 the Home Fleet at Scapa Flow came to one hour's notice)

12th - At 0127 hours KING GEORGE V (Flag CinC Home Fleet), light cruisers AURORA (Flag RA CS2) and ARETHUSA and destroyers BEDOUIN, PUNJABI, ESKIMO and NESTOR departed Scapa Flow for position 64N, 28-30W, to cover the Northern Patrol vessels.

(Just before midnight on 12/6/41, acting on information from the Admiralty OIC, the RAF launched a strike force of five Beaufort 1's of 22 Sqd. from Wick and nine Beaufort 1's of 42 Sqd. from Leuchars. At 0015/13/6/41 a patrolling RAF Blenheim of 114 Sqd. sighted and reported LUTZOW in position 57-48N, 6-50E, and course 270 ¼. At 0225/13/6/41 one of the Beauforts torpedoed LUTZOW on her port side in No 2 motor room. By 0445/13/6/41 she had abandoned her mission and was making for Kiel. At 0525/13/6/41 the OIC was aware that the LUTZOW had been hit and crippled)

13th - At 0200 hours in position 61-08N, 16W, AURORA detached to investigate Finnish merchant ship the SS ROLFSBORG 1831 grt, en route from Norfolk, USA to Petsamo. The ROLFSBORG was sent into Kirkwall under armed guard, and taken into British service.

Later, ARETHUSA detached to investigate Finnish merchant ship the SS KRONBERG 6537grt, en route from New York to Petsamo. The KRONBERG was also sent into Kirkwall under armed guard.

At 0745 hours when the Force was in approximate position 61-40N, 19-08W, the CinC Home Fleet was made aware that the LUTZOW was damaged and returning to Germany.

At 0942 hours the CinC aborted the mission and the Force turned for Scapa.

14th - At 1230 hours KING GEORGE V, AURORA, ARETHUSA and destroyers BEDOUIN, PUNJABI, ESKIMO and NESTOR arrived back at Scapa.

15th to 30th - Deployed at Scapa Flow, during which time she was fitted with the new centimetric surface warning radar Type 271.

July

1st to 31st - Deployed at Scapa Flow.

(On the 22/6/41 Germany commenced Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of Russia. On the same day Winston Churchill condemned the invasion in a broadcast on BBC radio, in his broadcast he stated; 'Any man or State who fights against Nazism will have our aid'. The only way aid could immediately be given to Russia was by sea.

On 12/7/41 the CinC Home Fleet was instructed by the Admiralty to prepare a squadron to operate in North Russia. The squadron was to consist of two light cruisers, four destroyers, three minesweepers and four trawlers, supported by two oilers and two small armament supply issuing ships and would be under the command of Rear Admiral P. L. Vian. On the same day, in order to ascertain the situation in North Russia, Vian flew to Murmansk.

Whilst awaiting Vian's return the CinC Home Fleet and his staff aboard KING GEORGE V were kept busy organising the preparation and assembly of the vessels that would be required for the enterprise.

The departure of the force would reduce the Home Fleet cruisers to one and leave no destroyers. Therefore after the 14/7/41 it would be impossible to maintain any cruisers at Iceland or to

operate the Northern Patrol. In order to provide a screen for KING GEORGE V should she need to leave Scapa, three destroyers were to be transferred to the Home Fleet, two from the 1st Minelaying Squadron and one from Western Approaches.

19/7/41 Vian returned from Russia, in his report he stated that the air defence of Murmansk was wholly inadequate to ensure the security of any force that might be stationed there.

The CinC Home Fleet therefore recommended to the Admiralty that the Naval Force should not be sent unless RAF fighter support could be arranged. The Admiralty therefore included in the ships to go to Russia the SS LANCASTRIAN PRINCE 1914grt with a battery of 40mm Bofors [sailed in the DERVISH convoy] and HMS AGAMEMNON 7593 grt, ex Blue Funnel ship now converted to a minelayer, which was to carry 350 soldiers to man the guns. In the event the troops were carried in SS LLANSTEPHAN CASTLE)

29th - The RFA NASPRITE was damaged when going alongside KING GEORGE V at Scapa Flow.

August

1st to 31st - Deployed at Scapa Flow.

2nd - Mr Harry Hopkins, one of President Roosevelt's closest advisers, stayed on board KING GEORGE V for two nights on his return from Russia. The American Ambassador Mr J C Winant visited Harry Hopkins on board.

(Hopkins had been on a fact-finding visit to discover if the Russians could hold out against the German invasion and what help the US could give to Russia. During his visit he had spent three days in Moscow and had several days of face-to-face meetings with Stalin and Molotov. Stalin's main request had been for AA guns, machine guns, aluminium, high octane fuel and a million rifles. Hopkins discussed his visit with Churchill, before they both sailed on the 4/8/41 on board the PRINCE OF WALES to meet Roosevelt in Placentia Bay)

9th - Destroyer INGLEFIELD escorted by the TARTAR conveyed His Majesty the King on a visit to the Home Fleet. His Majesty disembarked from INGLEFIELD and boarded KING GEORGE V where he was welcomed by the CinC Home Fleet.

During his three day stay with the Home Fleet the King visited aircraft carriers VICTORIOUS and FURIOUS, heavy cruisers DEVONSHIRE and SUFFOLK, light cruisers AURORA and NIGERIA, destroyer depot ship TYNE and destroyers ECLIPSE and CHARLESTOWN berthed alongside.

11th - In the morning His Majesty held an investiture on board KING GEORGE V, presenting decorations to officers and ratings. Many of the decorations were connected with the pursuit and sinking of the BISMARCK.

The King then inspected the Lyness Base and embarked in destroyer INGLEFIELD at 1230 hours for transport to Scrabster, escorted by destroyers TARTAR and PUNJABI.

20th - At 2100 hours KING GEORGE V, escorted by destroyers INGLEFIELD, LIGHTNING and PUNJABI departed Scapa Flow for Rosyth.

21st - At 0600 hours off the Isle of May destroyers INGLEFIELD and LIGHTNING detached and returned to Scapa Flow.

At 0830 hours KING GEORGE V and PUNJABI arrived off Rosyth.

Whilst KING GEORGE V was at Rosyth she was visited by Sir William Beveridge and his committee.

(At the time Beveridge and his committee were working on the Social Insurance and Allied Services report that was published in 1942. When published it proposed that all people of working age should pay a weekly National Insurance contribution. In return, benefits would be paid to people who were sick, unemployed, retired or widowed. The report argued that the system would provide a minimum standard of living 'below which no one should be allowed to fall'. It recommended that the government should find ways of fighting the five 'Giant Evils' of Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness. The report included as one of three fundamental assumptions the fact that there would be a National Health Service of some sort, a policy already being worked on in the Ministry of Health)

September

1st to 4th - At Rosyth.

5th - At 0930 hours KING GEORGE V escorted by destroyers BEDOUIN, VIVACIOUS and VERDUN departed Rosyth for Scapa Flow.

At 1700 hours off Kinnaird Head destroyer LAFOREY joined and VERDUN detached and returned to Rosyth.

At 2012 hours KING GEORGE V escorted by BEDOUIN, VIVACIOUS and LAFOREY arrived at Scapa Flow.

9th - At Scapa Flow, where early in the morning KING GEORGE V was brought to one hour's notice on the report that German heavy cruiser ADMIRAL SCHEER had departed Oslo.

(After the torpedoing of the LUTZOW the SKL decided to send heavy cruiser ADMIRAL SCHEER in her place. On 4/9/41, SCHEER sailed from the Bay of Mecklenburger for Oslo. At 0300/5/9/40 she was sighted and reported by a returning RAF bomber aircraft. At 1000/5/9/41, SCHEER arrived at Oslo. Her arrival was known and the RAF mounted several unsuccessful bombing attacks. Although SCHEER remained unharmed, SKL thought it only a matter of time before she was hit so she was ordered back to Germany. On the afternoon of 8/9/41 she sailed from Oslo and returned to the Baltic. However because the Admiralty thought a breakout attempt likely, the Home Fleet was alerted)

23rd - At 1800 hours KING GEORGE V (Flag CinC Home Fleet), aircraft carrier VICTORIOUS, light cruiser AURORA, and destroyers SOMALI (D6), MATABELE, BEDOUIN, ESKIMO, ASHANTI and PUNJABI departed Scapa Flow for Hvalfjord.

25th - At 1400 hours KING GEORGE V, aircraft carrier VICTORIOUS, light cruiser AURORA, and destroyers SOMALI, MATABELE, BEDOUIN, ESKIMO, ASHANTI, and PUNJABI arrived at Hvalfjord.

Whilst at Hvalfjord KING GEORGE V was visited by the CinC Western Approaches Admiral Sir Percy Noble, who stayed aboard the flagship for three days. Noble was present when the flagship was visited by Mr Bjornson the Regent of Iceland and Mr Jonasson the Prime Minister of Iceland.

October

4th - At 1300 hours KING GEORGE V (Flag CinC Home Fleet), aircraft carrier VICTORIOUS, light cruisers AURORA and PENELOPE, and destroyers SOMALI (D6), BEDOUIN, ESKIMO, MATABELE, ASHANTI and PUNJABI sailed from Hvalfjord.

5th - At 1400 hours KING GEORGE V, SOMALI, BEDOUIN and ESKIMO arrived at Akureyri for a short visit. At 2000 hours KING GEORGE V, SOMALI, BEDOUIN and ESKIMO sailed from Akureyri for Seydisfjordour.

6th - At 0800 hours KING GEORGE V, SOMALI, BEDOUIN and ESKIMO arrived off Seydisfjordour, where the three destroyers detached and joined VICTORIOUS.

At 0900 hours KING GEORGE V and destroyers MATABELE, ASHANTI and PUNJABI arrived at Seydisfjordour where they joined AURORA and PENELOPE.

At Seydisfjordour the CinC Home Fleet transferred his flag to the AURORA.

At 1715 hours KING GEORGE V, PENELOPE, SOMALI, BEDOUIN and ESKIMO sailed from Seydisfjordour; off Seydisfjordour they joined VICTORIOUS, MATABELE, ASHANTI and PUNJABI, the Force then set course westward for a flying off position off the Lofoten Islands, to carry out Operation EJ.

(Operation EJ was a FAA strike against enemy shipping in the port of Bodo and Norwegian coastal waters between Glomfjord and the head of Vestfjord)

8th - At 0730 hours off the Norwegian coast VICTORIOUS launched an air strike of eight Albacores from 817, 820 and 832 Sqds, 5 were armed with bombs and 3 with torpedoes, against the port of Bodo and shipping in Vestfjord.

The strike force should have been 13 but five aircraft were damaged immediately prior to take off by a squall.

At 1100 hours a strike force of eight Albacores armed with bombs was flown off to search Vestfjord.

At 1400 hours after all the second strike aircraft were recovered the Force set course for Scapa.

A sweep in Vestfjord by destroyers SOMALI and MATABELE was cancelled due to the lack of available destroyers and poor weather.

An inshore patrol north and south of Alesund by destroyers SOMALI, MATABELE, ASHANTI and ESKIMO was also cancelled.

10th - At 1000 hours KING GEORGE V, VICTORIOUS, PENELOPE, SOMALI, ESKIMO, MATABELE, ASHANTI and BEDOUIN arrived back at Scapa. PUNJABI arrived later in the day.
Back at Scapa the CinC Home Fleet moved his flag to KING GEORGE V.

11th to 31st - Deployed at Scapa Flow.

November

1st - Deployed at Scapa Flow.

3rd - At 1730 hours KING GEORGE V (Flag CinC Home Fleet), aircraft carrier VICTORIOUS, heavy cruisers KENT, BERWICK and SUFFOLK and destroyers SOMALI (D6), ASHANTI, MATABELE, PUNJABI, OFFA and ORIBI departed Scapa Flow for Hvalfjord.

(Whilst on passage the CinC Home Fleet received intelligence from the Admiralty which indicated that a heavy German unit had passed through the Belts late on 2/11/41. The indications were that this was the SCHEER. But it was possible that it could be the TIRPITZ or both. If the intelligence was correct they could attempt a breakout into the Atlantic on 5/11/41. In fact both German ships were in German waters, the TIRPITZ at Gotenhafen and the SCHEER en route to Hamburg)

5th - Early in the morning off southern Iceland, VICTORIOUS, ASHANTI, OFFA and ORIBI detached for exercise
At 0730 hours KING GEORGE V, BERWICK, KENT, SUFFOLK, SOMALI, MATABELE and PUNJABI arrived at Hvalfjord.

(On arrival at Hvalfjord Admiral R C Giffen USN CinC US naval forces in Iceland came on board KING GEORGE V to confer with the CinC Home Fleet regarding co-operation against the possible breakout of German heavy units. A joint plan of action was agreed between the two Admirals that was put into action later that day)

At 1200 hours, VICTORIOUS and destroyers ASHANTI, OFFA and ORIBI arrived at Hvalfjord.

At 1730 hours cruisers USS WICHITA (Flag CinC USN Iceland) and TUSCALOOSA sailed from Hvalfjord to patrol north east of the British minefield in the Denmark Strait.

At 1800 hours, light cruisers EDINBURGH (Flag 18CS), SHEFFIELD and heavy cruiser SUFFOLK sailed from Hvalfjord to carry out a line abreast patrol, 15 miles apart, leaving the datum line, which ran 145¼ from position 65-15N, 32-13W, at first light each morning and making good 055¼ at 18 knots, till last light when they were to turn back to reach the datum line again next morning.

At 1800 hours KING GEORGE V, VICTORIOUS, KENT, BERWICK, SOMALI, PUNJABI, ASHANTI, MATABELE, ORIBI and OFFA sailed from Hvalfjord for position 63-40N, 35W to cover the British cruiser patrol.

At 1830 hours the US battleships USS MISSISSIPPI and IDAHO and destroyers GWIN, MEREDITH and MONSSEN of Destroyer Division 22 departed Hvalfjord on patrol to pass through position 62-30N, 30W each morning.

(At 2200 hours the CinC Home Fleet received a signal from the Admiralty informing him that further intelligence had been received indicating SCHEER was still in the Baltic on 4/11/41. The CinC Home Fleet then ordered all units to return to Hvalfjord and suggested that the US forces do the same)

At 2230 hours, BERWICK detached to patrol the ice edge north east of the minefield in the Denmark Strait.

6th - At 0300 hours KING GEORGE V, VICTORIOUS, KENT and destroyers SOMALI, PUNJABI, ASHANTI, MATABELE, ORIBI and OFFA arrived back at Hvalfjord.

28th - At 1400 hours KING GEORGE V (Flag CinC Home Fleet), aircraft carrier VICTORIOUS, heavy cruiser NORFOLK and destroyers ASHANTI, TARTAR, ESKIMO, SOMALI, MATABELE, ECHO and ESCAPADE departed Hvalfjord for Scapa Flow.

30th - At 1200 hours KING GEORGE V, VICTORIOUS, NORFOLK, ASHANTI, TARTAR, ESKIMO, SOMALI, MATABELE, ECHO and ESCAPADE arrived at Scapa Flow.

December

1st - Under refit. Type 271 surface warning radar was replaced by four Type 273 (modified Type 271 for large warships)

Resumed Home Fleet Flagship duties at Scapa Flow on completion.

24th - At Scapa Flow on standby to provide cover for Operations ANKLET and ARCHERY. Commando raids on Vaagso Island and the Lofoten Islands.

1942

January

1st - Deployed at Scapa Flow.

(As a consequence of Operations ANKLET and ARCHERY, Hitler who was already concerned about a British invasion of Norway, became even more anxious. As a deterrent to an invasion and more landings Raeder proposed that battleship TIRPITZ should be sent to Norway; further she would be ideally positioned to interdict the Russian convoys. After some hesitation Hitler agreed to TIRPITZ's deployment to Norway.

Late on 14/1/42, TIRPITZ escorted by destroyers Richard Beitzen, Paul Jacobi, Bruno Heinemann and Z-29 sailed from Wilhelmshaven for Trondheim.

Late on 16/1/42, TIRPITZ arrived in Fottenfjord)

(At 0730/17/1/42 the CinC Home Fleet received information TIRPITZ might be at sea. From intelligence which was not conclusive, the indications pointed to some operation or movement other than a breakout into the Atlantic. However the CinC HF had to make the necessary dispositions to prevent this possibility)

17th - At 0800 hours all Home Fleet units at Scapa were ordered to raise steam

At 1600 hours battleships KING GEORGE V (C-in-C Home Fleet), RODNEY, aircraft carrier VICTORIOUS, heavy cruiser SUFFOLK, light cruisers NIGERIA (10th CS), KENYA, SHEFFIELD (18th CS), and destroyers INGLEFIELD (D.3), FAULKNOR (D.8), MARNE, PANTHER, BEDOUIN, ASHANTI, ESKIMO, INTREPID, ECHO, and ESCAPADE departed Scapa Flow for Hvalfjord.

19th – Home Fleet arrived at Hvalfjord.

20th – At 1600 hours KING GEORGE V (Flag CinC Home Fleet), RODNEY, VICTORIOUS, SUFFOLK, NIGERIA, KENYA, SHEFFIELD, INGLEFIELD, FAULKNOR, MARNE, PANTHER, BEDOUIN, ASHANTI, ESKIMO, INTREPID, ECHO and ESCAPADE sailed from Hvalfjord for position 61N, 25W.

(At 1428/22/1/42 the CinC Home Fleet signalled the Admiralty that every endeavour should be made to damage TIRPITZ in harbour by bombing or sabotage. At the same time he suggested that the Russian convoys should continue, only one at a time between 10¼W and 15¼E)

(On 23/1/42, TIRPITZ was located and photographed by a RAF Spitfire of No1 PRU flying from Wick. She was at anchor at the head of Aasfjord, 15 miles east of Trondheim. Fottenfjord is three quarters of a mile wide with steep cliffs on three sides and TIRPITZ was berthed on the north shore of the fjord below a steep cliff. The ship was well camouflaged and protected from attack by anti-submarine nets and protective booms in the water as well as anti-aircraft and searchlight positions on the surrounding cliffs and islands)

24th – The Home Fleet returned to Hvalfjord, and stayed there for the remainder of the month to cover the Denmark Strait and Faeroes-Iceland Gap.

(On 25/1/42 Winston Churchill wrote; "The destruction or even crippling of the TIRPITZ is the greatest event at sea at the present time. No other target is comparable to it")

(On 31/1/42 the first attempt on TIRPITZ in Norway, Operation OILED. At 0030 hours seven Short Stirlings of 15 and 149 squadrons took off from Lossiemouth and at 0205 hours eight Halifaxes four from 10 Sqd and five from 76 Sqd took off from Lossiemouth to bomb TIRPITZ in Fottenfjord. Weather conditions were not good with cloud from sea level to 20,000 feet. One of the Stirlings reported having seen the mast tops of TIRPITZ but was unable to gain sufficient height in order to drop its bomb load. All the Stirlings returned safely to base. All four of the 10 Sqd Halifaxes had to return to base before reaching the target due to lack of fuel. The five 76 Squadron Halifaxes reached the target area, but weather conditions prevented them from locating the target. All aircraft returned to base with the exception of one 76 Squadron Halifax which ditched in the North Sea just off the coast from Aberdeen. The crew were all uninjured and rescued by the Aberdeen Lifeboat)

February

1st to 18th - The Home Fleet remained at Hvalfjord to cover the Denmark Strait and Faeroes-Iceland Gap.

19th - At 0800 hours KING GEORGE V (Flag CinC Home Fleet), aircraft carrier VICTORIOUS, heavy cruiser BERWICK and destroyers ONSLOW, BEDOUIN, TARTAR, ESKIMO, ASHANTI, PUNJABI and ICARUS departed Hvalfjord for Seydisfjordour.

20th - At 0830 hours KING GEORGE V, VICTORIOUS, BERWICK, ONSLOW, BEDOUIN, TARTAR, ESKIMO, ASHANTI, PUNJABI and ICARUS arrived off Seydisfjordour, following which destroyers detached and completed with fuel in Seydisfjordour.

At 1600 hours the Force reassembled off Seydisfjordour and set course for Tromso to carry out Operation EO.

(Operation EO was to be an air strike against shipping at Tromso)

(At 2200/20/2/42, German heavy cruisers PRINZ EUGEN (Flag Vice Admiral Ciliax) and ADMIRAL SCHEER sailed from Brunsbuettel on Operation SPORTPLAST. From Ultra the OIC was aware of the movement and requested RAF Coastal Command to carry out extra reconnaissance patrols. At 1210/21/2/42 a RAF Hudson V, H/53 from North Coates, sighted and reported ADMIRAL SCHEER and PRINZ EUGEN, escorted by destroyers RICHARD BEITZEN, FRIEDRICH IHN, PAUL JACOBI, HERMANN SCHOEMANN and Z 25 and torpedo boats SEEADLER and ILTIS, off Jutland heading north. This Force was assumed to be heading for Trondheim. On receipt of the information the CinC HF immediately abandoned the attack on Tromso and altered course to the south)

21st - At 1400 hours KING GEORGE V, VICTORIOUS, BERWICK, ONSLOW, BEDOUIN, TARTAR, ESKIMO, ASHANTI, PUNJABI and ICARUS altered course to the south.

(At 1300/21/2/42 the B Dienst detachment on the PRINZ EUGEN had decoded the Hudson's sighting report. Ciliax immediately reversed course to return to Germany. At 1730 hours Ciliax was ordered to reverse course by Gruppe Nord, this he finally did at 1940 hours and at the same time detached the two torpedo boats. At 0815/22/2/42 the Force was off Karlsund, and at 1200 hours the Force anchored in GrimstadFjord, south of Bergen. At 2000/21/2/42 Ciliax sailed from GrimstadFjord for Trondheim. At approximately 0330/23/2/42 Ciliax's Force was off Stadtlandet. At 0700 hours in position 63-12N, 7E submarine TRIDENT torpedoed PRINZ EUGEN in the stern)

22nd - The VICTORIOUS, BERWICK and destroyers ASHANTI, BEDOUIN, ESKIMO and ICARUS were detached to proceed ahead to reach a point 100 miles off Stadtlandet at 0100/23rd. KING GEORGE V and destroyers ONSLOW, TARTAR and PUNJABI followed at a slower speed to give cover.

23rd - At 0100 hours, VICTORIOUS, BERWICK, ASHANTI, BEDOUIN, ESKIMO and ICARUS arrived in approximate position 62-12N, 2E.

At 0130 hours in atrocious weather conditions, VICTORIOUS launched a strike force of ten Albacore's of 832 Squadron, only one of which was equipped with ASV radar.

At 0200 hours a second strike force of seven Albacore's of 817 Squadron were launched, two of which were fitted with ASV radar.

Immediately after launching the last aircraft, VICTORIOUS and her escort set course to rejoin the CinC HF and then return to Scapa Flow.

(Due to the weather conditions the strike force achieved nothing, although at 0300 hours one of the ASV equipped aircraft obtained a contact that was probably Ciliax's Force; three aircraft were lost. The strike force was ordered to return to RAF Sumburgh on completion of their mission. At 1900/22/2/42 destroyers GROVE and CHIDDINGFOLD departed Scapa Flow to patrol to the east of the Shetlands and act as rescue ships for the aircraft)

At 2230 hours KING GEORGE V, VICTORIOUS, BERWICK, ONSLOW, BEDOUIN, TARTAR, ESKIMO, ASHANTI, PUNJABI and ICARUS arrived back at Scapa Flow.

(The Kriegsmarine now had at Trondheim a ship, the SCHEER, whose preservation was not as important as the TIRPITZ and which could therefore be employed on offensive operations. Basing the German ships at this port was most disturbing, for no disposition of the Home Fleet could adequately protect both the Russian convoys and the Northern Passages from this threat. In the course of a prolonged discussion with the Admiralty, the CinC Home Fleet forwarded his appreciation of the new situation. In this, he detailed the many reasons for his opinion that, while it was possible that the enemy would attack the Russian convoys with the SCHEER, it was improbable that the TIRPITZ would take part or, if she did take part, that she would accept action with any capital ships covering the convoy. In a few months time, on the other hand, when the whole German Fleet could again be assembled, they could seek to engage in their own waters, with superior force and with the co-operation of shore-based aircraft and U-boats. It was essential that the men and material of the Home Fleet should be prepared for this situation; the watertight subdivision of several of the capital ships was deficient and refits, dockings, training and leave were widely necessary if the efficiency of the fleet was to be maintained.

The CinC Home Fleet, stated his intention to cover the next homeward and outward convoys, which were both unusually large, with DUKE OF YORK and RENOWN, sailing KING GEORGE V and VICTORIOUS in support only if late intelligence should indicate movement at Trondheim or if the PRU reconnaissance failed; he was averse to the use of the whole fleet to cover these convoys, for this would steadily sap its efficiency, would leave the Atlantic wholly uncovered and, as soon as the enemy became aware of our policy, would present him with attractive opportunities for the use of his U-boats against our capital ships. At the same time, the CinC repeated the request he had made five weeks earlier for offensive action against the ships at Trondheim and against their sea communications, in an endeavour to stop their use of this base; the crux of the whole problem.

The Admiralty, in reply, pressed for an increase in the size of the convoy covering force, stating that their Lordships accepted full responsibility for any break out into the Atlantic which might occur while the Fleet was thus employed. They were concerned at the danger to the covering force of air attack from North Norway, though the enemy air forces there were small in number and without torpedo aircraft, and though the CinC had earlier instructed the covering force not to approach within 250 miles of that coast except to sink or damage enemy warships; their Lordships instructed the CinC to provide fighter protection to the capital ships when within range of enemy aircraft. They hoped that the NELSON and RODNEY would have completed refits by the time the enemy battlecruisers could be repaired; and stated that the possibility of offensive action against the ships at Trondheim was still under consideration)

(In order to comply with the Admiralty requirement that the Home Fleet was to cover the passage of convoys PQ 12 and QP 8, CinC Home Fleet believed that the most dangerous area would be between Jan Mayen and Bear Islands. Therefore on 26/2/42 Tovey asked that the next outward and homeward Arctic convoys be sailed simultaneously so that they would pass through the danger area at the same time. For the first eight days of the operation the weather conditions were extreme with storms up to force 10, snow showers, icing and poor visibility. Convoy PQ 12 and QP 8 sailed on 1/3/42 from Reykjavik and Murmansk respectively)

March

1st - At Scapa Flow.

4th - At 0730 hours KING GEORGE V (Flag CinC Home Fleet Admiral Tovey), aircraft carrier VICTORIOUS, heavy cruiser BERWICK and destroyers ASHANTI, BEDOUIN, ICARUS, INTREPID, LOOKOUT and ONSLOW sailed from Scapa Flow and set course northerly.

At 1600 hours BERWICK detached to return to Scapa with engine trouble escorted by BEDOUIN.

5th – At 1200 hours the Home Fleet was in approximate position 65-27N, 5W, about 100 miles bearing 206¼ from the 2nd Battle Squadron and steering northerly.

At 1200 hours the 2nd Battle Squadron was in position 66-45N, 06-30W about 100 miles south of PQ 12 and steering northerly.

(At 1300 hours a Fw 200 reconnaissance aircraft of Gruppe 1, KG40 from Trondheim-Vaernes airfield, sighted and reported PQ 12 in position 69-22N, 08-27W, 100 miles south of Jan Mayen Island. The sighting was made after the KENYA had joined PQ 12 and was reported as 15 merchantmen, one cruiser and two destroyers. The signal was picked up by the Y service and passed to Bletchley Park who, because they had broken the GAF Enigma, decoded it almost immediately. The information was then passed to CinC Home Fleet)

(NB: in this account of the encounter between the Home Fleet and the TIRPITZ, German times are one hour ahead of British times. Also the weather was generally poor with low visibility and snow showers)

At 2000 hours the 2nd Battle Squadron altered course easterly to affect a RV with the Home Fleet.

6th – At 1030 hours in position 71-00N, 4-30E the Home Fleet and the 2nd battle squadron RVed and the two forces joined together, continuing to steer northerly.

The Home Fleet now comprised KING GEORGE V, RENOWN, DUKE OF YORK, VICTORIOUS and destroyers ASHANTI, ICARUS, INTREPID, LOOKOUT, ONSLOW, FURY, ECHO, PUNJABI and ECLIPSE

(At 1200 hours the TIRPITZ (Flag Vice Admiral Otto Ciliax) sailed from Fottenfjorden on Operation SPORTPLAST.

At 1315 hours TIRPITZ was joined by destroyers HERMANN SCHOEMANN, PAUL JACOBI and Z25.

At 1430 hours the TIRPITZ squadron was joined by destroyer FRIEDRICH IHN and torpedo boats T5 and T12.

At 1600 hours the TIRPITZ squadron entered the Frohavet Channel and turned NNE into the Norwegian Sea on an intercept course for the convoy reported by the Fw 200 reconnaissance aircraft at 1300/5/3/42.

At 1801 hours the submarine SEAWOLF sighted TIRPITZ in approximate position 64-15N, 9-44E, but was forced to dive and therefore unable to report until she surfaced.

At 1945 hours SEAWOLF surfaced and signalled the Admiralty reporting 'a large warship, either a battleship or a heavy cruiser'.

At 1935 hours the TIRPITZ squadron was in position 64-44N, 10-17E)

At 1400 hours the Home Fleet altered course to the south.

7th – At 0010 hours the CinC Home Fleet received a signal from the Admiralty giving him SEAWOLF's sighting report. Tovey now knew that TIRPITZ was out but was unsure if she was intending to attack the convoy or break out into the Atlantic.

The Home Fleet altered course to the north.

(Early in the morning the CinC HF planned that VICTORIOUS would launch reconnaissance aircraft to search out to 120 miles in the sector 065¼ to 115¼. However due to the severe icing conditions no flying was possible.

At 1000 hours TIRPITZ released destroyers FRIEDRICH IHN, Z 25 and HERMANN SCHOEMANN to carry out a sweep to the north.

At 1200 hours TIRPITZ was in position 70-45N, 10-21E, approximately 90 miles from Tovey, and had planned to launch two Ar 196 aircraft, but had to abandon the reconnaissance for the

same reason as VICTORIOUS)

At 0800 hours the Home Fleet increased to full speed.

At 1122 hours the Home Fleet altered course to the south, this put Tovey on a reciprocal course to TIRPITZ.

(At 1200 hours convoys PQ 12 and QP 8 passed each other 200 miles SW of Bear Island.

At this time TIRPITZ was crossing the mean course of the convoy's, astern of PQ 12 and ahead of QP 8.

At 1630 hours in approximate position 72-35N, 10-30E, the German destroyers found a straggler from QP 8, the Russian freighter MV IJORA 2815grt; she was approximately 100 miles astern of QP 8. HERMANN SCHOEMANN fired a torpedo, which missed then FRIEDRICH IHN attempted to sink her by gunfire but failed. HERMANN SCHOEMANN and FRIEDRICH IHN then teamed up to sink her with their main armament. The Russian merchantman's distress signal was intercepted by Tovey, but the sender's position was not clear to him)

At 1750 hours the Home Fleet altered course to the east. At the same time destroyers ICARUS and INTREPID detached to Iceland to refuel.

(At 1830 hours in approximate position 72-33N, 8-23E, the three destroyers rejoined the TIRPITZ.

At 2113 hours TIRPITZ released destroyer FRIEDRICH IHN to refuel at Harstad)

At 2000 hours the Home Fleet was about 150 miles SW of the TIRPITZ and altered course to the north. Tovey was now on an interception course. At the same time, destroyers ONSLOW (D17), ASHANTI, ECHO, ECLIPSE, FURY and PUNJABI were detached to sweep north between the Home Fleet and the Lofoten Islands along what Tovey considered to be the enemy's most likely return route, before returning to Iceland to refuel.

(The 2000 hour course change was based on signal traffic analysis from TIRPITZ that was analysed almost simultaneously by the AID and the results passed to Tovey)

(At 2400 hours TIRPITZ was in position 72- 10N, 12-22E and steering east)

At 2400 hours, in approximate position 71-30N, 7-30E, the Home Fleet altered course to the south so that Tovey could be in position off the Lofoten Islands to launch an air strike at dawn. Tovey had been approximately 120 miles from TIRPITZ and was now steering away from her.

8th – At 0400 hours Tovey, who's Fleet now comprised KING GEORGE V, VICTORIOUS, DUKE OF YORK, RENOWN and destroyer LOOKOUT, decided that he had missed TIRPITZ and since he was without destroyers in dangerous waters, turned SW towards Iceland to collect some destroyers.

(At 0740 hours TIRPITZ released destroyers Z25 and HERMANN SCHOEMANN to refuel at Tromso, which was approximately 125 miles distant)

At 0800 hours destroyers ONSLOW (D17), ASHANTI, ECHO, ECLIPSE, FURY and PUNJABI, who were to the north east of Tovey, having sighted nothing set course for Seidisfjord to refuel.

At 1800 hours the Home Fleet was steering south westerly when Tovey received a signal from the Admiralty suggesting that TIRPITZ might be south of Bear Island and still searching for the convoys.

At 1820 hours the Home Fleet in approximate position 68 -20N, 01W, acting on Admiralty intelligence, altered course to the north east. The Home Fleet was again steaming towards the TIRPITZ.

(At 1730 hours TIRPITZ was in approximate position 72-54N, 13-24E and steering 255¼)

At 1830 hours Tovey broke radio silence with a signal to the Admiralty requesting destroyers and refuelling facilities for his destroyers.

(On receipt of this signal the Admiralty ordered 4 cruisers [heavy cruisers KENT and LONDON and light cruisers LIVERPOOL and TRINIDAD] to positions between Jan Mayer and Bear Islands to refuel destroyers and assembled all available destroyers which were then sailed to the aid of the Home Fleet)

(At 2130 hours TIRPITZ turned on to a southerly course and was now moving away from the convoys.

At 2352 Ciliax took the decision to abort his mission to find and destroy the convoys, and return to Trondheim)

9th – At 0240 hours the Home Fleet was in approximate position 70-20N, 02-30E and steering north easterly, when Tovey received a signal from the Admiralty that TIRPITZ was steaming south and not searching the waters off Bear Island.

At 0245 hours the Home Fleet altered course to 120¼, steering for Vestfjord, and increased speed to 26 knots.

At 0640 hours VICTORIOUS flew off a reconnaissance force of 6 Albacores on a diverging search between 105 degrees: and 155 degrees to a depth of 150 miles.

(At 0800 hours TIRPITZ was in position 68-15N, 10-44E, steaming south when she was joined by destroyer FRIEDRICH IHN who took up position off TIRPITZ's starboard bow)

At 0730 hours the Home Fleet was in approximate position 68-10N, 6-40E, a strike force of 12 torpedo-carrying Albacores, 5 from 817 Sqd and 7 from 832 Sqd, was flown off VICTORIOUS. At the time of launch TIRPITZ was approximately 115 miles to their south east.

(At 0830 hours TIRPITZ was in approximate position 68N, 10-45E, steering southerly at 25 knots)

At 0802 hours Albacore F of 832 Sqd sighted TIRPITZ and FRIEDRICH IHN sailing south, and made a sighting report.

(At 0910 hours TIRPITZ sighted two Albacores dead aft.

At 0931 hours TIRPITZ increased speed to 27 knots and turned on to course 130¼.

At 0932 hours TIRPITZ launched her Arado 196 aircraft for anti-submarine detection and makeshift fighter protection.

At 0934 hours TIRPITZ and FRIEDRICH IHN increased speed to 29 knots and turned on to course 82¼ heading for Vestfjord and Narvik)

At 0917 hours, TIRPITZ was attacked by the strike force of 12 torpedo-carrying Albacores. The attack failed although one torpedo only missed TIRPITZ's stern by 30 feet, 2 Albacores were shot down.

(TIRPITZ reported the torpedo attack by 24 Swordfish type aircraft taking place between 1015 and 1024 hours. Three downings were claimed two on starboard and one on port side. Several aircraft claimed leaving the scene with smoke trails)

At 0940 hours the Home Fleet turned west then SW

At 1545 hours the Home Fleet was attacked by 3 Ju 88 bombers, one bomb landed close astern of VICTORIOUS but no damaged was caused.

At 1840 hours FAULKNER, BEDOUIN, ESKIMO and TARTAR joined the Home Fleet.

(At 1957 hours TIRPITZ anchored in Bogen Bay, off Ofotfjord)

At various times during the Home Fleets return to Scapa the Fleet was joined by destroyers that the Admiralty had assembled at Tovey's request. These were destroyers JAVELIN, INCONSTANT, VERDUN, LANCASTER, LEDBURY, GROVE, WOOLSTON and WELLS joined the fleet.

10th – At 2300 hours, KING GEORGE V, DUKE OF YORK, VICTORIOUS, RENOWN, LOOKOUT, FAULKNER, BEDOUIN, ESKIMO, TARTAR, JAVELIN, INCONSTANT, VERDUN, LANCASTER, LEDBURY, GROVE, WOOLSTON and WELLS arrived at Scapa.

(So ended what for both sides had been a frustrating operation. The appalling weather affected both sides. The Kriegsmarine were poorly served by the Luftwaffe who only sighted PQ 12 once and completely missed QP 8. Also B-Dienst were completely unaware of the Home Fleets presence until Tovey broke radio silence. Even so TIRPITZ failed by a very narrow margin in finding the convoys. In contrast Tovey was well served by good intelligence from the Admiralty

which was based on appreciations by OIC and decoded intercepts from BP. This intelligence led to air strike against TIRPITZ which almost succeeded and was the only time that the FAA were to attack TIRPITZ in the open sea)

(The next operation for the Home Fleet was to cover the passage of convoys PQ 13 and QP 9. The TIRPITZ was in Trondheim Fjord with heavy cruisers ADMIRAL SCHEER and ADMIRAL HIPPER [arrived 21/3/42]. The Admiralty considered that another sortie by the Kriegsmarine heavy surface units was a possibility. So Tovey again had to provide heavy distant cover for the two convoys. What was not known by the Admiralty was that the Kriegsmarine heavy units were limited by lack of destroyers and low fuel stocks. This operation again took place in exceptionally bad weather)

20th - At Scapa a RAF type of 12in Plan Radar Display Indicator (PPI) unit was installed in the Admirals Plot for use with the Type 273 surface warning radar. First operational use of a PPI at sea.

22nd – At 1400 hours the Home Fleet comprising KING GEORGE V (Flag Vice Admiral Curteis 2iC Home Fleet), DUKE of YORK, RENOWN, VICTORIOUS, cruisers KENT and EDINBURGH and destroyers ASHANTI, BEDOUIN, ECHO, ESCAPE, ESKIMO, FORESIGHT, ICARUS, INGLEFIELD, LEDBURY, MARNE, MIDDLETON, ONSLOW, PUNJABI, TARTAR and WHEATLAND sailed from Scapa to provide distant cover for convoys PQ 13 and QP 9. Course was set for the north east of Iceland.

(At 0720/20/3/42 convoy PQ 13 comprising 21merchants sailed from Reykjavik heading north through the Denmark Strait. When the Home Fleet sailed PQ 13 was north of Iceland in approximate position 67-35N, 16-40W. Convoy QP 9 sailed from Kola Inlet on 21/3/42)

23rd – Late in the evening the Fleet arrived off Seydisfjörður where destroyers were detached turn to refuel.

24th – In the afternoon, all destroyers having refuelled, the Fleet set course for 68N, 10W.

25th – Early in the morning the Fleet arrived in position 68N, 10W, where, for two days, in temperatures of -35 degrees, they cruised for two days.

(Against convoys PQ 13 and QP 9 the Kriegsmarine deployed ten U-Boats and three destroyers. Using intelligence gained from Enigma the Admiralty was able to provide details of the U-Boat dispositions and to warn of the GAF and destroyer attacks. Most importantly the Enigma provided the Admiralty with evidence that none of the larger enemy units had moved north with destroyers. The Admiralty was therefore able to assure Curteis that TIRPITZ was not going to sortie against the convoys)

27th – Aware from TRINIDAD's signal, received late on 25/3/42, informing the CinC Home Fleet that convoy PQ 13 had been scattered by a full gale and with the Home Fleet itself experiencing gale force conditions that had caused damage to VICTORIOUS and TARTAR, Curteis decided that he would be unable to provide assistance to the convoy in its scattered state so therefore turned for Scapa.

At 0600 hours the Home Fleet left its patrol area to return to Scapa.

28th – At 1400 hours the Home Fleet arrived back at Scapa.

April

3rd - At Scapa where the Flag of the Commander in Chief, Home Fleet was transferred to KING GEORGE V from light cruiser LIVERPOOL.

At 0700 hours KING GEORGE V (Flag CinC Home Fleet) then sailed from Scapa for Rosyth to have two additional eight barrelled Pom-Poms fitted atop B and Y turrets.

In the afternoon arrived at Rosyth.

(At 0905/3/4/42 the USN Task Force TF 99 comprising battleship WASHINGTON, heavy cruiser TUSCALOOSA (Flag Rear Admiral Giffen CinC Task Force 99), and destroyers WAINWRIGHT, MADISON, WILSON and PLUNKETT arrived at Scapa)

5th - KING GEORGE V (Flag CinC Home Fleet), light cruiser NIGERIA and destroyers FAULKNOR (D8), ICARUS and ESCAPADE left Rosyth for Scapa.

6th - KING GEORGE V, NIGERIA, FAULKNOR (D8), ICARUS and ESCAPADE arrived at Scapa.

(The next operation for the Home Fleet was to cover the passage of convoys PQ 14 and QP 10. Their cover was required as the Kriegsmarine heavy units were still in Trondheim Fjord)

12th – At 0600 hours the Home Fleet, comprising KING GEORGE V (Flag CinC Home Fleet), DUKE OF YORK (Flag Vice Admiral, 2iC Home Fleet), VICTORIOUS, heavy cruiser KENT, light cruiser NIGERIA and destroyers FAULKNOR (D 8), ONSLOW (D 17), OFFA, ESCAPADE, MIDDLETON, LEDBURY, WHEATLAND and BELVOIR departed Scapa to cover convoys PQ 14 and QP 10. Course was set north westerly for the Faroe Islands.

(At 1430/8/4/42 convoy PQ 14 comprising 26 merchant ships sailed from Reykjavik heading north through the Denmark Strait. When the Home Fleet sailed, PQ 14 was south west of Jan Mayen Island and having encountered fog, snow and ice, only 8 ships were in company with the commodore. Convoy QP 10 of 16 merchant ships sailed from Kola Inlet on 10/4/42)

At 1930 hours when the Home Fleet was south of the Faroe Islands destroyers FAULKNOR, ONSLOW, ESCAPADE and OFFA were detached to refuel in Skaalefjord.

13th – At 0430 hours destroyers SOMALI (D 6), BEDOUIN, ESKIMO, and MATCHLESS joined the Battlefleet from refuelling in Skaalefjord.

At 0500 hours, north of the Faroe Islands FAULKNOR, ONSLOW, ESCAPADE and OFFA rejoined the battlefleet.

At 0500 hours destroyers MIDDLETON, LEDBURY and BELVOIR detached to return to Scapa.

The Home Fleet then set course for north east Iceland.

At 1900 hours the Home Fleet arrived off Seydisfjordour where destroyer WHEATLAND detached to escort oiler RFA ALDERSDALE from Seydisfjordour.

The Home Fleet then set course for a patrol position 135 miles south west of Jan Mayen Island.

14th – At 1000 hours the Home Fleet arrived in position 62-50N, 6-15W where they patrolled for the next two days to be available should the Kriegsmarine heavy units sortie from Trondheim.

(Twice during the period that the Home Fleet were in the patrol area the Admiralty, from the lack of Enigma traffic, was able to assure Tovey that no German heavy units were at sea)

16th – In the morning the Home Fleet was about to leave the patrol area when Tovey received a report from the LIVERPOOL (with QP 10) that the convoy was being shadowed by four aircraft and one U-Boat, and that heavy air attack was expected. Tovey decided to remain in the area, to provide support should it be required.

At 0800 hours, KENT detached from the Home Fleet to proceed north to reinforce the escort of convoy QP 10.

At 1500 hours the Home Fleet set course for Scapa via north east Iceland.

17th – At 0400 hours off Seydisfjordour FAULKNOR, SOMALI, BEDOUIN and MATCHLESS were detached to refuel.

The Home Fleet then set course for the north Faroes.

At 1500 hours in position 62-50N, 6-15W the Fleet was joined by destroyers MIDDLETON, LEDBURY, LAMERTON, and HURSLEY from Skaalefjord, following which ESKIMO, OFFA and ESCAPADE detached to refuel at Skaalefjord.

At 1630 hours the Fleet was joined by FAULKNOR, SOMALI, BEDOUIN and MATCHLESS from Seydisfjordour.

18th – At 0500 hours the Home Fleet comprising KING GEORGE V, DUKE OF YORK, VICTORIOUS, NIGERIA, escorted by the SOMALI, FAULKNOR, ONSLOW (D 17), MIDDLETON, LEDBURY, LAMERTON, HURSLEY, BEDOUIN, and MATCHLESS arrived back at Scapa.

28th - KING GEORGE V (Flag CinC Home Fleet), battleship USS WASHINGTON (Flag CinC Task Force 99), aircraft carrier VICTORIOUS, heavy cruisers USS WICHITA and TUSCALOOSA, and light cruiser KENYA escorted by destroyers INGFIELD (D3), MIDDLETON, LAMERTON, HURSLEY, BELVOIR and USS WAINWRIGHT, MADISON, WILSON and PLUNKETT, sailed from Scapa and set course northerly to provide distant cover for convoys PQ 15 and QP 11.

(Convoy PQ 15 sailed from Reykjavik on 26/4/42 and QP 11 sailed from Kola Inlet on 28/4/42)

30th - North of the Faroe Islands the Battlefleet was joined by destroyers MARTIN, PUNJABI, ORIBI and MARNE from Seydisfjordour following which destroyers MIDDLETON, LAMERTON, HURSLEY and BELVOIR detached and returned to Scapa.

May

1st - At 1545 hours north east of Iceland in thick fog the Battlefleet was zigzagging when they ran into a thick bank of fog; immediately KING GEORGE V made a signal to cease zigzagging. Destroyer PUNJABI failed to receive the signal and carried on zigzagging and crossed under the flagship's bows. KING GEORGE V travelling at 25 knots cut PUNJABI clean in half; PUNJABI's stern sank almost immediately. The collision caused a 40 foot gash in the bow of KING GEORGE V and also under water damage. As the stern of PUNJABI sank her ready use depth charges exploded directly under the keel of the WASHINGTON the vessel immediately astern of KING GEORGE V, causing slight damage to WASHINGTON.

The fore section of PUNJABI sank slowly which enabled many of her crew to abandon ship. Destroyers MARNE and MARTIN were able to pick up 201 survivors. 49 were lost mainly from the stern section.

(Immediately following the assessment of the damage to the flagship, Tovey signalled the 2iC Home Fleet in battleship DUKE OF YORK at Hvalfjord, to sail as soon as possible to relieve the CinC Home Fleet and KING GEORGE V. As well as the structural damage, most of her radar and radar equipment suffered some degree of damage)

At 2359 hours in position 67-32N, 10-25W, DUKE OF YORK (Flag Vice Admiral Curteis, 2iC Home Fleet), and destroyers FAULKNOR and ESCAPADE RVed with the Home Fleet.

3rd - At 0030 hours KING GEORGE V escorted by destroyers MARTIN, MARNE and ORIBI detached from the Battlefleet for Seydisfjordour.

At 1330 hours KING GEORGE V, MARTIN, MARNE and ORIBI arrived at Seydisfjordour.

The PUNJABI survivors were transferred to KING GEORGE V for passage to Scapa.

At 1630 hours KING GEORGE V escorted by destroyers MIDDLETON, LAMERTON, BLANKNEY and WHEATLAND sailed from Seydisfjordour for Scapa.

4th - At 2330 hours KING GEORGE V, MIDDLETON, LAMERTON, BLANKNEY and WHEATLAND arrived at Scapa.

7th - At Scapa Captain P.J. Mack, DSO, RN, assumed command of KING GEORGE V.

8th - The flag of CinC Home Fleet, was transferred from KING GEORGE V to the DUKE OF YORK. KING GEORGE V, escorted by destroyers MIDDLETON and BLANKNEY left Scapa for Liverpool for repairs and refit.

9th - KING GEORGE V and destroyers MIDDLETON and BLANKNEY arrived at Liverpool.

On arrival at Liverpool KING GEORGE V entered Gladstone dock and was taken in hand for repairs and refit.

The damage sustained by KING GEORGE V in the collision extended from the stem to number 16 station below the main deck, both sides of the ship were open to the sea. The starboard outer wing compartments 119 to 140 were flooded as a result of the depth charge explosions.

June

1st to 30th - At Liverpool under repair and refit.

During her refit radar Type 285 installed for fire-control of 5.25in mountings and the newly developed surface warning radar Type 273Q was also fitted.

(In September 1942 a CW candidate from KING GEORGE V, a Petty Officer Deacon, who had a roving commission around the Fleet attending to radar problems, was in London for a CW selection board. Sitting on the board was the chief scientist to Winston Churchill, James Brundrett who appeared only to be interested in quizzing the candidate about the performance of the new 3000 MHz Type 273Q surface warning radar recently fitted to KING GEORGE V)

July

1st to 9th - At Liverpool under repair and refit.

10th - KING GEORGE V escorted by destroyers MARNE, MARTIN and ESCAPADE left Liverpool on completion of refit for Scapa to work up.

11th - Off Cape Wrath KING GEORGE V, MARNE, MARTIN and ESCAPADE were joined by the heavy cruiser CUMBERLAND to carry out trials of KING GEORGE V's new radars.

Later in the day KING GEORGE V, CUMBERLAND, MARTIN, MARNE and ESCAPADE, arrived Scapa to commence working up exercises.

24th - The flag of CinC Home Fleet, transferred from DUKE OF YORK to KING GEORGE V.

August

1st to 31st - At Scapa Flow.

The Russian convoys were suspended following the debacle of convoy PQ 17 and also because of the transfer of Home Fleet units to the Mediterranean for Operation PEDESTAL

12th - His Excellency The Turkish Ambassador made a two day visit to the Home Fleet, accompanied by the Turkish Naval Attache, between 12th and 14th August. He arrived from Scrabster in destroyer MONTROSE on the 12th and stayed onboard KING GEORGE V, going to sea in the escort carrier AVENGER on the afternoon of that day to watch flying exercises. He returned by air to London on 14th August

24th - His Majesty The King of the Hellenes arrived at Scapa to pay a short visit to the Home Fleet. During his stay His Majesty was accommodated onboard KING GEORGE V which he inspected. He also inspected the Greek destroyers ADRIAS and KANARIS which were working up at Scapa at the time. His Majesty returned to London by train on the 26th.

September

1st to 30th - At Scapa Flow.

5th - His Grace The Archbishop of Canterbury paid a short visit to the Home Fleet arriving in destroyer ECLIPSE from Scrabster on 5th and leaving again two days later. During his stay, His Grace was accommodated onboard KING GEORGE V.

Admiral Tovey found the visit of the Archbishop immensely stimulating,

October

1st to 31st - At Scapa Flow.

7th - His Majesty King Peter of Yugoslavia, paid a visit to the Home Fleet from 7th to 9th October. The Royal Party arrived from Scrabster in destroyer ROTHERHAM on 7th and were accommodated onboard KING GEORGE V. During his stay, King Peter visited several units of the Home Fleet, leaving Scapa on the 9th in destroyer FAULKNOR for Scrabster.

9th - The Prime Minister accompanied by Sir Stafford Cripps visited the Home Fleet from the 9th to 11th. During his stay the Prime Minister was accommodated on board KING GEORGE V, but visited several other units of the Fleet, notably those who had taken part in the last North Russian convoys, and address the ships' companies. The Prime Minister left Scapa on Sunday 11th in destroyer MILNE for Thurso and Edinburgh

November

1st to 30th - At Scapa Flow.

December

1st to 18th - At Scapa Flow.

19th - KING GEORGE V (Flag CinC Home Fleet), heavy cruiser BERWICK escorted by destroyers MUSKETEER, QUADRANT and RAIDER sailed from Scapa Flow to provide distant cover for convoy JW 51A. Cover was to be provided to the westward of 15¼ East.

(Convoy JW 51A [this was the first convoy with the new title; the titles had been changed from PQ to JW, and QP to RA for return, for security reasons]. JW 51A sailed from Loch Ewe on 15/12/42. Loch Ewe was chosen as the new starting point because the Luftwaffe had been increasing its reconnaissance flights over Iceland)

21st - The Battlefleet reached approximate position 72-30N, 2E, in which area it cruised for two days before returning to Scapa.

25th - KING GEORGE V, BERWICK, MUSKETEER, QUADRANT and RAIDER arrived back at Scapa.

(Convoy JW 51B, comprising 15 merchant ships, sailed from Loch Ewe on 22/12/42. At 0300/30/12/42, U 354 reported a lightly guarded convoy of six to ten ships 50 miles south of Bear Island. On receipt of this sighting report Admiral Raeder personally ordered heavy cruisers LUTZOW and HIPPER to sail from their base in Altenfjord with an escort of six destroyers and carry out Operation REGENBOGEN, an attack on convoy JW 51B.

At 0820/31/12/42 the corvette HYDERABAD, one of the close escort on the starboard quarter, sighted two strange destroyers. She took them to be the expected Russian reinforcements, and therefore made no report. Ten minutes later destroyer OBDURATE, who was on the starboard beam of the convoy, sighted and reported the same ships crossing astern of the convoy.

At 0930 hours the German destroyers open fire on OBDURATE, and so commenced the Battle of the Barents Sea.

The return convoy RA 51, of fourteen ships, sailed from Murmansk on the 30th of December. Although the CinC Home Fleet did not have full details of the progress of the action until much later, it was evident that the cruiser force, Force R, was unlikely to have enough fuel remaining to cover RA 51 throughout the dangerous part of its passage. Therefore the CinC HF put to sea to give additional cover)

31st - Battleships KING GEORGE V (Flag CinC Home Fleet) and HOWE, heavy cruisers KENT (Flag CS1) and BERWICK, light cruiser BERMUDA, escorted by destroyers RAIDER, QUEENBOROUGH, MUSKETEER, MONTROSE, WORCESTER and ORP PIORUN sailed from Scapa and steered north to cover the passage of convoy RA 51 between latitudes 70 and 71-30N and longitude 1 to 5E.

1943

January

1st - As the battlefleet steered northerly they ran into heavy weather and had to slow down to enable Destroyers to keep up.

KENT and BERWICK were detached to proceed ahead to reach the covering position as soon as possible.

2nd - The battlefleet arrived in position 72-50N, 11-40E where they cruised until the convoy had cleared the area. Destroyer MONTROSE detached and proceeded to Seydisfjordour to refuel.

3rd - The battlefleet left the covering position to return to Scapa.

Destroyer WORCESTER detached and proceeded to Seydisfjordour to refuel.

5th - KING GEORGE V, HOWE, BERMUDA and destroyers RAIDER, QUEENBOROUGH, MUSKETEER and ORP PIORUN arrived back at Scapa.

6th to 31st - At Scapa.

February

1st to 17th - At Scapa.

15th - Her new CO, Captain Thomas Edgar Halsey took command.

18th - KING GEORGE V (Flag CinC Home Fleet), heavy cruiser NORFOLK, screened by destroyers METEOR, FORESTER and ICARUS sailed from Scapa for Akureyri.

20th - KING GEORGE V, NORFOLK, METEOR, FORESTER and ICARUS arrived at Akureyri.

22nd - Battleships KING GEORGE V (Flag CinC Home Fleet) and HOWE, heavy cruiser BERWICK, screened by destroyers ONSLAUGHT, OFFA, MUSKETEER, ICARUS, METEOR and ORP PIORUN sailed from Akureyri and set course for Bear Island to cover convoy JW 53.

(Convoy JW 53, comprising 25 merchant ships, sailed from Loch Ewe on 15/2/43; this was four days later than planned due to loading difficulties. A further three merchant ships and escort designated JW 53B sailed from Loch Ewe on 16/3/43 to catch up with JW 53. On the afternoon of 17/2/43 the weather had deteriorated to a Force 10 westerly with a huge 80ft swell, the deck cargos of the ships of JW 53B started to shift so they turned back to Loch Ewe. The convoy was delayed and scattered by the severe weather, which also caused damage to light cruiser SHEFFIELD and escort carrier DASHER)

23rd - During the northerly passage several groups of scattered merchant ships were encountered and reported to the convoy escorts to be rounded up.

24th - The battlefleet arrived in their covering position 150 miles S.W. of Bear Island.

25th - The battlefleet left their covering position to return to Akureyri.

26th - BERWICK detached for Hvalfjord.

KING GEORGE V, HOWE and destroyers ONSLAUGHT, OFFA, MUSKETEER, ICARUS, METEOR and ORP PIORUN arrived at Akureyri.

March

1st - At Akureyri.

2nd - Battleships KING GEORGE V (Flag of CinC Home Fleet) and HOWE, light cruiser GLASGOW screened by destroyers ONSLAUGHT, OFFA, ICARUS, MUSKETEER, FORESTER and ORP PIORUN sailed from Akureyri and set course for Bear Island to cover convoy RA 53.

(Convoy RA 53, comprising 30 merchant ships, sailed from Kola Inlet on 1/3/43. En route this convoy also experienced severe weather with most of the passage taking place in a full gale. The weather caused the convoy to drop behind schedule and ships to straggle. The convoy finally arrived at Loch Ewe on 14/3/43)

4th - The battlefleet arrived in its covering position, where it cruised for a few hours then turned for Scapa.

5th - GLASGOW and FORESTER detached for Skaalefjord where FORESTER fuelled from GLASGOW.

6th - KING GEORGE V, HOWE, ONSLAUGHT, OFFA, ICARUS, MUSKETEER and ORP PIORUN arrived at Scapa Flow.

7th to 31st - At Scapa.

18th - HM The King came on his second visit to the Fleet at Scapa Flow; he arrived in destroyer MILNE escorted by destroyers INTREPID, FURY and ORP ORKAN. He was hosted by the CinC Home Fleet, Admiral Sir John TOVEY KCB KBE CB DSO in the flagship KING GEORGE V.

During his four day visit the King visited the DUKE OF YORK, HOWE, INDOMITABLE, ARCHER, TYNE, BELFAST, CUMBERLAND, GLASGOW, JAMAICA and SCYLLA. He also embarked in ONSLAUGHT to go ashore to visit Hatston RN Air Station and later attend an ENSA show in the RN Cinema on Flotta.

21st - HM The King departed from KING GEORGE V on board light cruiser SCYLLA to return to Scrabster escorted by destroyers OBDURATE, OPPORTUNE and ORIBI. As was the custom the King ordered 'Splice the Mainbrace' giving every rating an extra tot of rum, gaining the hearty approval of the fleet.

(With the hours of daylight now lengthening and with a powerful Kriegsmarine squadron in Altenfjord, Admiral Tovey considered the risks involved in sailing further convoys to Russia unjustified. Further the CinC Home Fleet was well aware of the difficulties, shortage of surface escorts and long range aircraft, being faced by the North Atlantic convoys. So he proposed to the Admiralty that the postponement of the Russian convoys would temporarily release 19 destroyers, 8 other escorts, one escort carrier and six submarines to reinforce our forces in the vital trans-Atlantic theatre. This solution was adopted and all destroyers, except a bare minimum to screen the battlefleet, were temporarily transferred to Western Approaches command)

April

1st to 13th - At Scapa.

14th - Flag of the Commander in Chief, Home Fleet, transferred from KING GEORGE V to DUKE OF YORK. KING GEORGE V escorted by destroyers ECHO, BRISSENDEN and HMCS IROQUOIS sailed from Scapa for Rosyth.

15th - KING GEORGE V, ECHO, BRISSENDEN and HMCS IROQUOIS arrived at Rosyth where KING GEORGE V had a short docking for the installation of additional 20 x 20mm Oerlikon guns for close range AA defence and to give leave.

30th - KING GEORGE V escorted by destroyers MAHRATTA, STEVENSTONE and ST MARYS sailed from Rosyth for Scapa.

May

1st - KING GEORGE V, MAHRATTA, STEVENSTONE and ST MARYS arrived at Scapa. In the PM KING GEORGE V and destroyers TROUBRIDGE, TUSCAN and METEOR sailed from Scapa for Gibraltar for temporary duty with Force H.

6th - KING GEORGE V, TROUBRIDGE, TUSCAN and METEOR arrived at Gibraltar. KING GEORGE V joined Force H.

(This deployment was to reinforce Force H in preparation for Operation HUSKY, the invasion of Sicily)

June

1st - At Gibraltar.

12th - At Algiers where she was visited by King George V1.

July

5th - At 0500 hours battleships KING GEORGE V (Flag, Vice Admiral Arthur John Power) and HOWE escorted by destroyers ARROW, JERVIS, PALADIN, PANTHER, PATHFINDER, PENN, PETARD and TYRIAN sailed from Gibraltar for Algiers.

6th - At 0800 hours off Oran the force was joined by battleships NELSON and RODNEY, aircraft carrier INDOMITABLE and their screen of 7 destroyers.

8th - KING GEORGE V, HOWE, JERVIS, PANTHER, PATHFINDER, PENN, PALADIN and PETARD arrived at Algiers.

9th - At 0300 hours KING GEORGE V, HOWE, light cruisers DIDO and SIRIUS and destroyers JERVIS, PANTHER, PATHFINDER, PENN, PALADIN and PETARD sailed from Algiers as Force Z (also known as Division 3 of Force H) for their operational position between Sardinia and Sicily.

(The task of Force Z was to provide distant cover for the HUSKY assault convoys, to provide a show of force to suggest an American attack on Sardinia and Corsica and to reinforce the Eastern Task Force should it suffer casualties)

(During the afternoon of D-1 an unseasonable force 7 north-westerly gale blew up and the smaller craft were tossed about like corks. On D Day itself the Canadians and Americans landed in very rough conditions suffering the double discomfort of seasickness and a drenching through to the skin. The British conditions on the leeward side of the island were better as the landing craft moved inshore. However these unfavourable conditions had a beneficial side effect, the enemy relaxed their guard in the mistaken belief that a landing in such conditions was most unlikely and initial resistance was consequently less than expected.

H Hour had been set at 0245/10/7/43, two hours before first light. This time had been fixed by the fact that it required the paratroops about three hours from dropping time to assemble and carry out their mission of softening the beach defences. This despite the fact that the assault forces needed to approach the coastline under cover of darkness. But an examination of the Astronomical Data revealed no such darkness. On the contrary the assault forces were required to make the approach under a brilliant waxing moon which would not set until the vessels had hove-to in the Initial Transport Areas immediately under the coast defence guns of the enemy. These facts were well known to the naval planners who pointed out the fact that the moon phase selected was most unfavourable from naval considerations. The date, however, was not changed because it was reiterated that this phase was most favourable to dropping of the paratroops that were the only means available to 'neutralize the beach defences opposing the seaborne assaults, the most vital part of the whole plan'. In the event the American paratroopers objective became the seizure of high ground around Gela and the capture of the airfield at Ponte Olivo)

10th - At approximately 0200 hours Force Z arrived in their operational position, approximately 38-30N, 11E.

11th - Cruising in operational position.

At 1800 hours Force Z moved eastwards towards the western coast of Sicily.

At 2330 hours the force was approximate position 38N, 12-15E at which time KING GEORGE V and HOWE commenced a 14in shoot against the port of Trapani and the islands of Favignana and Levanzo as a diversion to suggest landings on west coast of Sicily (Operation FRACTURE). DIDO and SIRIUS carried out a bombardment of the port of Marsala at the same time.

12th - Force Z off the western coast of Sicily with KING GEORGE V and HOWE continuing their bombardment. At 0030 the bombardment was checked and Force Z regrouped and set course westerly to return to their operational area.

(Just before Force Z completed their bombardment the area was bombed by RAF Wellingtons of the Northwest African Strategic Air Force, flying from North Africa)

During the operation destroyer PATHFINDER hit a submerged rock and sustained damage to her port propeller. She detached from Force Z and went to Alexandria for replacement of the propeller.

13th - Cruising in operational position.

14th - Force Z returned to Algiers.

(Under the original plan KING GEORGE V and HOWE would now returned to the Home Fleet.

However Admiral Cunningham CinC Mediterranean requested and was granted permission to retain the two battleships in the Mediterranean for Operation AVALANCHE, the assault on the Italian mainland at Salerno)

15th to 31st - At Algiers.

(On 25/7/1943, the Italian Head of State, King Victor Emmanuel III, had Benito Mussolini arrested and replaced him with Marshal Pietro Badoglio, the Army Chief of Staff. Badoglio immediately started secret negotiations with the Allies to take Italy out of the war)

August

1st to 31st - At Algiers or Mers el Kebir.

September

1st - At Algiers.

(On 3/9/43 a representative of Marshal Pietro Badoglio, Italy's prime minister since the downfall of Benito Mussolini signed the document in which Italy surrendered to the Allies. The surrender was not officially announced until 1730/8/9/43. Also at 0430/3/9/43 British troops of XIII Corps, [British 5th and Canadian 1st Divisions], Eighth Army crossed the Straits of Messina and landed in force on the European mainland north of Reggio di Calabria in Operation BAYTOWN.

Operation BAYTOWN had been planned to draw German forces away from Salerno, where Operation AVALANCHE was to take place. But the Germans had left by the time the men of XIII Corps came ashore. There was little resistance; some Italian soldiers even volunteered to unload the landing craft. The lack of opposition in the heel and along the east coast had resulted from an independent decision made by the commander of the 1st Parachute Division, General Major Richard Heidrich. It was the only German unit in Apulia and its troops were dispersed over a wide area. Since there were several points of entry vulnerable to Allied invasion he concluded he would be unable to offer effective resistance anywhere against what would obviously be superior invading forces. Heidrich assembled his troops and insured their security by withdrawing north, though he maintained light contact with the British troops to delay them where he could.

One consequence of the German withdrawal was that the naval port of Taranto was open and heavy units of the Italian navy in that port needed to be secured. On 5/9/43 The CinC Malta Vice Admiral A J Power was ordered to seize the port and neutralise the Italian naval units. An operation was quickly cobbled together and code named Operation SLAPSTICK [as General Alexander later remarked, the code name well illustrated the ex tempore nature of the planning] and was to involve KING GEORGE V and HOWE and 3600 men of the 1st British Airborne Division under the command of Maj. Gen. G. F. Hopkinson, who were in reserve at Bizerte. Cruisers AURORA PENELOPE, DIDO, SIRIUS and the USS BOISE and the minelaying cruiser ABDIEL were ordered to Bizerte to embark the airborne division and KING GEORGE V and HOWE were ordered to Malta)

7th - At 1700 hours KING GEORGE V and HOWE escorted by destroyers JERVIS (D14), PALADIN, PANTHER, PATHFINDER and PENN sailed from Algiers for Malta.

8th - At 2230 hours KING GEORGE V and HOWE arrived off Malta and destroyers detached to refuel in Valetta. Vice Admiral A J Power came out from Valetta and embarked on the HOWE.

9th - At 0300 hours KING GEORGE V and HOWE (Flag Vice Admiral A J Power) escorted by destroyers JERVIS (D14), PALADIN, PANTHER, PATHFINDER and PENN sailed for Taranto as Force Z to carry out Operation SLAPSTICK.

At approximately 1100 hours, cruisers AURORA PENELOPE, DIDO, SIRIUS, USS BOISE and minelaying cruiser ABDIEL, with the 1st British Airborne Division embarked, joined Force Z.

At approximately 1400 hours, Italian battleships CAIO DUILIO (Flag Vice Admiral Alberto Da Zara) and ANDREA DORIA, light cruisers LUIGI CADORNA and POMPEO MAGNO and destroyer NICOLOSO Da RECCO hove into sight, they were steaming towards Malta to surrender.

KING GEORGE V detached from Force Z and escorted the Italian ships to Malta.

(At approximately 1800/9/9/43 Force Z arrived at Taranto and received a friendly welcome from the Italians. Because of the possibility of mines in the inner and outer [Mar Grande] harbours of Taranto, disembarkation of the airborne troops proceeded slowly. ABDIEL who had embarked 435 men of the British 1st Airborne Division [6th Royal Welsh battalion and the 2nd Oban, Air Landing Anti Tank Battery] moored to a buoy in the Mar Grande. At 0015/10/9/43 a violent explosion took place under ABDIEL which broke her back and caused her to sink in two minutes. It is believed that she had swung at her moorings and triggered a German GS type magnetic mine. 48 crew plus 120 soldiers were killed, together with the loss of a large amount of stores, eight Jeeps and seven 6 pounder A/T guns)

10th - At 1800 hours KING GEORGE V and her Italian charges arrived at Malta.

11th - At Malta

During the morning, surrendered Italian Fleet units from northern Italy arrived at Malta.

(On 11/9/43 Admiral Cunningham signalled the Admiralty sending the message, 'Be pleased to inform their Lordships that the Italian battle fleet now lies at anchor beneath the guns of the fortress of Malta')

14th - At 2000 hours KING GEORGE V, HOWE and destroyers FAULKNOR, FURY, ECHO, ECLIPSE, INTREPID and the RHeINS VASSILISA OLGA sailed from Valletta escorting the Italian battleships VITTORIO VENETO, ITALIA (ex LITTORIO), CAIO DUILIO, ANDREA DORIA and GIULIO CESARE and light cruisers EUGENIO di SAVOIA, EMANUELE FILIBERTO DUCA d'AOSTA, RAIMONDO MONTECUCCOLI and LUIGI CADORNA to Alexandria to be interned to await a disposal decision.

17th - At 0700 hours the surrendered ships and escort arrived at Alexandria.

(On 23/9/43 at Taranto, Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, acting on behalf of the Allied Commander in Chief, and Italian Admiral Rafaella De Courten, the Italian Minister of Marine, signed an agreement for naval cooperation. Battleships and some cruisers were placed in care and maintenance, under Italian control. Some cruisers were to remain active and serve in the Atlantic on blockade control. All destroyers, torpedo boats and coastal craft were kept in commission, under Italian control. all Italian ships continued to fly their flags)

25th - KING GEORGE V and HOWE with destroyer escort sailed from Alexandria for Algiers.

29th - KING GEORGE V and HOWE with destroyer escort arrived at Algiers.

October

13th - At 1200 hours battleships KING GEORGE V and HOWE aircraft carriers ILLUSTRIOUS (Flag Rear Admiral Aircraft Carriers) and FORMIDABLE screened by destroyers INGLEFIELD, OBEDIENT, SAVAGE, VENUS, HNorMS STORD, and USS FORREST, CAPPS and HOBSON sailed from Gibraltar for the UK.

17th - At approximately 1200 hours in position 55-05N, 11-15W, ILLUSTRIOUS, FORMIDABLE and destroyers INGLEFIELD, VENUS detached for the Clyde and destroyer USS HOBSON detached for Londonderry.

18th - At 1300 hours in the Pentland Firth, HOWE and destroyers OBEDIENT, SAVAGE and HNorMS STORD detached for Scapa Flow.

19th - At 0700 hours KING GEORGE V and destroyers FORREST and CAPPS arrived at Rosyth. KING GEORGE V gave leave and was taken in hand for a docking.

20th to 31st - At Rosyth.

November

1st to 13th - At Rosyth.

14th - At 0030 hours KING GEORGE V screened by destroyers VIGILANT and HARDY sailed from Rosyth for Scapa.

At 1800 hours KING GEORGE V, VIGILANT and HARDY arrived at Scapa.

15th to 30th - At Scapa.

December

1st to 6th - At Scapa.

7th - At 0700 hours KING GEORGE V escorted by destroyers OBDURATE, TERMAGANT and KEMPENFELT sailed from Scapa for Gibraltar, where KING GEORGE V was to embark Prime Minister Winston Churchill and convey him back to the UK following his conferences at Cairo and Teheran.

10th - At 0900 hours in approximate position 43N, 20W the force was joined by three destroyers from Gibraltar, following which OBDURATE, TERMAGANT and KEMPENFELT detached to refuel at Horta, Faial Island, the Azores.

12th - At 0200 hours KING GEORGE V arrived at Gibraltar; however the Prime Minister had contracted pneumonia and was unable to travel.

17th - At 0100 hours KING GEORGE V and heavy cruiser LONDON sailed from Gibraltar for the UK escorted by local destroyers.

19th At 1200 hours in approximate position 40N, 21W the Force was joined by destroyers OBDURATE, TERMAGANT and KEMPENFELT from Horta, following which the local escort detached and returned to Gibraltar.

22nd - At 0900 hours in position 55-32N, 7W, destroyer OBDURATE detached to refuel at Merville.
At 1800 hours KING GEORGE V, LONDON and destroyers TERMAGANT and KEMPENFELT arrived in the Clyde.

23rd - At 1200 hours KING GEORGE V escorted by OBDURATE left Greenock for Scapa.

24th - At 0900 hours KING GEORGE V and OBDURATE arrived at Scapa.

25th to 31st - At Scapa.

1944

January

1st to 7th - At Scapa.

8th - At 1700 hours KING GEORGE V escorted by destroyers METEOR and HMCS ATHABASKAN sailed from Scapa for Gibraltar, where she was to embark the Prime Minister Winston Churchill and convey him back to the UK.

9th - At 1400 hours in position 56-30N, 11-15W, destroyer ASHANTI joined the screen.

13th - At 1000 hours in approximate position 40N, 20W the force was joined by three destroyers from Gibraltar, following which ASHANTI, METEOR and ATHABASKAN detached to refuel at Horta, Faial Island, the Azores.

14th - At 1200 hours KING GEORGE V arrived at Gibraltar, refueled and embarked the Prime Minister and his party.
At 2330 hours sailed from Gibraltar for the UK escorted by local destroyers.

16th - Destroyers ASHANTI, ATHABASKAN and METEOR joined from Horta and the local destroyers detached and returned to Gibraltar.

18th - At 2300 hours KING GEORGE V, ASHANTI, ATHABASKAN and METEOR arrived Plymouth and disembarked Winston Churchill and his party.

19th - At 1500 hours KING GEORGE V escorted by destroyer METEOR sailed from Plymouth for Scapa.

21st - At 0500 hours KING GEORGE V and METEOR arrived at Scapa.

22nd to 31st - At Scapa.

February

1st to 8th - At Scapa.

9th - KING GEORGE V and escort sailed from Scapa for Liverpool.

10th - KING GEORGE V arrived at Liverpool for refit.

Paid-off and taken in hand for refit by Cammell Laird at Gladstone Dock, Liverpool in preparation for re-deployment with the Eastern Fleet

11th to 31st - At Liverpool under refit.

March to June

At Liverpool under refit.

During the refit the aircraft and catapult equipment were landed. The space that had been occupied by the catapult was replaced with new superstructure on which the ship's boats were relocated.

AA armament was amended by the removal of 1 x 4 barrelled 2pdr pom-pom and 12 x single barrelled 20mm Oerlikons; and augmented by the addition of 3 x 8 barrelled 2pdr pom-poms, 6 x 2 barrelled 20mm Oerlikons and 2 x 4 barrelled 40mm Bofors.

Aircraft warning radar Type 279 was replaced by Type 279B using only one mast.

Main armament fire control radar for forward mountings Type 284 replaced by a Type 274.

After main armament fire control radar Type 284 replaced by a Type 274 augmented by a new Type 277/P/Q to measure approximate elevation.

Surface warning radar Type 273Q replaced by a Type 293/M.

Additionally for control of the pom-poms 7 x Type 282Q beam switching radars.

July

1st to 30th - At Liverpool under refit.

31st - KING GEORGE V sailed from Liverpool for Scapa.

August

1st - KING GEORGE V arrived at Scapa.

2nd to 31st - At Scapa working up.

September

1st to 30th - At Scapa working up.

October

1st to 4th At Scapa.

5th - At 1100 hours KING GEORGE V escorted by destroyers OPPORTUNE and ORIBI sailed from Scapa for Plymouth.

6th - At 0600 hours in the North Channel, OPPORTUNE and ORIBI detached for the Clyde and the escort was taken over by two Western Approaches destroyers.

7th - At 0400 hours KING GEORGE V arrived at Plymouth.

16th - At 0100 hours KING GEORGE V escorted by destroyers NUBIAN and UNDAUNTED sailed from Plymouth for Scapa.

17th - At 1800 hours KING GEORGE V, NUBIAN and UNDAUNTED arrived at Scapa.
At Scapa the Flag of the CinC Home Fleet was transferred from the RODNEY.

24th - At Scapa where the Flag of the CinC Home fleet was transferred to aircraft carrier IMPLACABLE.

28th - KING GEORGE V sailed from Scapa for the Clyde arriving the same day.
Whilst off Greenock KING GEORGE V was visited by the King and Queen and their daughters Princesses Elizabeth and Margret.

30th - KING GEORGE V sailed from the Clyde escorted by Western Approaches Command destroyers for Gibraltar on the first leg of her journey to join the Eastern Fleet.

November

3rd - KING GEORGE V arrived at Gibraltar.

4th - KING GEORGE V sailed from Gibraltar for Malta.

6th - KING GEORGE V arrived at Malta.

10th - KING GEORGE V sailed from Malta for Alexandria.

12th - KING GEORGE V arrived at Alexandria.

13th - KING GEORGE V sailed from Alexandria to carry out a bombardment of Milos Island.

14th - KING GEORGE V arrived off the Island of Milos and carried out a bombardment of the Lakida battery in support of the attacking British troops.

(Previous bombardments of Milos had been carried out on 25/26 October 1944 by cruiser AURORA, destroyers TETCOTT and TYRIAN and Seafires of 899 Sqd. from the escort carrier KHEDIVE)

15th - KING GEORGE V arrived back at Alexandria.

December

1st - KING GEORGE V sailed from Alexandria to join the Eastern Fleet at Trincomalee.

19th - KING GEORGE V arrived at Colombo.

21st - KING GEORGE V sailed from Colombo for Trincomalee arriving later in the day and joining the Eastern Fleet.

1945

January

1st - KING GEORGE V became a unit of the British Pacific Fleet.

(The formation of the British Pacific Fleet was resultant of the second Quebec Conference, held in September 1944 and code-named OCTAGON. Two months after OCTAGON, US agreement in principle was reached that a British carrier task force would fight in the Pacific despite continued opposition from Churchill and the USN Chief of Operations, Admiral Ernest J King. The man chosen to be CinC of the BPF was Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser GCB KBE. He was responsible to the Admiralty in London for the general direction the forces under his command; to the Australian Government for the dockyards, air stations, depots and barracks that formed his main base and to the individual Navy Boards of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa for the men and ships they provided him. Operationally he took his orders from Admiral Chester Nimitz the Allied Commander-in-Chief Pacific Ocean Areas. But because of his own seniority, he delegated sea command to Vice Admiral Sir Bernard Rawlings his second-in-command. The Admiralty intended the BPF to reach its full strength in October 1945 in time for Operation OLYMPIC, the planned invasion of Japan.

Before his fleet was ready to move into the Pacific, Admiral Fraser called on Admiral Nimitz at Pearl Harbour with key members of his staff. Admiral Nimitz asked for the BPF to strike at the important oil refineries in the Palembang complex in Sumatra as the fleet deployed from Ceylon to Australia. He had several reasons for doing so. Between them, the Sumatran refineries provided Japan with about 75% of the aviation fuel it needed and any reduction would have strategic significance. USAAF B-29 bombers had attacked the plants recently using high-level bombing techniques and had failed to score hits; tactical aircraft from carriers were expected to be more accurate. It must also be said that Nimitz wanted a demonstration of the RN capability to carry out sustained strikes at long range so that he could judge the value of the BPF to his command. Fraser accepted immediately and 1st Aircraft Squadron (1 ACS) relished the chance to show what it could achieve. Models of the refineries were made in the carriers which helped operations staff brief aircrew on individual, specific targets and an 'air co-ordinator', Major Hay RM from the VICTORIOUS, was used for the first time in line with USN procedures)

2nd to 15th at Trincomalee.

16th - At 1430 hours KING GEORGE V (Flag Vice Admiral Sir Henry Bernard Rawlings 2iC British Pacific Fleet) the aircraft carriers INDOMITABLE (Flag Rear Admiral Sir Philip Louis Vian Rear Admiral Aircraft Carriers, British Pacific Fleet), INDEFATIGABLE, VICTORIOUS and ILLUSTRIOUS, light cruisers BLACK PRINCE, ARGONAUT and EURYALUS and destroyers GRENVILLE (D25), UNDAUNTED, UNDINE, URSA , KEMPENFELT (D27), WAGER, WAKEFUL, WHELP and WHIRLWIND sailed from Trincomalee as TF 63, to carry out Operation MERIDIAN 1.

At 1700 hours, light cruiser CEYLON, having collected mail for the ships of TF 63, sailed from Trincomalee to join TF 63.

(Operation MERIDIAN 1 was an air strike carried out of the aircraft of TF 63 on oil refineries at Pladjoe, Palembang on the Island of Sumatra.

The targets in the Palembang area were at Songei Gerong, which had been the East Indies oil refinery for the Standard Oil Company. The other was at Pladjoe, the former Royal Dutch Shell refinery. Both were quite large and between them produced and supplied 50% of the oil used by Japan, including 75% of the vital aviation fuel.

The targets were situated about 50 miles inland up a network of rivers and creeks and surrounded by jungle and swamp on the south east of the island.

American long-range reconnaissance aircraft had reported that there was a strong anti-aircraft gun defence and the presence of fighter aircraft based at the airfields of Lembak, Palembang, Talangbetoetoe and Mana; also from a fighter training base nearby. Unfortunately no reports had been made of a defensive balloon barrage around the refineries.

The objective was too put refineries at Palembang out of action)

17th & 18th - During their passage south easterly TF 63 carried out intensive exercises.

19th - The exercises continued.

At 1930 hours destroyer WESSEX, who had been delayed at Trincomalee waiting parts for her faulty radar, joined TF 63.

20th - At 0700 hours on arrival at the refueling RV, in approximate position 5S, 97-30E, the refueling force TF 69 was not in sight.

At 0822 hours TF 69 was located by aircraft and refueling commenced at 0900 hours. The weather conditions at the time were not good, there being frequent rain squalls, with a moderate southerly swell and wind force 3-5, the oilers reported much gear damaged by destroyers.

By 1850 hours KING GEORGE V, the cruisers and destroyers had all been refueled.

This was the first under way refueling by KING GEORGE V and she took 10 hours to complete.

(At 1530/13/1/45, TF 69, consisting of destroyer URCHIN (Senior Officer) and the RFA oilers ECHODALE, WAVE KING and EMPIRE SALVAGE sailed from Trincomalee and proceeded to the first oiling rendezvous)

At 1900 hours, cruiser CEYLON detached from TF 63 and joined TF 69. TF 63 then set course for the flying off position.

During the passage Vice Admiral Rawlings became ill and was confined to his bed so operational control of TF 63 was exercised by Rear Admiral Vian.

21st - 22nd - During the night, Force 63 approached the flying off position, but owing to bad weather and unfavourable weather forecasts, it was decided to turn back to the westward.

22nd - 23rd - During the night, Force 63 approached the flying off position, and again, owing to bad weather and unfavourable weather forecasts, it was decided to turn back to the westward.

(The weather problem was caused by an inter-tropical front [now known as an Intertropical Convergence Zone] which lay against the Sumatran coast until the 23rd January. Whilst it provided a convenient screen in which to operate, it detracted on the whole from success because spray and the torrential rains affected the serviceability of the large number of aircraft necessarily parked on deck)

24th - At 0400 hours TF 63 arrived at the approximate position 5-41S, 103-32E, between the Island of Pulau Enggano and the coast of Sumatra, coded as 'Position TA'; and approximately 200 miles from the target, Pladjoe refinery.

At 0615 hours the first aircraft began taking off and during the next 45 minutes the strike force of 52 Avengers each armed with 4 x 500 lb bombs, 12 Fireflies armed with 60lb rockets, 56 Corsairs and 20 Hellcats were assembled.

At 0704 hours, nine minutes late, the strike force headed for the objective, Pladjoe refinery.

At 0850 hours the attack commenced, after dropping their bombs the Avengers headed for the RV 30 miles away.

At 0940 hours the strike started to land on. This was completed by 1025 hours.

Six Corsairs, one Hellcat and two Avengers failed to return.

At 1030 hours TF 63 commenced retiring to the south-west at 22 knots towards the refuelling area.

25th - En route to the refuelling area KING GEORGE V topped up destroyer URSA with oil following which URSA was detached in the evening to proceed to the Cocos Island with signals for despatch.

On arrival at the refuelling area TF 63 commenced refuelling in two groups. ILLUSTRIOUS and VICTORIOUS also topped up with aviation spirit. Oiling was slow owing to buoyant hoses parting at the joints.

(The refuelling force TF 69 now included the RFA oiler ARNDALÉ who had sailed from Freemantle on 15/1/45)

26th - TF 63 continued refuelling. At this stage it had become clear that the fuel situation would allow no more than one further strike at Palembang.

Destroyer URSA rejoined.

27th - TF 63 continued refuelling.

28th - TF 63 continued refuelling.

On completion of refuelling TF 63 headed back to flying off position TA.

29th - At 0600 hours TF 63 arrived In position TA, the weather was poor with heavy rainstorms in a belt 30 miles off the coast. So H Hour was postponed from 0615 until 0640. By which time the carriers were in a clear patch between two rainstorms, but others soon arrived.

At 0640 hours the first aircraft began taking off and during the next 54 minutes the strike force of 48 Avengers each armed with 4 x 500 lb bombs, 12 Fireflies armed with 60lb rockets, 48 Corsairs and 16 Hellcats were assembled.

At 0734 hours the strike force, four minutes late, headed for the objective, Songei Gerong refinery.

At 0850 hours the attack commenced; after dropping their bombs the Avengers headed for the RV.

At 0900 hours TF 63 gained a radar indication of an enemy aircraft in the vicinity of the fleet.

At 0917 hours the bogey was sighted by Seafires of the CAP, it was a fast single engined aircraft which escaped by diving into clouds.

At 0939 a few enemy aircraft approached TF 63 from the north. They probably did not sight the fleet, which was then under low cloud. Seafires were sent to intercept and shot down one Dinah [Mitsubishi Ki-46] 28 miles west of the fleet

At 1010 hours the strike started to land on. This was completed by 1100 hours.

Seven aircraft failed to return.

At 1026 hours a group of twelve plus enemy aircraft were reported approaching from the north. Corsairs and Seafires of the fighter patrols were vectored out. The Corsairs reported sighting two single engined enemy aircraft carrying bombs which were chased far to the eastward. One Corsair from VICTORIOUS failed to return.

At 1028 hours a few enemy planes were detected passing the fleet on a southerly track some 40 miles to seaward. No fighters were sent to intercept as the enemy seemed to have no knowledge of the fleet's position.

At 1100 hours the last of the strike force was landed on. TF 63 then commenced its withdrawal north westward towards the refuelling area.

(The two strikes on the oil refineries severely disrupted production. According to post war analysis the strikes crippled production and reduced the Japanese fuel reserves)

At 1152 a raid was detected approaching low from the southward and seven Seafires of the low patrol were sent to intercept. This Seafire patrol was flying wide of the fleet to the northward when given their first vector. They intercepted the raid as it was sighted from the fleet. The enemy formation, which was originally reported by radar as 'one large', consisted of one Helen [Nakajima Ki-49] and six Sallies [Mitsubishi Ki-21]. The enemy formation attacked from the port quarter of the fleet upwind, height about 50 feet. They broke up when the Seafires intercepted and appeared to try to carry out low-level bombing attacks on ILLUSTRIOUS and INDEFATIGABLE. From the form of the attack when it first developed it was thought that the enemy aircraft were carrying torpedoes and the fleet was accordingly manoeuvred so as to present a difficult torpedo target.

Most of the attackers succeeded in reaching the main body and were shot down close to the ships. Of the seven aircraft which attacked, certainly six and probably all seven were destroyed.

Gunfire from the fleet accounted for one aircraft. But the standard of fire discipline and fire control in the fleet was low.

At 1203 hours during the air attack the ILLUSTRIOUS was struck by two 5.25in shells fired by our own forces and suffered 12 fatal casualties and 21 wounded (see following).

(The attacking Japanese aircraft were described as above in the official British report. However some reports state that the attacking aircraft were seven Kawasaki Ki-48, Lilies, of the Japanese Army's Shichisi Mitate Tokubetsu Kōgeki Tai)

(A Walrus amphibian, with recovered aircrew, had just landed on ILLUSTRIOUS, when two Sallies attacked the ILLUSTRIOUS. One dropped a bomb astern of the ILLUSTRIOUS that failed to explode and they then flew down the length of the deck. The cruiser EURYALUS was shooting at the attacking aircraft and failed to check her fire as the enemy flew over the ILLUSTRIOUS. Two of EURYALUS's 5.25in shells struck the ILLUSTRIOUS hitting the superstructure and destroying the Walrus and killing some of the rescued aircrew)

From 1212 to 1430 hours the fleet was shadowed by an aircraft which remained 45 to 60 miles to the eastward. It is possible that this aircraft may have been keeping track of us by receiving either our radar or our beacon transmissions.

At 1818 hours, a quarter of an hour before sunset, a single enemy aircraft approached from the north-eastward at 15,000 feet. The enemy aircraft remained in the vicinity until about 1910 hours, during which time TF 63 was steering a course towards Ceylon.

As soon as night fell course was altered to the westward at 23 knots to arrive at the re-fueling area on 30th.

30th - At 1315 hours TF 63 commenced re-fueling from TF 69, all ships with the exception of VICTORIOUS and ILLUSTRIOUS either filling up or topping up for the passage to Fremantle.

After refuelling destroyer, URSA was detached to take messages to the Cocos Island for transmission and then to proceed independently to Fremantle.

At 2200 hours re-fuelling was completed and TF 63 set course for Fremantle.

February

1st to 3rd - TF 63 on passage to Fremantle

4th - At 0600 hours TF 63 arrived at Fremantle.

(When the fleet arrived in Fremantle the public welcome stunned the arriving crews. Every vantage point was packed with people, all cheering and waving)

(At Fremantle a Board of Inquiry was convened on board ILLUSTRIOUS to investigate the circumstances attending the unfortunate incident which occurred when the Fleet was attacked by Japanese bombers off Western Sumatra and ILLUSTRIOUS sustained damage and casualties from 'friendly' gunfire)

(On the Orders of the CinC, British Pacific Fleet, the Fleet was split into two groups, ABLE and BAKER, before leaving Fremantle. Group ABLE comprising INDOMITABLE, ILLUSTRIOUS, INDEFATIGABLE, ARGONAUT, BLACK PRINCE, GRENVILLE, UNDINE, UNDAUNTED, WAGER and WESSEX. Group ABLE sailed late on the 4/2/45 for Sydney)

5th - Group BAKER comprising KING GEORGE V (Flag Vice Admiral Sir Henry Bernard Rawlings 2iC British Pacific Fleet), VICTORIOUS, EURYALUS, KEMPENFELT, WHIRLWIND, WHELP, WAKEFUL and URSA sailed for Sydney.

6th to 10th - On passage to Sydney the Fleet carried out an intensive program of exercises. These included: Fleet manoeuvres with ships conning from emergency positions.

GUNNERY :

- (i). 14 inch throw short firing by KING GEORGE V.
- (ii). AA throw off firings by KING GEORGE V, VICTORIOUS, and EURYALUS
- (iii). Dive bombing exercise
- (iv). Fire direction exercise
- (v). Range and inclination exercise.

COMMUNICATIONS :

- (i). No difficulties were experienced in the use of American Signal publications and procedure, except in the case of the United States Radar reporting and fighter direction methods, which must be practiced further to become efficient. Manoeuvres were carried out daily by V/S, W/T and R/T.

11th - Group BAKER arrived at Sydney

(As the fleet steamed into Sydney harbour, thousands of people were gathered at various points waving and cheering the return of the Royal Navy and, according to one historian, 'the city went mad'. In port, members of the fleet received an extremely warm welcome. 'The hospitality of the Australian families, with their own sons still overseas or POWs and with a far higher percentage of their population in the forces than ourselves, had to be seen to be believed')

At 1130 hours Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser the CinC, British Pacific Fleet, Admiral Sir Guy Royle the First Naval Member of the Commonwealth Naval Board and Rear Admiral G.D. Moore, Flag Officer in Charge, Sydney; arrived on board KING GEORGE V where the Flag Officers met the Commanding Officers of the ships of the British Pacific Fleet.

(The British Pacific Fleet had established a Barracks, Accounting Base and Manning Depot in the docklands area at Woolloomooloo at the head of Woolloomooloo Bay. It was commissioned on 20/11/44 as HMS GOLDEN HIND)

(Most Royal Navy ships were designed to operate in climates that had brief and temperate summers. Therefore they did not have air-conditioning, or evaporation plant that could produce sufficient fresh water for the boilers and the crew when operating in the tropics.

The result was that in the tropical areas of the Pacific the heat below decks became unbearable; 127¼ F [53¼C] was recorded in one instant. This made physical labour exhausting and it was difficult to avoid becoming drowsy while doing paperwork. Crews took lots of showers and drank as much water as possible, quickly overwhelming the evaporators and forcing water rationing.

There was also a lack of standardisation in Royal Navy equipment. This was particularly so with the aircraft which constituted the British Pacific Fleet's main offensive weapon. Admiral Fraser informed the Admiralty that, 'The Royal Navy had too many different types of aircraft, which made logistics difficult, and recommended standardisation of the machines and designing a plane specifically for carrier warfare'. The Royal Navy was using the Seafire, which was a modified Spitfire. Although a good plane in the air, the Seafire had problems withstanding the stress of the sudden stops of carrier landings. Many of the planes in the fleet were of US design, which the RN had then modified, and this made it impossible to obtain some spare parts from the Americans. The RN was also using bombs that would not fit aboard their aircraft carriers and had to be stored on other ships. This process added to the time and energy required for resupply at sea.

The RN therefore had a number of design, equipment and logistical problems to overcome for Pacific operations. Most of which they muddled through rather than resolved. Keeping the fleet equipped with fuel, food, water and ammunition was an ever present concern for Fraser, his staff, subordinate commanders and the Admiralty.

Without the generous help of USN bases, fuelling facilities and spare parts, the British Pacific Fleet would have been hard put to keep going. Eventually even Admiral King backed away from the requirement of self-sufficiency. In a letter to Admiral Fraser from Washington, Admiral Somerville recounted that 'recently King has admitted that pooling of resources to some extent must obviously be necessary if we are to keep the maximum number of ships, both US and British, ready for operations')

12th to 26th - The Fleet remained at Sydney where the ships made good minor defects which had developed during nearly four weeks at sea, and the ships' companies were given 48 hours local leave.

(Whilst at Sydney, the British Pacific Fleet was allocated Task Force Numbers so as to conform to American procedure. Battleships, carriers, cruisers, and destroyers were designated Task Force 113 and the Fleet Train was designated Task Force 112. Task Force 113 remained as such until it was allocated to the Commander 4th Fleet when it became Task Force 57)

27th - At Sydney.

(In the afternoon the 1st Aircraft Carrier Squadron, comprising aircraft carriers INDOMITABLE [Flag of AC1 Rear Admiral Sir Philip Vian], VICTORIOUS and INDEFATIGABLE screened by destroyers HMAS QUICKMATCH (D4), HMAS QUIBERON, HMS QUEENBOROUGH and HMS QUALITY sailed from Sydney and headed east)

28th - At 0830 hours battleships KING GEORGE V (Flag Vice Admiral Sir Henry Bernard Rawlings 1st Battle Squadron and 2ic British Pacific Fleet) and HOWE, maintenance carrier UNICORN, light cruisers SWIFTSURE (Flag Rear Admiral E.J.P. Brind CS 4), ARGONAUT, BLACK PRINCE, EURYALUS (Flag Rear Admiral J.H. Edelsten, Rear Admiral (D) temporarily) and HMNZS GAMBIA, destroyers GRENVILLE (D25), ULSTER, UNDINE, URSA, and URANIA, KEMPENFELT (D27), WAGER, WAKEFUL, WHIRLWIND, WHELP and WESSEX sailed from Sydney as TF 113, into the teeth of an easterly gale.

At 1200 hours the 1st Battle Squadron was in position 33-49S, 151-54E.

During the afternoon the 1st Battle Squadron RVed with the 1st Aircraft Carrier Squadron. TF 113 then set course northerly.

(The Fleet was due to be shadowed and attacked by RAAF aircraft. A few blue aircraft were

tracked, but no attack developed. Weather prevented our carriers from flying off fighter opposition. Altogether this was a disappointing exercise which provided little value)

After dark, SWIFTSURE and GAMBIA carried out shadowing exercise with the Fleet.

March

1st - TF 113 continued on a northerly course. The weather was still rough.

In the morning TF 113 Carried out Visual Radar Control Air Defence Exercise.

At 1200 hours TF 113 was in position 29-18S, 155-04E.

In the afternoon TF 113 exercised tactical maneuvering.

EURYALUS and all destroyers carried out Radar Interrogation Exercises (INTX)

TF 113 carried out Range and Inclination exercises on EURYALUS.

After dark the 4th Cruiser Squadron carried out a Night Encounter Exercise.

2nd - Early in the morning destroyer URANIA was detached and returned to Sydney.

At 1000K hours the refueling force of four tankers escorted by minesweeper (known as a corvette in the RAN) HMAS WHYALLA was located.

For refueling TF 113 divided into two groups, the Main Body requiring no fuel, and the fuelling force of all cruisers and destroyers.

(The refueling force was placed under the Command of Rear Admiral Commanding CS4. Screens for both forces were relieved as necessary, and fuelling was completed by 1700 hours by which time all destroyers and 5.25in cruisers had been topped right up and 6in cruisers had fuelled for exercise. The detailed fuelling program made by CS 4 seemed to be expeditiously and smoothly carried out. Unnecessary high steaming by fuelled ships from the Fuelling Force joining the screen of the non fuelling Force would be saved if they were ordered to proceed to the nearest position in the screen, other screening vessels adjusting position as if rotating.)

At 1200 hours TF 113 was in position 25-50S, 155-39E.

After dark 4th Destroyer Flotilla exercised flotilla night attacks on the Fleet in cruising disposition 5A. From this, and similar attacks on subsequent nights, the weakness of a circular screen to prevent a determined or suicide minded enemy flotilla fighting their way into decisive torpedo range of the Main Body was shown.

3rd - In the morning TF 113 Carried out aircraft Direction and Radar Reporting Exercise No 1. Attacking planes flew 90 miles ahead of the Fleet before commencing their approach. EURYALUS and ARGONAUT were stationed 15 miles 30 degrees on either bow of the Fleet as Radar Pickets. Full fighter protection was flown off by the carriers. Some very interesting Torpedo Bomber and Dive Bomber raids developed, and the Fleet was maneuvered evasively and as necessary for flying off standby fighters to meet raids as they developed. On such occasions unnecessary and unrealistic confusion was caused to plots by aircraft which hovered over the Fleet after completing their attacks; they should have formed up and remained well clear, but in sight of the Fleet.

At 1200 hours TF 113 was in position 21-25S, 156-40E.

In the afternoon the carriers exercised A.A. throw off firings. SWIFTSURE and GAMBIA carried out independent exercises. The 1st Battle Squadron exercised H.A. Drills with single aircraft and then with EURYALUS, SWIFTSURE, and BLACK PRINCE, exercised emergency conning and communications. It was found that when in a single line ahead; ships had to haul out of line for their secondary control position personnel to read the Flagship's Signals.

After dark the 27th Destroyer Flotilla carried out divisional night attacks on the Fleet representing a damaged force returning to base. One cruiser with destroyers in any threatened sector moved out to counter attack, and the exercise finished in true Saturday night style with a blaze of starshell searchlight and smoke.

The 27th Destroyer Flotilla continued to shadow during the night.

4th - TF 113 continued on a northerly course.

At 1200 hours TF 113 was in position 15S, 156-32E.

UNICORN escorted by two destroyers detached

5th - TF 113 continued on a northerly course.

In the morning QUICKMATCH was detached to investigate radar surface contacts to eastward. The contacts were identified as the troop transport USAT SEABARB 7909grt and Australian coastal transport ALAGNE. No warnings

of these ships had been received.

(The SEABARB was en route to Cairns, Queensland where she was to embark the advanced party of the 2/9 Australian armoured Regiment and transport them to Morotai Island in preparation for the invasion of Borneo. Morotai Island had only been secured on 14/1/45)

FAA planes Exercised Dummy Suicide attacks on the Fleet. Enemy aircraft occasionally strafing with bursts short, attacked every ship in the Fleet in most realistic manner for two hours, and providing very useful training. Carried out Height Find Exercise.

Several groups of apparently large aircraft flying from East to West detected ahead of the Fleet and displaying I.F.F. Total number of aircraft estimated at 50. They were eventually identified as friendly transports by carrier aircraft. At 1200 hours TF 113 was in position 08- 29S, 153-27E.

In the afternoon HOWE carried out 14in Long Range Throw Shoot Firing on KING GEORGE V.

A.A. Throw off Firings by all ships of the Fleet.

More aircraft detached ahead, flying from west to east and not displaying I.F.F. No warning had been received of these or the forenoon aircraft.

After dark TF 113 altered course 30 minutes, to avoid a Radar Contact. The KEMPENFELT detached to investigate the contact, which was identified as the eastbound troop transport USS STRATFORD 2286grt. No warning of this ship had been received.

6th - TF 113 continued on a northerly course.

In the morning UNICORN and her two destroyer escorts rejoined TF 113

Following which TF 113 carried out Visual and Radar controlled fighter direction exercise for the battleships, cruisers, and aircraft carriers; 9 detected, with Fireflies representing hostile snoopers, and with 24 fighters acting as a CAP and 2 Avengers as friendly A/S patrol.

At 1200 hours TF 113 was in position 06-42S, 148-32E.

At 1315 hours TF 113 formed into groups disposed astern for passage into the Bismarck Sea.

In the afternoon SWIFTSURE and GAMBIA carried out 6in throw off firings. Groups exercised emergency conning and communication.

The airborne A/S patrol and CAP was maintained at readiness to deal with possible snoopers from the enemy base at Rabaul.

KING GEORGE V, HOWE, EURYALUS and 4th D.F. carried out Radar Interrogation exercise.

As night fell it had been hoped to operate night fighters from INDOMITABLE, but weather conditions were not suitable.

7th - At 1000 hours TF 113 were off the north east coast off the Island of Manus, in approximate position 1-53S, 147-30E.

At 1000 hours UNICORN and a destroyer screen detached for Ponam Island.

(The UNICORN was carrying MSR 4 [MAINTENANCE, SUPPORT & REPAIR 4] they were an advanced party of MONAB IV. MSR 4 were to take over the airbase on Ponam Island that had been built by the Americans and completed in August 1944 and had been used by USN aircraft up to its handover to the Royal Navy. On 2/4/45 the airbase was commissioned as HMS NABARON, Royal Naval Air Station PONAM. The stores and equipment of MONAB 4 arrived on the 11/3/45 on board SS Clan MacAULLY 10492grt. The advanced party of MONAB IV and the second echelon of MSR 4 arrived on 13/4/45 on board escort carrier SPEAKER. The main body of MONAB IV arrived on the 25/4/45 on board SS EMPIRE ARQUEBUS 6440grt, direct from the UK. [EMPIRE ARQUEBUS was a standard US C1 cargo ship, ex USS CAPE ST VINCENT, but was now a commissioned RN LSI(L) HMS CICERO, although she does not appear to have operated in her latter guise])

Following the departure of UNICORN, TF 113 commenced an Air Defence Exercise with 6 shore based Corsairs as Blue aircraft simulating torpedo, dive, suicide, and level bombers. TF 113 operated a CAP of eight Hellcats and eight Seafires.

After the exercise, TF 113 divided into groups and entered Seeadler Harbour, Manus between 1300 and 1600 hours. Battleships and aircraft carriers anchored on the western side of the harbour.

(Seeadler Harbour is at the eastern end of Manus and a superb natural anchorage, 15 miles long by 4 miles wide and 120ft deep)

8th to 11th - TF 113 was anchored in Seeadler Harbour.

(During this period the fuelling of the Fleet was carried out, with destroyers and cruisers proceeding alongside the oilers at their berths in the Eastern Anchorage, it being intended that capital ships and carriers should be fuelled at their own berths in the Western Anchorage. It was soon found that the swell was too heavy for fuelling the carriers in these berths, VICTORIOUS, the first to fuel, smashing both her own catamarans; a tug had then to be provided to tow the oiler clear of her.

In view of the above, a signal was made to the Senior British Naval Officer asking for berths to be allocated in the Eastern anchorage to complete the fuelling of the carriers. This was arranged accordingly and U.S. Navy steel catamarans were provided by the Commander Naval Base Manus for the VICTORIOUS. Fuelling was successfully completed but not before the INDOMITABLE had smashed one of her own catamarans in the process.

The catamarans carried by our carriers are for use in calm water and are in no way suitable for the open anchorages of the Pacific. The U.S. Navy has developed steel 'fenders' from the pontoon structures used widely by them for lighters and sea bridges. We shall be dependent on the U.S. Navy for the loan of theirs until we can get our own. They cannot be carried in a ship and once erected would have to be towed from place to place as required.

Even in the Eastern anchorage the swell caused damage when ammunition ships, oilers, etc were alongside the cruisers and it is apparent that in an exposed anchorage such as Manus a large supply of hard fenders is most necessary.

Some cocoanut trees were obtained locally and all ships were instructed to make additional fenders.

It was later arranged that on all future occasions of fuelling our carriers, U.S. Navy steel catamarans should be provided, and that the carriers should be allocated the best available berths in the Eastern Anchorage')

12th - TF 113 commenced a series of exercises; however these did not involve KING GEORGE V or HOWE.

13th - Aircraft carrier ILLUSTRIOUS and destroyers URANIA and UNDAUNTED arrived from Sydney and proceeded to fuel in the Eastern Anchorage.

14th - Exercises continued.

15th - The 1st Battle Squadron proceeded to sea for exercises, but the receipt of messages from the CinC British Pacific Fleet, DTG 141205Z and DTG 141208Z instructing TF 113 and TF 112 to report to CINC PAC forthwith for duty in operations connected with Operation ICEBERG, changed the situation. All exercises were immediately cancelled and HOWE was ordered back to harbour whilst KING GEORGE V proceeded to get in V/S touch with AC 1 to arrange for re-embarkation of aircraft and air personnel.

Arrangements were made to top up the fleet with fuel, ammunition, and stores as quickly as possible and it was decided the Fleet could be ready to sail at noon on the 17th March. CinC PAC was informed accordingly in CTF 113's signal DTG 150611Z.

(The final US decision to accept the BPF for operations alongside the US Fifth Fleet was not taken until 15/3/45. Despite late opposition from Admiral King, Admiral Nimitz insisted that the BPF form part of his Central Pacific Command. Admiral Nimitz's decision was justified within days when on 19/3/45 the US aircraft carriers INTREPID, WASP II, and FRANKLIN were all damaged and put out of action, reducing the number of carriers available for Operation ICEBERG, the Okinawa landings)

(The staff's of the BPF Flag Officers were now tasked with planning and implementing the necessary operations to ensure the Fleets timely departure, these were:

(a). Fuelling, embarkation of aircraft, stores, etc. The time table for these was in some measure the sport of the swell and the lack of boats.

(b). Final preparation of operation orders and arrangements for fuelling in the forward area for a period of up to three weeks continuous operations.

(c). The speed [9 knots] at which the tankers of the Fleet Train could be moved to the first re-fuelling area.

(d). Adjustment of aircraft between the maintenance/escort carriers UNICORN, SPEAKER and SLINGER so that the Fleet might leave as fully equipped as could be contrived)

(Many American naval officers did their best to ignore Admiral King's requirement on supply matters. In fact, a good number of admirals in the Pacific had problems with this stipulation. The requirement had to be heeded, though, at least on paper. The Americans were more than willing to provide the British with any surplus items they had available. Commanders and supply officers, however, had to turn down requests that had to go through Washington, at least officially. The doctrine of self-sufficiency was always the rationale for this response)

16th - Preparations continued.

17th - Preparations continued.

(The Fleet Train oiling force, designated TU 112.2.1, comprising oilers RFA CEDARDALE 8132grt, 12.5 knots, MV SAN AMBROSIO 7410grt, 12 knots and MV SAN ADOLPHO 7365grt, 12 knots, escorted by escort carrier STRIKER with replacement aircraft embarked, escorted by destroyer WHIRLWIND, sloop CRANE and frigate FINDHORN sailed from Seeadler Harbour. This was in order to be in position at the appointed time for the BPF to top with fuel, as near to what was to be their operational area as possible.

The Fleet Train force designated TU 112.2. 2 comprising escort carrier SPEAKER, with Hellcats of 1840 Sqd embarked, to provide a CAP for the Fleet Train, escorted by destroyer KEMPENFELT and sloop PHEASANT sailed at the same time)

18th - At 0630 hours the 1st Battle Squadron, comprising, KING GEORGE V, HOWE, SWIFTSURE, ARGONAUT, HMNZS GAMBIA screened by destroyers GRENVILLE, ULSTER, UNDINE, URANIA and UNDAUNTED sailed from Seeadler Harbour and set course north easterly for Ulithi Atoll.

(The aircraft carriers were delayed to complete the embarkation and adjustment of aircraft which had been hampered by adverse weather conditions. They sailed at 1100/18/3/45 with a screen of six destroyers and completed the passage to Ulithi Atoll as a separate force.

Cruiser BLACK PRINCE remained at Manus to complete the fitting of American SG Radar. [SG Radar was a centimetric Radar, the USN equivalent of the RN Type 271. However the SG had become the holy grail for navigating officers for new and unexpected reasons. The charts of the Pacific islands were dangerously inaccurate, but close approaches to shore were now the rule not the exception, which made the map-like PPI display of SG a comforting sight for a captain closing an unknown and poorly charted coast]. The EURYALUS was delayed by a foul cable and jammed cable holder, but rejoined the Fleet shortly. The URSA also remained behind to dock for hull repairs)

At 0815 hours the battleships and cruisers carried out AA sleeve firings. Four sleeves were shot down. Seven U.S.N. aircraft took part in this and the practices went off in an unusually prompt and efficient manner.

At 1720 hours, EURYALUS dropped depth charges for practice.

At 1800 hours, KING GEORGE V carried out Type 253 Radar Interrogation tests of ships in company.

At 2130 hours, radar contact was obtained with TU 112.2.1 and TU 112.2.5.

19th - The 1st Battle Squadron continued on course for Ulithi Atoll.

At 0830 hours, KING GEORGE V and ARGONAUT carried out Range and Inclination Exercises.

At 1100 hours, KING GEORGE V carried out a 5.25in long range throw off firing at ARGONAUT.

The SWIFTSURE carried out a damage control exercise.

At 12.00 hours EURYALUS carried out a VT fuse test shoot, throwing off at the ARGONAUT. Owing to a number of early bursts, EURYALUS had to be ordered to cease fire and move further from the screen before resuming.

At 1400 hours HOWE carried out a 5.25in long range throw off firing at the SWIFTSURE.

At 1600 hours KING GEORGE V carried out a blind main armament control long range throw shoot firing at the SWIFTSURE.

At 1730 hours KING GEORGE V and HOWE carried out VT fuse test shoots.

20th - The 1st Battle Squadron continued on course for Ulithi Atoll.

At 0730 hours the cruisers were ordered to proceed 4 miles ahead for entering harbour.

At 0915 hours the cruisers entered Ulithi harbour

At 0930 hours the battleships and destroyers entered Ulithi harbour.

At 1300 hours the aircraft carriers, screened by destroyers QUICKMATCH, QUALITY, QUIBERON,

QUEENBOROUGH, WHELP and WAGER arrived at Ulithi.

At 1800 hours re-fuelling of the Fleet commenced.

(Ulithi atoll is at the western end of the Caroline Islands, 360 miles southwest of Guam, 850 miles east of the Philippines and 1300 miles south of Tokyo. It is a typical volcanic atoll, with a coral reef, white sand beaches and palm trees. Ulithi Atoll consists of forty small islands that barely rise above sea level, the largest being only half a square mile in area. However the reef runs roughly twenty miles north and south by ten miles across, enclosing a vast anchorage with an average depth of 80 to 100 feet. The anchorage was well situated for the concentration of naval vessels that were to take part in Operation ICEBERG.

The main body of the USN invasion covering Force, TF 58 had sailed from Ulithi on 14/3/45 and headed north. Its objective was the Inland Sea, bounded by Kyushu, western Honshu, and Shikoku; the task of TF 58 was to prepare for the invasion of the Ryukyus Islands by attacking airfields and naval bases in the Japanese homeland. The formidable task force was composed of 10 large aircraft carriers, 6 smaller carriers, 8 fast battleships, 16 cruisers, and dozens of destroyers and auxiliaries.

Although Ulithi Atoll was some distance from the nearest Japanese air base it was necessary for the forces at Ulithi to be alert for air attack; on 11/3/45 the anchorage was attacked by two kamikaze Yokosuka P1Y bombers, Frances, one of which hit and damaged aircraft carrier USS RANDOLPH.

The distance between the Fleet and the American anchorage at the northern end of the harbour [about 10 miles] was too great for ships' boats. Realising this, the US authorities placed an L.C.I. at the disposal of the Vice Admiral Rawlings; this proved of the greatest value, not least so as a 'staff boat' for Staff Officers in their many lengthy trips in bad weather)

21st - The British force continued re-fuelling and ammunitioning before sailing for Operation ICEBERG. The fuelling was done from USN tankers, destroyers and cruisers proceeding alongside the tankers as detailed. The tankers serviced the battleships and carriers at their anchorages.

5000 fuses Mark 40 were supplied by ComSerRon 10 to KING GEORGE V, HOWE, ARGONAUT and EURYALUS to replace fuses Mark 32. The supply was very promptly executed and U.S. Navy personnel advised and assisted ships' staffs when carrying out the un-fusing and re-fusing of ammunition.

22nd - In the morning Vice Admiral C.H. McMorris, U.S.N., Chief of Staff to CinC PAC, accompanied by Captain H.S. Hopkins, R.N., British Pacific Fleet Liaison Officer, arrived by seaplane from Guam to discuss general matters with Vice Admiral Rawlings, 2iC British Pacific Fleet. Admiral Nimitz had intended to come to Ulithi himself but he had been laid up the previous day with a cold. The Flag Officers of the British Pacific Fleet came on board KING GEORGE V for lunch and to meet Vice Admiral McMorris.

At 1600 hours BLACK PRINCE arrived at Ulithi.

(The considerable activity which had prevailed during the last days at Manus increased in intensity at Ulithi, but transferred itself mainly to Flag Officers meetings and their staff officers. There was a continuous stream of intelligence and other material [flown by special plane from Guam], the arrival of which required hurried modification and re-modification of such plans as had already near-crystallised. Typing the distribution to the Fleet of both plans and intelligence matter went on throughout the night of the 22/3/45, the boat shortage and the swell in the anchorage no way assisting. In spite of everything, the British Pacific Fleet, now designated Task Force 57 was ready to sail on 23/3/45)

23rd - At 0630 hours TF 57 (now under the overall command of Admiral Raymond Spruance USN, CinC US Fifth Fleet) comprising TU 1, battleships KING GEORGE V (Flag Vice Admiral Sir Henry Bernard Rawlings, CinC TF 57 and 1st Battle Squadron and 2iC British Pacific Fleet) and HOWE; TU 2, aircraft carriers INDOMITABLE (Flag Rear Admiral Sir Philip Louis Vian Rear Admiral Aircraft Carriers, British Pacific Fleet and 2iC TF 57), INDEFATIGABLE, VICTORIOUS and ILLUSTRIOUS; TU 5, light cruisers SWIFTSURE, BLACK PRINCE, ARGONAUT, EURYALUS (Flag RA [D] temporarily) and GAMBIA; and TU 8, destroyers GRENVILLE, ULSTER, UNDINE, URANIA, UNDAUNTED, QUICKMATCH, QUALITY, QUIBERON, QUEENBOROUGH, WHELP and WAGER sailed from Ulithi heading north easterly for the re-fuelling area, 18-30N, 129-08E, and then their operational position for Operation ICEBERG.

(The overall objective of Operation ICEBERG was to capture Okinawa Gunto and, gaining control of the Nansei Shoto area, use them to attack the main islands of Japan with their sea and

air approaches. Within ICEBERG the objective of the BPF [TF 57] was to neutralise the six airfields in the Sakishima Gunto as continuously, and for as long as possible. H Hour for the US landing on Okinawa had been set for 0830/1/4/45)

En route to the re-fuelling area bombardment exercises were carried out by KING GEORGE V, HOWE and SWIFTSURE.

25th - At 0310 hours with EURYALUS, BLACK PRINCE and ARGONAUT spread 8 miles apart, 8 miles ahead of the Fleet, radar contact was made with TU 12.2.5 and TU 112.2.1.

At 0600 hours an RV was made with the re-fuelling group and destroyers commenced re-fuelling. It had been hoped to complete the re-fuelling in five hours from the tankers, but the north easterly wind, swell and hose problems were causing the operation to exceed the projected time frame. Some of destroyers were therefore ordered to refuel from KING GEORGE V, HOWE and STRIKER.

Destroyers QUALITY and WHELP, both with defects, were detached to operate with TU 12.2.5 and TU 112.2.1 and destroyers KEMPENFELT and WHIRLWIND joined TF 57.

At 1530 hours re-fuelling was terminated and TF 57 set course for the operation area at 23½ knots.

26th - At 0635 hours when TF 57 was in approximate position 23-15N, 125-21E, 100 miles south of the island of Miyako-Jima, fighter sweeps were flown off to attack the airfields of Ishigaki on the island of Ishigaki-Shima and Miyako on the island of Miyako-Jima.

(At 0800 hours the US 77th division made the first landings of Operation ICEBERG, when they landed on the Kerama Islands. These are a group of islands 15 miles west of Okinawa and the landings were designed to secure a seaplane base and a fleet anchorage to support the main invasion)

In the evening after the last aircraft had been recovered at dusk, TF 57 moved off to the south eastward.

27th - At sunrise, which was at approximately 0600 hours, TF 57 had returned to yesterdays flying off position and flew off a strike force to attack Ishigaki airfield.

It had been intended that the capital ships would carry out a bombardment of Ishigaki airfield; but Guam reported a typhoon to the southward whose track would threaten the fuelling area and dislocate the re-fuelling. Therefore the CinC TF 57 decided to withdraw early to the re-fuelling area.

In the evening after the last aircraft had been recovered at dusk, TF 57 moved off south eastward toward re-fuelling area MIDGE.

28th - At 0730 hours TF 57 made contact with Task Units 112.2.5 and 112.2.1 in area MIDGE, a rectangle extending 50 miles to the south and 100 miles to the west of 19-55N, 129-40E; fuelling and transfer of aircraft continued throughout the day.

The Fleet was divided into two groups for this operation, the non-fuelling group proceeding so as to remain within touch of the fuelling group. The Fleet disengaged from the Tanker Group for the night.

29th - In the morning TF 57 re-engaged with the Tanker Group.

In the afternoon the RA Commanding. Destroyers transferred his flag from EURYALUS to WHIRLWIND; the WHIRLWIND with STRIKER and CRANE then detached for Leyte.

EURYALUS then rejoined the remainder of the cruisers in TU 5.

During the day, mails and correspondence brought out by the Tanker Group were distributed by destroyers around TF 57.

Destroyers QUALITY and WHELP rejoined TF 57.

Destroyers KEMPENFELT and WHIRLWIND rejoined the Tanker Groups.

For the night TF 57 formed up into Cruising Disposition 5A.

30th - In the morning TF 57 re-engaged with the Tanker Group.

At 1430 hours fuelling was completed and TF 57 formed up in Cruising Disposition 5B. Departure was taken at 22 knots for the operating area and AC 1 assumed tactical command.

31st - At 0530 hours, ARGONAUT and WAGER were detached to a position 300⁰, 30 miles from the Fleet centre to act as pickets to prevent enemy aircraft returning with our own strikes. ARGONAUT was chosen for this purpose as having the most suitable radar.

At 0630 hours a fighter sweep was sent in from a flying-off position 23-10N, 125-23E and thereafter fighter patrols

were maintained over the islands of Ishigaki and Miyako. There appeared to be little activity in either island. Two bomber strikes were sent against Ishigaki airfield, installations and barracks.

At dusk TF 57 disengaged to the south westward and CTF 57 assumed tactical command.

April

1st - As TF 57 approached the operational area, AC 1 assumed tactical command.

ARGONAUT and WAGER opened out to their picket positions before the fighter sweep was launched.

At 0640 hours from the flying-off position 23-26N, 125-25E, the first fighter sweep was launched.

At 0650 hours bogeys were detected by radar to the westward, height 8,000 feet, closing at 210 knots. The fighter sweep was recalled to intercept and additional fighters were flown off.

The raid split up more than 40 miles from the Fleet.

One enemy ZEKE aircraft machine-gunned INDOMITABLE in a low attack killing one rating and wounding two officers and four ratings. Still flying very low it made a similar attack on KING GEORGE V but without causing casualties.

Considerable difficulty was experienced in identifying enemy planes from the FAA planes that were hard on the enemy heels.

At 0727 hours an enemy Kamikaze plane dived into the base of the INDEFATIGABLE's island. Four officers and ten ratings were killed, and sixteen of her complement wounded. The flight deck was put temporarily out of action.

At about 0755 hours the ULSTER was near missed by what appeared to be a 500 lb. bomb from an aircraft then being chased by one of our fighters. ULSTER reported that the bulkhead between the engine-room and the after boiler-room had blown, flooding both compartments, but that the ship was floating well. Casualties were two killed and one seriously wounded. She was unable to steam but her armament remained effective. The QUIBERON was ordered to stand by her and as soon as the raid was over the GAMBIA was ordered to tow ULSTER to Leyte.

(At 0830 hours the first landings by US forces took place on the island of Okinawa)

(At 1200 hours, GAMBIA with the ULSTER in tow, left TF 57. Two days later destroyer reported that she was short of drinking water and supplies were passed to her from the GAMBIA, sixteen casks being veered astern one at a time on the end of a light wire line. On 4/4/45, minesweepers HMAS BALLARAT and LISMORE RVed with the GAMBIA and provided an anti-submarine escort for the rest of the passage. Two hours after the meeting, the tow-line carried away when two badly worn links in the ULSTER's cable parted. It took GAMBIA five hours to recover her wire and pass a 61/2-inch wire hawser which was secured to the destroyer's two remaining shackles of cable. The ships arrived off the entrance to Leyte Gulf in the evening of the 5/4/45 and the tow was transferred to a naval tug. GAMBIA had towed the ULSTER 760 miles at an average speed of eight knots)

At 1215 hours a bombing strike was sent in against Ishigaki to bomb airfields and runways. No activity was noted.

At 1430 hours reports were received from combat patrols over the islands that more aircraft had been sighted at Hirara and Ishigaki airfields. These were attacked by the fighter patrols and were followed by a fighter sweep. It was estimated that about 14 enemy aircraft were destroyed on the ground during this attack and others damaged.

At 1730 hours a low flying bogey was detected by radar to the north westward. Hellcats were sent to intercept this raid which developed into 2 plus but the enemy avoided them in cloud.

Soon afterwards the Fleet sighted the enemy and opened fire, sometimes it is regretted, at friendly fighters.

One enemy aircraft dived on the VICTORIOUS; her swing under full helm was successful and the plane touched its wing only on the flight deck edge spinning harmlessly into the sea where its bomb exploded clear of the ship. The manuscript instructions to the pilot were blown on board the VICTORIOUS, an interesting document, denoting priority of targets for suicide planes.

(The matter of differentiating between friendly and enemy aircraft became daily more important. With the Kamikaze's being chased by friendly fighters right on to the Fleet's guns, there was only a matter of seconds in which to act. Presented at certain angles there is very little difference between the Kamikaze Japanese single-engined aircraft and some of the FAA fighters. On the other hand the means of controlling, particularly of, stopping, the fire of the innumerable small guns that are now scattered about ships, often with poor communications, made the problem difficult)

At dusk TF 57 disengaged to the south eastward and CinC TF 57 assumed tactical command.

2nd - At 0510 hours, in moonlight, two fighters were flown off INDOMITABLE and sent to Ishigaki airfield. Two other aircraft were flown off at the same time and destined for Miyako airfield, but these were unable to proceed owing to radio failures. No activity was reported from Ishigaki.

(It was evident from experience the day before that the Japanese had started staging into the Sakishima airfields and it was therefore decided to cancel the planned bombardment in favour of air operations. Also the absence of enemy activity noticed by the first fighter sweep the previous day made it appear likely that the enemy might be leaving the airfields at first light)

At 0630 hours from a flying off position 230-12N, 126-02E a fighter Ramrod was flown off to attack all airfields before TF 57 withdrew. Little activity was noticed, but one airborne Zeke was shot down over Ishigaki by Hellcats. At 1045 hours the fighter Ramrod was recovered, following which TF 57 withdrew to fuelling area MIDGE, maintaining a CAP of 12 aircraft until dark

The CinC TF 57 was very disappointed to have to cancel the bombardment again, for although bombing was far more successful in cratering the runways etc. Rawlings particularly wished to bombard for the sake of the personnel manning the battleships and cruisers, many of whom were very young and untried.

As TF 57 left the operational area CinC TF 57 resumed tactical command.

(During the period 23rd March to 2nd April inclusive, losses of aircraft were 25, compared to 47 enemy destroyed or probably destroyed and .38 damaged, on the ground. Enemy vessels sunk and damaged were one lugger sunk, 13 other small vessels probably sunk, and over 40 small craft damaged)

3rd - 0630. There was no sign of the Tanker Group in rendezvous position MIDGE ONE, 19-12N, 128-00E. Weather: heavy N.E. swell, wind north, force 5. SWIFTSURE, ARGONAUT and EURYALUS were ordered ahead to carry out a search for the Fleet train.

At 0900 hours TF 57 made W/T contact with Tanker Group.

At 1320 hours TF 57 RVED with TU 112.2.5 and 112.2.2.

The weather and cross swell were too heavy to attempt re-fuelling. TF 57 remained in the area throughout the day, but towards the evening meteorological information suggesting more suitable weather to the westward; TF 57 and the Fleet Train turned west to area MOSQUITO.

A US Task Group, TF 58, was ordered to cover Sakishima Gunto during the absence of TF 57.

4th - En route to area MOSQUITO.

(At 0630 hours TU 112.2.3 arrived in replenishment position MOSQUITO from San Pedro Bay, Leyte. TU 112.2.3 included escort carrier SLINGER with replacement aircraft embarked and two further oilers, RFA's ARNDAL 8296grt, 12 knots and DINGLEDALE 8145grt, 11.5 knots. This brought the number of oilers available for refuelling to five)

At 0730 hours TF 57 commenced refuelling and transferring stores and aircraft in a heavy N.N.E. swell in position, MOSQUITO ONE, 19-37N, 124-42E.

At 1920 hours TF 57 disengaged from the Tanker Group for the night.

5th - TF 57 returned to position MOSQUITO ONE.

At 0630 hours recommenced refuelling TF 57, the weather conditions for fuelling having considerably improved. During replenishment, Captain E. C. Ewen, USN, the senior USN Liaison Officer, was transferred from the INDOMITABLE to KING GEORGE V.

At 1930 hours TF 57 having disengaged from the Tanker Group; TF 57 set course at 20 knots for the operational area. Owing to the numerous delays in fuelling, KING GEORGE V and the HOWE had to proceed, nearly 50% short of their full fuel stowage and the aircraft carriers had been able to embark only sufficient Avgas for the forthcoming two days' operation.

(Rawlings took the decision to stop replenishment even though refuelling was incomplete as he judged it essential to leave with these shortages in order to be back at the time promised. He did not like battleships steaming about short of fuel for although they should have enough oil for the operation as planned, it left little in hand to meet any change of programme, and if a ship short of fuel received underwater damage her position might become embarrassing)

6th - At 0450 hours four fighters were flown the INDOMITABLE, two each to Miyako and Ishigaki airfields to

attack any enemy aircraft taking off at dawn, but early reports from these planes indicated little or no activity in the islands. Heavy low cloud over the islands impeded operations. However eight aircraft not previously noticed at Ishigaki were attacked with apparent satisfactory results.

At 0530 hours, ARGONAUT and URANIA with a CAP were detached to act as Radar pickets to the north westward.

At 0625 hours CAP (Combat Air Patrol) and ASP (Anti-Submarine Patrol) for the Fleet flown off.

At 0635 hours TF 57 was in position 23-16N, 125-36E and CAPS were flown off to cover both islands. The craters in the runway at Miyako airfield were observed to be filled in.

At 0650, ARGONAUT and URANIA not being required to operate as pickets, were ordered to rejoin TF 57.

At 0850 hours TF 57 was detected by an enemy aircraft who escaped in cloud.

In the forenoon Hellcats returning from Miyako, shot down a Frances, after a 30 mile chase.

At about 1700 hours bogeys were detected by Radar. Fighters intercepted them and splashed one Judy. One Kamikaze out of an estimated raid of four broke through in cloud and dived on the ILLUSTRIOUS, who took radical avoiding action. The aircraft's wingtip hit the island, spinning the aircraft into the sea where the bomb exploded. Only slight damage and no casualties were caused.

After the dusk the CAP had been flown on and TF 57 disengaged to the south eastward and CTF 57 assumed tactical command.

(During the day the following signal was received by the CinC TF 57:

To:—COM 5th Fleet (R) CTF 58 CTF 57 CTF 51 CTF 56 CTF 17

From C IN C PAC

I share your hope we can bring enemy to decisive battle. Expect all out enemy reactions in prospect.

Good luck.— Nimitz)

7th - At 0530 hours AC 1 assumed tactical control.

At 0530 hours ARGONAUT and URANIA were detached to the north westward to act as Radar pickets, with orders to rejoin TF 57 at 0810 hours.

(In view of Admiral Nimitz's appreciation that an all out enemy air reaction against the land and sea forces in and around Okinawa was imminent, the bombardment of Ishigaki planned to take place p.m. was cancelled in favour of air operations only, clouds over the island also influencing the decision.

A report was received that an enemy surface force had 'been sighted in the early hours leaving the Inland Sea and steering to the southward')

At 0610 hours CAPS for the Fleet and islands, and ASP were flown off from position 23-16N, 125-36E. The island CAPS reported little activity on the islands, but noticed that bomb craters on Ishigaki had been filled in, and that Hirara and Nobara airfields appeared serviceable. It was therefore decided to send in three bomber strikes during the day to re-crater these fields. These strikes were successfully carried out without loss.

(In the afternoon a USN Privateer aircraft [a navalised Liberator bomber] sighted and reported a downed FAA Corsair pilot who had lost, his way and landed in the sea about 70 miles from TF 57. The Privateer having reported him, dropped dinghies and remained in the vicinity until relieved by FAA Fireflies)

URANIA escorted by two fighters was despatched to the rescue of the Corsair pilot. URANIA recovered him, but unfortunately he was found to be dead.

At 1930 hours CTF 57 assumed tactical command and the Fleet set course to refuel in area COOTIE, an American area closer to TF 57's operating area than areas MIDGE or MOSQUITO and which C IN C PAC had approved TF 57 using.

USN TG 52 was instructed to cover Sakishima Gunto during the day in the absence of TF 57

(In the evening CTF 57 learned that aircraft from TF 58 had dealt severely with a Japanese surface force which had sallied forth from the Inland Sea. Reports, which indicated that the enemy lost 1 battleship, 1 cruiser, 4 destroyers sunk, with 2 destroyers burning. This news filled crews of the ships of TF 57 with admiration and at the same time, envy. This was a suicide attack on the US forces off Okinawa by the world's largest battleship the YAMATO the light cruiser YAHAGI and 8 destroyers. The USN attacked the Japanese Force with 386 aircraft from TF 58)

8th - At 0600 hours TF 57 RVed with TU 112.2.5 in position COOTIE ONE, 21-12N, 128-44E and commenced to refuel the Fleet in excellent weather conditions.

Light cruiser HMCS UGANDA and destroyers URCHIN and URSA joined TF 57 as reinforcements and GAMBIA rejoined from Leyte after towing the ULSTER.

By dusk all ships except one battleship and one aircraft carrier had fuelled from the 5 tankers. At this point TF 57 disengaged for the night.

9th - At 0630 hours TF 57 recommenced fuelling.

UNDAUNTED rejoined TU 112.2.5 from Leyte, WHIRLWIND joined TF 57 from TU 112.2.5, and WHELP detached from TF 57 with A/S defects to Leyte.

At 1500 hours refuelling was complete.

At 1530 hours TF 57 proceeded, setting course to carry out final strikes on Sakishima on 10th and 11th April; the programme then envisaged TF 57 returning to Leyte thereafter.

(At 1650 hours the following signal was received:

C IN C PAC (R) CTF 57

From COM 5th Fleet.

On 11-12 April propose Task Force 57 strike Shinchiku and Matsuyama, airfields Formosa.

Request you arrange SOWESPAC AIR hit Southern Formosa fields same days. COMSUBPAC assign lifeguards to stations 9, 10 and, if possible, 11 on these days. TG 52.1 will maintain neutralisation Sakishima Gunto.

Shortly after, the following signal was also received:

CTF 57 and 51.

From COM 5th Fleet

CTF 57 cancel 10th April Sakishima operations. TG 52.1 continues neutralisation that day.

CTF 57 advise if following not within capabilities. If approved by C IN C PAC, CTF 57 to strike Shinchiku and Matsuyama airfields Formosa 11-12 April.

These were the first intimation that a change of plan was contemplated for TF 57; Rawlings thought it looked an attractive change. Rawlings discussed the situation with AC 1, following which they decided that the attacks on the Formosan airfields could be undertaken.

At 1817 hours CTF 57 made a signal to inform COM 5th Fleet that TF 57 were ready to attack Formosa)

10th - TF 57 continued patrolling in the southern area during most of the day.

At 0845 hours AC 1's Chief Staff Officer was transferred to KING GEORGE V by destroyer and the various details of the strike plans were discussed with Rawlings and his staff.

(Following the discussion, Rawlings made a signal to inform all concerned of his intentions:

To COM 5th Fleet (R) CINC POA both HQs. CTG 50.5. CINC BPF, CTG 51, CTF 112, COMAAFSWPA, CINCSWPA.

From CTF 57

From approximate position SAMSON 196½¼ from western tip Yonakumi Jima will strike Matsuyama and Shinchiku airfields 11-12 April forenoons. Will replenish COOTIE area 13th April. On 16th will arrive Leyte)

At 1203 hours TF 57 was in position 20-35N, 125-55E when the final signals were transmitted to Guam.

At 1700 hours TF 57 was steering for the flying-off position and CTF 57 handed over tactical command to AC 1. The operation was named ICEBERG OOLONG.

11th - At 0600 hours TF 57 arrived at the flying-off position, 30 miles 202¼ from Yonakumi Shima. There was a fresh N.N.E. wind, moderate sea and short swell. Cloud base was about 1,000 feet with intermittent rain and drizzle.

Course was reversed and in daylight it was soon apparent that conditions were unlikely to improve in the flying area during the day while weather reports showed that conditions over Matsuyama precluded any hope of attack. It was considered that a small fighter sweep coasting round North Formosa might find Shinchiku, but that their return journey would be a considerable gamble and surprise lost. Conditions were most unsuitable also for air-sea rescue. Operations were accordingly postponed 24 hours, and the Fleet continued to the south eastward.

At 1813 hours CTF 57 received CinC US 5th Fleet's order to all Task Group Commanders to prepare for heavy enemy air attacks on 12th April.

At 2000 hours CTF 57 assumed tactical command.

Course was reversed during the night to bring the Fleet to the flying-off position at dawn.

12th - Overnight the weather improved considerably.

At 0530 hours AC 1 assumed tactical command.

At 0555 hours enemy reconnaissance aircraft possibly detected TF 57 and soon afterwards enemy air activity was detected to the northward.

At 0615 hours CAP flown off.

At 0704 hours Seafires had an encounter with four eastbound Zekes, one of which was shot down.

At 0715 hours in position 23-58N, 122-46E the main strike force of 24 bombers and 20 fighters was flown off.

At 1135 a shadowing Dinah was chased by Corsairs, which, after releasing their drop tanks, caught and destroyed it.

At 1410 hours a Dinah escorted by two Oscar's escaped our fighters in cloud

At 1530 hours Hellcats to the north westward of the Fleet shot down a Zeke.

In the evening the enemy made a sortie from Ishigaki, which was intercepted by fighters.

At dusk all aircraft were recovered and TF 57 moved away from the operational area.

At 2100 hours CTF 57 assumed tactical command.

(From signals received CTF 57 became aware that during the day US forces off Okinawa were being heavily attacked by Kamikaze's and that Formosa-based planes were taking part.

Rawlings came to the conclusion during the evening that TF 57 must contrive to remain for a further period; even it could do little more than occasionally strike at the Sakishima Gunto. TF 57 should anyhow provide an alternative target to take some of the weight. AC 1 had evidently come to the same conclusion, for at 2113 hours he informed Rawlings that, in view of the very heavy air attacks being launched against US forces on and around Okinawa, he felt that our remaining aircraft and aircrews could manage a fifth operating period provided that our losses tomorrow should remain small. In the event, the Formosa attack days acted as tonic. I therefore made the following signal:

To COM 5th Fleet (R) CTG 52.1 CINC BPF, CINC PACCTF 112.

From CTF 57.

In view of current situation expect to be ready further operations 16th-17th April. If Formosa weather bad tomorrow intend deal with Ishigaki and significant intercepted traffic between Sakishima and Formosa both ways)

13th - At 0530 hours AC 1 assumed tactical command.

At 0550 hours four fighters were flown off. A bogey originally detected at 0540 hours developed into an ineffective raid by four Vals accompanied by a radar fitted search plane. One Val dive bombed, but missed INDOMITABLE.

At 0615 hours in position 23-58N, 122-46E the CAP proper was flown off.

At 0640 hours a small group of bogeys was intercepted 25 miles to the north west, two Zekes were splashed by Corsairs and the remainder retired to the northward.

At 0645 Avenger strikes were flown to attack Matsuyama and Shinchiku airfields.

At 1300 hours Hellcats intercepted three Zekes about 40 miles north of the Fleet, and Corsairs intercepted a Dinah escorted by Tojos. All the enemy aircraft escaped in cloud.

(At 1840 hours the following signal was received, and plans for a fifth operating period were made accordingly:—

CTF 57

From COM 5th Fleet

Cover Sakishima 16th and 17th unless other orders received in interim. Affirmative your message of 12th. Appreciate your co-operation and initiative)

At 1945 hours after all aircraft had been flown on, CTF 57 assumed tactical command and TF 57 moved out of the operational area to RV with Fleet Train.

(When Rawlings became aware of the death of President Roosevelt [Roosevelt died at 1535/12/4/45 at Warm Springs, Georgia] he sent the following signal:

To CINCPAC

From CTF 57

It was with profound grief that TF 57 learned of the death of the President of the United States)

14th - At 0630 hours TF 57 RVed with TU 112.2.5 and Tanker-Group consisting of 5 tankers in position COOTIE ONE, 21-12N, 128-44E.

Fuelling was commenced in fine weather and proceeded with fewer delays than usual.

Aircraft carrier FORMIDABLE and destroyers KEMPENFELT and WESSEX joined TF 57.

At 1755 hours, ILLUSTRIOUS screened by destroyers URANIA and QUALITY detached for Leyte.

(Following receipt of the order to the US Fleet to half mast colours, Rawlings gave orders that British ships in harbour or near thereto, should conform. 'Since US ships do not, I understand, fly their colours in the operation areas and the half masting of our colours at sea in war is I believe only done when convoying or burying the deceased, the position was not clear as regards TF 57. However Rawlings felt it fitting and in keeping with what I knew to be the feeling of the British Fleet for this great leader and sincere friend of the British Empire, to mark the occasion irrespective of precedent'; therefore Rawlings ordered colours to be half masted for the last hour before sunset)

(During the refuelling operation, oiler RFA WAVE KING established a record at the time for the number of ships refuelled in one day and pumped 5050 tons of oil in 9 hours)

At dusk TF 57 disengaged from the Tanker Force for the night.

15th - At 0730 hours TF 57 rejoined the Tanker Group, now consisting of three tankers.

By 1400 hours fuelling and general replenishing was completed at TF 57 set course to cover the Sakishima area again.

16th - At 0530 hours AC 1 assumed tactical command.

No picket cruiser was stationed owing to the shortage of fighter aircraft. (No supply of new aircraft had been available during the replenishment period)

At 0600 hours, 17 minutes before sunrise, in position 23-28N, 125-18E the CAP was flown off in excellent operating weather.

At 0622 hours an enemy snoopier at 20,000 feet escaped before the CAP had time to gain height.

At 0630 hours the first strike took off to attack Ishigaki airfields.

At 0930 hours the second strike took off to attack Miyako airfields.

At 1230 hours a further strike took off to attack Ishigaki airfields.

At 1530 hours a further strike took off to attack Miyako airfields.

At 1536 hours fighters failed to find a 320 knot bogey closing from the westward, the bogey fading at 25 miles. A possible explanation for these mysterious bogeys is that they were piloted flying bombs launched too far away and which failed to reach TF 57 before exhausting their fuel.

At 1722 hours Hellcats shot down a Myrt which was apparently stalking a USN Privateer search plane.

(In spite of having received no replenishment aircraft since 9/4/45 and the lack of fighters consequently felt, AC 1 informed CTF 57 that he considered a sixth operation period, if confined to one day, would be possible.

Rawlings, therefore, in view of the sustained heavy enemy air attacks on our Fleet mates at and around Okinawa, informed Commander 5th Fleet as follows:

Continuing operations Sakishima tomorrow. Own losses light. Little enemy activity except anti-aircraft fire. If light losses continue, can strike final blow 19th April. Same Dumbo and submarine services needed)

At dusk TF 57 disengaged to the south eastward and CTF 57 assumed tactical command at 2110 hours.

17th - At 0520 hours AC 1 assumed tactical command.

At 0600 hours TF 57 was in position 23-34N, 125-38E. CAP was flown off.

At 0609 a few bogeys were detected to the north west of the Fleet. Fighters sent to investigate splashed one Zeke.

At 0630 hours the first strike took off to attack Miyako airfields.

At 1627 hours bogeys were detected 110 miles west of the Fleet. Fighters intercepted at 55 miles and two out of 6 Zekes were shot down, the others escaping in cloud.

At 1750 hours the close range weapons on KING GEORGE V suddenly opened fire on what appeared to be a blazing aircraft diving vertically on the ship. It turned out to be a falling dropped tank from a Corsair overhead, both parties missed.

(Rawlings signal informing COM 5th Fleet that TF 57 would be available to strike again on 20th April was approved by him.

A further signal was also received:

From CINCPAC

To CTF 57 (R) 5th Fleet, CINC BPC.

It was gratifying to note, your message of 16th to COM 5th Fleet. Your Force is always ready to make still greater efforts whenever there is an opportunity to hit the enemy. Appreciate your offer which is traditional of British Navy)

At 1945 hours CTF 57 assumed tactical command of TF 57, which then withdrew to fuel in area MOSQUITO ONE.

18th - At 0630 hours TF 57 commenced fuelling from Tanker Group of 5 tankers in area MOSQUITO ONE. Mails, stores, and correspondence were transferred but no replenishment aircraft were available.

Destroyers HMAS NAPIER (7), NORMAN and NEPAL joined TF 57 and HMS UNDAUNTED rejoined.

Three of the five tankers of the tanker group, with Captain of Escort Forces in sloop PHEASANT, detached and sailed for Leyte.

By dusk TF 57 had completed fuelling and disengaged from the Tanker Group for the night.

19th - At 0730 hours TF 57 rejoined the remaining two tankers of the tanker group, and destroyers topped up.

The second day in replenishing area was necessary in order to rest aircrews, and for maintenance work on aircraft.

At 1300 hours TF 57 disengaged and set course for the Sakishima area, leaving KEMPENFELT (D27) in the fuelling area with 2 tankers, SPEAKER and the sloops WOODCOCK and FINDHORN, with orders to proceed to Leyte at dawn on 21st April.

20th - At 0520 hours AC 1 assumed tactical command.

At 0555 hours in position 23-33N, 125-02E the CAP was flown off.

The plan for the day followed generally the pattern of previous strikes, namely to crater the runways on all Miyako and Ishigaki airfields and to maintain a CAP over them to prevent repair work, destroying any enemy airborne, and to strafe any grounded planes. In addition, 2 strikes by rocket-firing Fireflies were ordered to attack coastal shipping and ground installations.

There was no enemy airborne opposition over the islands and none came near the Fleet. The several bogeys detected during the day were all found to be friendly search planes when intercepted.

At 1910 hours TF 57 set course for Leyte, having completed 12 strike days out of 26 days between first and last strikes.

At 1930 hours CTF 57 assumed tactical command.

22nd - During the day, and taking advantage of the presence of Chief Staff Officer to CinC BPF on board KING GEORGE V, Rear Admiral E. J. P. Brind, C.B., C.B.E. (Flag Officer Commanding, 4th Cruiser Squadron), and Captain J. P. Wright, D.S.O. (C.S.O. to AC 1), were transferred by destroyer to KING GEORGE V for conferences.

At 1700 hours paravanes were streamed.

At 2000 hours, SWIFTSURE (Flag 4CS), GAMBIA, UGANDA and EURYALUS to proceed ahead to Leyte.

23rd - At 1030 hours TF 57 entered the swept channel.

At 1115 hours paravanes were recovered.

At 1245 hours TF 57 anchored in San Pedro Bay, Leyte. TF 57 anchored close to the ships of the Fleet Train.

TF 57 had been at sea for 32 days since sailing from Ulithi. On arrival in San Pedro Bay the ships of TF 57 commenced making good defects and replenishing from ships of the Fleet Train.

R and R for the crews of TF 57 was taken on board ship.

KING GEORGE V's new commanding officer, Captain Brian Bethem Schofield, RN, took command.

(On arrival at Leyte, Rawlings waited upon Admiral Kincaid USN, Commander US 7th Fleet, and he met Vice Admiral J. L. Kauffman USN, Commander Philippine Sea Frontier and Rear Admiral R. O. Davis USN, Commander Amphibious Group 13.

Following his meetings with these officers Rawlings hosted a lunch for them on board his Flagship, KING GEORGE V.

Commodore E. M. Evans-Lombe RN, Captain (S) J. R. Allfrey RN, Chief of Staff and Secretary to CinC BPF, after most useful discussions, with Flag Officers of TF 57, left Leyte by air for Guam: Captain E. C. Ewen, USN, liaison Officer with TF 57, travelled with them.

Uppermost in Rawlings mind during the first few days at Leyte was the question of the future employment of Task Force 57. Rawlings had been informed by the CinC BPF, that alternative employment for the Fleet in the immediate future was under consideration as follows:

(a) Continuation of Operation ICEBERG as already planned.

(b) Withdrawal from ICEBERG and engagement on an operation in Borneo with target date for

leaving Leyte of approximately 15th May.

The CinC's signals made the latter appear the most probable.

On 27/4/45 a signal was received from CinC BPF making it clear that the Fleet would not participate in the Borneo operation and CinC, Pacific in a signal informed Rawlings that TF 57 should continue with Operation ICEBERG. This was very satisfactory.

In Rawlings's signal to COM 5th Fleet he stated his intention and ability, unless otherwise ordered, to proceed from Leyte with TF 57 on 1st May to continue the neutralisation of Sakishima Gunto for a period of from three to four weeks before requiring to withdraw for major replenishment. Operations were planned for a cycle of two days of strikes. followed by two for replenishment, the first strikes to be carried out on 4th and 5th May)

24th to 30th - At San Pedro Bay where repairs and replenishment of TF 57 continued.

May

1st - At 0630 hours TF57 sailed from Leyte in the following groups:

1st Battle Squadron comprising battleships KING GEORGE V (Flag CTF 57 and 1stBS) and HOWE.

1st Carrier Squadron comprising aircraft carriers INDOMITABLE (Flag of 2iC TF57 and AC 1), VICTORIOUS, FORMIDABLE and INDEFATIGABLE.

4th Cruiser Squadron comprising light cruisers SWIFTSURE (Flag of CS.4), EURYALUS, BLACK PRINCE, HMCS UGANDA and HMNZS GAMBIA.

4th Destroyer Flotilla comprising destroyers QUILLIAM (D4), QUEENBOROUGH, QUALITY , HMAS QUIBERON, and HMAS QUICKMATCH.

25th Destroyer Flotilla comprising destroyers GRENVILLE (D5), UNDINE, URCHIN, URANIA, UNDAUNTED and URSA.

Course was set to RV with the Logistic Support Group in area MOSQUITO ONE.

2nd - TF 57 continued steaming for replenishment area MOSQUITO ONE.

3rd - At 0600 hours TF 57 RVed with the Logistic Support Group TF 112 comprising oilers RFA CEDARDALE, MV SAN AMBROSIO and MV SAN ADOLPHO escorted by destroyers HMAS NAPIER (D7), HMAS NEPAL, HMAS NIZAM and HMAS NORMAN, sloops HMS CRANE and WHIMBREL and frigate AVON.

TF 57 cruisers and destroyers topped up with fuel.

By 1530 hours fuelling was completed.

(The RN transferred fuel at sea using hoses trailed astern of the tankers since they lacked catamarans to keep ships apart and the appropriate derricks and block and tackles to sail side by side while fuelling. Admiral Vian called this method 'an awkward, un-seaman like business. This approach was dangerous and resulted in incidents like the one on 3/5/45 when the UGANDA fouled one of her propellers on a hose. Because of the method used it took the RN twice as long as the USN to replenish their ships. When the RN mastered the techniques that the US Pacific Fleet had mastered, such as having ships refuel abeam of their tanker, the time required was reduced)

TF 112 set course for area COOTIE.

TF 57 set course for their operational area to commence Operation ICEBERG TWO.

4th - At 0500 hours AC 1 assumed tactical command.

(The plan for the opening of operations of ICEBERG TWO was:

(a) To make airfields of the Sakishima Gunto unserviceable by bombing runways and air installations.

(b) To conduct an offensive against flak positions and to assist in cratering runways by ship bombardment.

(c) To maintain an offensive CAP over the islands.

The particular plan for the first day was for the bombarding force to bombard Miyako airfields and flak positions at about noon, from medium range, with the Carrier Force about 30 miles to the southward)

At 0540 hours in position 23-44N, 125-11E the CAP was flown off

At 0600 hours enemy air activity in the vicinity of Sakishima was detected, the general trend of traffic being to the eastward. One small group approached the Fleet and Hellcats shot down one Zeke before the others escaped in cloud.

At 0605 hours bomber strikes were flown off against Miyako.

At 0815 hours bomber strikes were flown off against Ishigaki.

At 1000 hours in position 23-54N, 125-10E the bombarding force comprising KING GEORGE V, HOWE, SWIFTSURE, GAMBIA and UGANDA escorted by destroyers GRENVILLE (D5), UNDINE, URCHIN, URANIA, UNDAUNTED and URSA, and EURYALUS and BLACK PRINCE, detached from the carrier force and closed Miyako at 24 knots. The carriers provided an additional CAP for this force as well as aircraft for spotting.

At 1155 hours the bombarding force passed through position 24- 33.5N, 125-10E on the bombarding course of 070 degrees at 15 knots. KING GEORGE V and HOWE were in open order line ahead and screened by 25th DF and EURYALUS and BLACK PRINCE, who occupied the two port, i.e. inshore, positions on the screen. SWIFTSURE, GAMBIA and UGANDA in open order line ahead were stationed 270¼, 3 miles, i.e. fire off port quarter of the Fleet Flagship. Conditions were ideal.

At 1205 hours fire was opened. KING GEORGE V and HOWE bombarded Hirara airfield and the A.A. defence area to the north of the airfield, respectively.

EURYALUS and BLACK PRINCE carried out a simultaneous air burst shoot on the A.A. defence area of Nobara airfield.

On completion of the air burst shoot, SWIFTSURE and GAMBIA bombarded Nobara airfield, and UGANDA bombarded Sukama air strip.

In spite of comparatively close ranges, no form of opposition from the shore was encountered.

At 1247 hours fire was checked after firing 77 rounds of 14in and 188 rounds of 5.25in.

(The shots fired by UGANDA were the first shots fired in anger at sea by a Canadian warship against the Japanese)

Photographs showed that the runways at Nobara and Sukama were well hit and that all rounds from the HOWE fell in the target area, but no photographs were obtained to show results of the bombardment by KING GEORGE V.

(A few minutes after the bombardment was commenced CTF 57 received a signal from AC 1 to say that the FORMIDABLE had been hit; at 1131 hours she was struck by a Zeke Kamikaze, and was reduced to a speed of 18 knots. CTF 57 accordingly informed the Bombarding Force and instructed ships to speed up the bombardment. As signals were corrupt and the situation not quite clear, CTF 57 ordered the cease fire a little earlier- than planned and at 1247 hours turned the force to the southward and closed the carriers at 25 knots)

At 1500 hours the bombarding force rejoined the carriers.

At 1945 hours CTF 57 assumed tactical command and TF 57 withdrew from the area for the night.

5th -

(Because the operational condition of the FORMIDABLE was not clear, the programme for the day was arranged on the basis that FORMIDABLE would keep 8 fighters at readiness to reinforce the CAP if required.

At 0420 hours FORMIDABLE reported that repairs to her centre boiler room were complete and that full speed was available)

At 0500 hours AC 1 assumed tactical control.

At 0545 hours in position 23-10N, 125-29E the CAP was flown off.

Bombing missions were carried out against runways on Miyako and Ishigaki.

At 1905 the Fleet withdrew and set course for area COOTIE.

At 1945 hours CTF 57 assumed tactical command.

In the absence of TF 57, US Task Group 52.1 covered Sakishima.

6th - At 0630 hours in area COOTIE ONE, position 21-12N, 128-44E, TF 57 RVed with the Logistic Support Group TF 112 comprising oilers RFA's CEDARDALE, WAVE KING, WAVE MONARCH and MV SAN AMBROSIO and MV SAN ADOLPHO, escort carriers RULER and STRIKER escorted by destroyers HMAS NAPIER (D7), HMAS NEPAL, HMAS NIZAM and HMAS NORMAN, sloops CRANE, PHEASANT and WHIMBREL and frigate AVON.

At 0700 hours re-fuelling commenced and exchange of aircraft with STRIKER continued throughout the day.

(The RULER, who had embarked 885 Sqd a composite squadron of 18 Hellcats and four

Avenger, provided a CAP and ASP over TF 112)

Casualties from FORMIDABLE were transferred to the STRIKER.

At 1915 hours STRIKER and destroyer KEMPENFELT detached for Leyte.

HMAS NAPIER joined TF 57.

At 1845 the Fleet detached from the Tanker Group for the night.

7th - At 0615 hours TF 57 RVed with TF 112 and re-commenced fuelling and exchange of stores, mail and correspondence.

At 1400 hours fuelling was completed and TF 57 set course to return to the operational area. By this time the FORMIDABLE had made good her damage and was fully operational.

(NORMAN was ordered to escort oilers WAVE KING and WAVE MONARCH to Leyte; and WHIMBREL and AVON escorted oilers SAN AMBROSIO, SAN ADOLPHO and CEDARDALE to Leyte)

9th - At 0510 hours AC 1 assumed tactical command. The weather although showery was much improved and continued to do so during the day.

At 0545 hours in position 23-06N, 126-00E, CAPS were flown off. Weather over the targets was reported as satisfactory. All runways at Hirara were reported as serviceable.

At 0830 hours in position 23-40N, 125- 34E. the first bomber strike was flown off.

Three further bomber strikes were flown off during the day.

At 1145 hours TF 57 was sighted by a bogey which approached within 30 miles. Fighters drove it off but were unable to catch it.

At 1645 hours bogeys were detected very low 22 miles to the westward coming in fast. Four Seafires intercepted at 15 miles, but allowed themselves to be decoyed away by one aircraft which they shot down. Meanwhile four other enemy planes evaded another division of Seafires, and after climbing to about 3,000 feet penetrated to the Fleet.

From 1650 hours onwards the Fleet was radically manoeuvred by emergency turns at 22 knots. One minute after such a turn of 60 degrees to starboard was executed, a Kamikaze made a 10 degrees angle dive onto the VICTORIOUS from her starboard quarter. The enemy was well hit by close range weapons but crashed onto the flight deck near the forward lift.

At 1656 hours another Kamikaze made a shallow power glide from astern on VICTORIOUS. Though hit hard by gunfire, and well on fire, it hit the flight deck aft a glancing blow, and burning furiously, passed over the side. Damage to the ship was limited.

At 1657 hours a third Kamikaze made a pass at VICTORIOUS but then shifted target to the HOWE further ahead, and approached from the starboard quarter in a long shallow dive. This time the attacker was hit at a more reasonable range, and continued to be so until it crashed in flames 100 yards from the HOWE after passing over the quarterdeck.

At 1705 hours a fourth Kamikaze approached FORMIDABLE and then INDOMITABLE, being engaged by both ships, without apparent result. It then turned and dived into the after deck park of the FORMIDABLE. There was a large explosion and fire and a great deal of smoke. Speed was reduced to 15 knots to aid control of the fire which was extinguished at 1720 hours.

At 1755 hours the FORMIDABLE reported being fit to land on aircraft.

(The state of the Carrier Squadron was now as follows. The FORMIDABLE and VICTORIOUS could operate, but the former had only four bombers and 11 fighters serviceable, and also had two pom-pom mountings out of action. The VICTORIOUS could operate a few aircraft at a time, but the damage to her lift seriously reduced her speed of handling. In the circumstances CTF 57 concurred with a recommendation from AC 1 that the Fleet should withdraw to fuel, sort out and make good the damage, etc; and return to strike on 12th/13th May. Rawlings informed Commander 5th Fleet of this intention. As TG 52.1 had been ordered to cover Sakishima on days when TF 57 was not striking, these two alterations to the programme, dictated first by weather and then by damage consideration, must have caused inconvenience to QJG 52.1)

At 1950 hours TF 57 left the operational area and course was set for area COOTIE.

At 2000 hours CTF 57 assumed tactical command.

USN Task Unit 52.1.3 covered Sakishima during 10th and 11th May.

10th - At 0610 hours in area COOTIE ONE, TF 57 RVed with the Logistic Support Group TF 112 comprising oilers RFA ARNDAL and DINGLEDALE, MV AASE MAERSK 6184grt, 10.5knots [Danish, taken over by MOWT in 1940] and MV SAN AMADO 7316grt, 12 knots, tug WEASEL, and escort carriers RULER and STRIKER escorted by destroyer NEPAL, sloops CRANE, PHEASANT and WOODCOCK and minesweepers [known as corvettes in Australian Navy] HMAS WHYALLA and BALLARAT.

At 0630 hours re-fuelling and the exchange of mail correspondence and stores, and the replenishment of aircraft commenced and continued throughout the day.

AC 1 visited VICTORIOUS and FORMIDABLE to inspect damage, and found that temporary repairs being carried out showed that both ships would be sufficiently repaired to be operational to continue the programme of strikes.

(AC.1 and CS.4 then boarded KING GEORGE V to discuss with CTF 57 measures to give better protection to the carriers, and in the light of the enemy's apparent change of tactics in attacks on TF 57. The enemy appeared to have abandoned his previous practice of a high approach in favour of a low one, thereby greatly reducing the length of warning and making interception by fighters much more difficult. To combat this, it was decided:

'(a) To station two radar pickets, each consisting of a 6in cruiser and a destroyer, 12 miles to the north west, and south westward of the Fleet so as to increase the range of detection. Two fighters would be allocated to each picket and at first contact with the enemy, other fighters would be sent to the threatened sector.

(b) To bring in the 5.25in. cruisers from the screen and station them with the main body of the Fleet to increase AA protection for the carriers whenever in the operation area.

(c) To station a destroyer astern of each carrier to afford more gun protection in what appears to be the enemy's favourite position for attacking carriers.

(d) To increase mutual gun support when attack threatened by bringing in the carriers to the 2,000 yards circle, and the battleships and cruisers of the main body until their distance from adjacent carriers is 2,000 yards.

This new disposition was to be given a trial during the next-strike period.

The question of reducing the distance between ships had been under review for some time: there are many factors to take into consideration, not least of these being the interference caused to flying in and off and forming up. Its adoption for trial now is a measure of the improvement of the pilots' skill, etc., during the present operations.

The Fleet was also instructed that in future attacks enemy aircraft must be brought under fire much earlier than has been the case recently. Commanding Officers of ships were ordered to give this matter their personal attention')

At 1915 hours the Fleet disengaged from the Tanker Group for the night.

11th - At 0630 hours, KEMPENFELT, having made good defects at Leyte rejoined TF 57.

At 0640 hours TF 57 again formed on the Tanker Group, and all fuelling and transfer of stores, aircraft, correspondence, and personnel was completed in time for the Fleet to disengage at 1640 hours and take departure for the operations area.

NEPAL joined TF 57.

QUEENBOROUGH, who had developed shaft vibration, was sent back to Leyte, with SPEAKER.

oilers AASE MAERSK and SAN AMADO escorted by the WHYALLA and BALLARAT also returned to Leyte.

12th - At 0510 hours AC 1 assumed tactical command.

At 0520 hours the four counter-Kamikaze destroyers took station, one close astern of each carrier.

Radar pickets, SWIFTSURE with KEMPENFELT, and UGANDA with WESSEX, were stationed 12 miles 315 degrees and 225 degrees respectively from the Fleet centre.

At 0540 hours in position 23-40N, 126-51E, in overcast weather, the TF 57 and island CAPS and the first bomber strike were flown off.

Four bomber strikes were flown off during the day.

At 1915 hours the radar pickets rejoined.

At 1930 the dusk CAP was landed on and the Fleet withdrew to the southward for the night.

At 2010 hours CTF 57 assumed tactical command.

13th - At 0510 hours AC 1 assumed tactical command.

Radar pickets and counter-Kamikaze destroyers were stationed.

At 0540 hours in position 24-20N, 126-55E, in fine weather, the TF 57 and island CAPS were flown off.

Four bomber strikes were flown during the day, three to Miyako and one to Ishigaki.

At 0948 hours a possible submarine contact was obtained close to TF 57 in position 24-20N, 126-48E. Three destroyers were detached to hunt for it with a CAP of 4 Corsairs

At 1203 hours a possible contact was attacked with depth charges, and 2 Avengers were flown off for ASP, and another armed with depth charges was sent to assist the hunt. The possible contact was later reported as stationary, and although the hunt was continued throughout the afternoon no S/M contact was found. It now considered that a S/M was ever present.

At 1920 hours the dusk CAP was landed on and the Fleet withdrew to fuel in area COOTIE.

At 1950 hours CTF 57 assumed tactical command.

14th - At 0630 hours in area COOTIE, TF 57 RVed with oilers RFA's ARNDALE and DINGLEDALE escorted by RULER, CRANE, WOODCOCK, PHEASANT and WEASEL.

At 0650 hours re-fuelling commenced.

The other incoming Tanker Group was late at the rendezvous. They were found by search aircraft from the CAP and directed to TF 57. This group consisted of RFAs WAVE KING and WAVE MONARCH escorted by NIZAM and STRIKER.

At 1100 hours re-fuelling and replacement of aircraft commenced from the second group.

Forty tons of bombs were transferred by BLACK PRINCE from FORMIDABLE to the INDEFATIGABLE. This was necessary because the dimensions of the American bombs supplied to ships at Leyte had prevented the full number required being stowed in INDEFATIGABLE.

During the forenoon, search aircraft were sent to find and direct hospital ship TJITJALENGKA to TF 57.

(MV TJITJALENGKA 10972grt, 15knots, was a Dutch passenger ship that had been requisitioned by the MOWT in 1940 and used as troopship. On 8/7/42 she was chartered to the Admiralty after having been fitted out as a hospital ship with beds for 504 patients)

TJITJALENGKA had been requested by CTF 57 to remain at call within 30 miles of a position 85 miles to the eastward of the normal dawn position of TF 57 in the fuelling area.

Casualties by now fit to be moved were transferred to TJITJALENGKA by destroyer in the afternoon.

At 1910 the Fleet disengaged from the Tanker Group for the night.

During the absence of TF 57 Sakishima was covered by USN TU 52.1.3.

(At this stage it became necessary to consider the date on which TF 57 would leave the operations area for major storing in the rear bases. The oilers and repair ships of the Fleet Train, based at Leyte, require early notice of a firm date for re-disposition in order that with their slow speed they might reach their new stations in time to meet TF 57 and fulfil their functions.

As TF 57 was due at the storing ports early in June, and as it was evident that a considerable amount of work would be required to make good the battle damage to carriers, it appeared desirable to conclude operations with the twelfth strike day on 25th May, and so ensure the Fleet being ready to resume operations when required in July.

After consultation with AC 1, CTF 57 accordingly sent the following signal:

Action COM 5th Fleet C IN C PAC

Info C-in-C, B.P.F. VA(Q) FONAS(A) CTF 113

From CTF 57

Propose with your concurrence TF57 continues present strikes until 24 and 25 May then CTF 57 in KING GEORGE V, 3 destroyers proceed Guam arriving 1000 hours 28th leave 0600 hours 30th for Manus. If you concur request authority these four ships fuel with US supplies Guam. Remainder TF 57 to Manus after fuelling COOTIE on 26th arriving in forenoon 30th. Could carry out further strikes if losses remain light on 28th and 29th May which would delay above programme for four days. CTF112 will divert slow tankers to Manus or COOTIE which necessitates early decision on your needs)

15th - At 0630 hours TF 57 reformed on the tanker group, and fuelling and exchange of stores, aircraft and correspondence was continued

Destroyers TROUBRIDGE and TENACIOUS joined TF 57.

GRENVILLE detached from TF 57 and joined TU 112.2.5, to be left in the servicing area.

At 1705 hours with replenishment completed TF 57 disengaged from the Tanker Group and departure was taken for the operations area.

(During the day the following signals were received:

CTF 57. From COM 5th Fleet

Not necessary, keep up coverage of Sakishima after 25th.

CTF 57. From CINOPAC

Arrival KING GEORGE V and 3 destroyers Guam 28th May approved. Will be pleased welcome you. Guam has available fuel for topping off)

16th - At 0510 hours AC 1 assumed tactical command.

Radar pickets were sent out and counter Kamikaze destroyers closed their carriers.

At 0540 hours in position 23-40N, 126-51E, the TF 57 and island CAPS and the first bomber strike for Miyako were flown off.

Five bomber strikes were sent to the islands, during the day, three to Miyako and two to Ishigaki.

At 1935 hours the dusk CAP landed on and the Fleet withdrew to the southward for the night.

At 1950 hours CTF 57 assumed tactical command.

17th - At 0510 hours AC 1 assumed tactical command.

Radar pickets were sent out and counter Kamikaze destroyers closed their carriers.

(The day broke with very light winds of only one or two knots, a state of affairs which persisted and proved a handicap throughout the day. The state of boiler brickwork in several ships, and the defective centre stern tube bush in INDOMITABLE, made high speeds most undesirable; but without high speeds, little safety margin was left for operating aircraft)

At 0540 hours from a position 85 miles 110 degrees from Miyako the TF 57 and island CAPS were flown off.

Bomber strikes were sent to the islands during the day.

At 1915 hours the dusk CAP was landed on and the radar pickets were recalled and TF 57 withdrew to area COOTIE to fuel.

At 1940 hours CTF 57 assumed tactical command.

During the absence of TF 57 Sakishima was covered by USN TG 52.1.

18th - At 0545 hours in area COOTIE, TF 57 RVed with the Tanker Group, comprising oilers RFA CEDARDALE, MV SAN AMBROSIO and MV SAN ADOLPHO, escorted by RULER, CHASER, [with replacement aircraft embarked] GRENVILLE, NORMAN, WHIMBREL, PARRETT, BENDIGO and WEASEL

At 0600 hours refuelling commenced.

BLACK PRINCE transferred bombs from FORMIDABLE to INDEFATIGABLE.

At 1745 hours the Fleet disengaged from the Tanker Group for the night.

At 1800 hours the Tanker Group reversed course to enable them to RV with ammunition carrier ROBERT MAERSK expected in position COOTIE ONE at 0600/18/5/45. Meanwhile the transfer of bombs by BLACK PRINCE continued until dark.

19th - At 0645 hours TF 57 reformed on the Tanker Group which now included MV ROBERT MAERSK 2294grt, 14 knots, [Danish ship requisitioned 6/40 by MOWT] with supplies of bombs, who had been escorted to the area by minesweeper HMAS CAIRNS

The transfer of bombs, fuel and stores was continued.

VICTORIOUS and later INDOMITABLE went alongside ROBERT MAERSK and embarked bombs by whip and inhaul method, the rate of transfer being about 75 bombs per hour.

Continuous rain and low visibility in the afternoon prevented flying and seriously upset the numbers of replenishment aircraft to be flown onto FORMIDABLE and the flyable duds which were to be flown from her to CHASER.

TJITJALENGKA was contacted by aircraft and directed to the Fleet. TJITJALENGKA then embarked sick and casualties.

NORMAN joined TF 57 replacing the NEPAL.

At 1800 hours oilers CEDARDALE, SAN AMBROSIO and SAN ADOLPHO escorted by BENDIGO and CAIRNS detached for Manus. PARRETT acted as additional escort until 21/5/45 when she detached to Leyte.

At 1930 hours NEPAL was detached to Leyte to augment the escorts available to CTF. 112 for the forthcoming, move south by the Fleet Train.

At 1930 hours TF 57 departed for the operations area.

20th - The flying-off position for the day was to be 23-39N, 126-40E.

At 0458 hours, first light, the clouds were low, about 8/10 and the horizon clear.

At 0500 hours the four anti-Kamikaze destroyers who included QUILLIAM, left the screen as previously arranged, and started to close their carriers to form astern of them. The Fleet was proceeding at 16 knots.

At 0510 hours AC 1 assumed tactical command.

At 0515 hours the Fleet ran into dense fog.

At 0524 hours QUILLIAM, endeavouring to form astern of the INDOMITABLE, collided with her. Fortunately no casualties were sustained, but superficial above water damage was caused to the INDOMITABLE, and serious damage to the bow of the QUILLIAM. As soon as the damaged destroyer was clear of the screen, NORMAN was ordered to take her in tow.

At 0615 hours BLACK PRINCE was sent to stand by both ships and escort them to area COOTIE.

At 0745 hours by which time the weather had improved slightly, CAPS and the first strike was flown off. Because of weather conditions this proved to be the only one.

(During the forenoon CTG 99.2's signal was received, indicating the intention of that group to strike Miyako with shore based aircraft at 1700 hours. It was therefore decided to withdraw CAPS from that island by 1600 hours. The strike planned for Ishigaki at 1630 hours was not altered. These intentions were communicated to CTF 51 and CTG 99.2. In the event, however, and presumably because of weather, CTG 99.2 cancelled his strike)

At 1210 hours two bogeys were detected 50 miles to the westward tracking 040 degrees. Fighters sent to intercept found both aircraft were friendly bombers. No information of their presence nor mission was known to CTF 57.

At 1900 hours all CAPS were recovered and TF 57 withdrew to the southward for the night.

At 1930 hours CTF 57 assumed tactical command.

At 2100 hours TF 57 passed close to BLACK PRINCE who reported that the QUILLIAM was satisfactorily in tow.

(On 21/5/45 BLACK PRINCE transferred the tow to tug WEASEL)

21st - At 0510 hours AC 1 assumed tactical command.

Flying off had been planned for 0540 hours from a position 85 miles 110¼ from Miyako. The weather at dawn was similar to the previous day except that the Fleet was clear of fog patches. Flying-off was therefore postponed.

At 0600 hours four Hellcats were flown off to investigate the weather within a 30 mile radius. They reported clear weather to east and west, and improving weather to the northward. Acting on this information the first strike was flown off at 0655 hours.

Five bomber strikes were flown off during the day, three to Miyako and two to Ishigaki.

At 1423 hours a high snooper was detected approaching TF 57 from the westward. Fighters were ordered to 30,000 feet and at 1442 hours intercepted 36 miles to the south westward at 26,000 feet. The enemy, a Myrt, was shot down 4 minutes later by Hellcats from the INDOMITABLE.

(During the day Commander Third Fleet's signal was received. This indicated the nature of future operations for the British Pacific Fleet. In the light of this, and after consulting with AC 1, CTF 57 decided to release FORMIDABLE early for repair of battle damage. It was felt that this was necessary to ensure that 4 carriers would be available for operations on completion of the forthcoming storing period. This decision was communicated to Commander Fifth Fleet)

At 1930 hours the dusk CAP were landed on, radar pickets were recalled, and TF 57 then withdrew to area COOTIE.

At 1930 hours CTF 57 assumed tactical command.

During the absence of TF 57 the USN Task Unit 52.1.3 covered Sakishima.

22nd - At 0700 hours in position COOTIE ONE, TF 57 RVed with:

(a) The tug WEASEL towing QUILLIAM and escorted by the BLACK PRINCE, GRENVILLE, NORMAN and RULER.

(b) The ships of the Fleet Train consisting of oilers RFA's WAVE KING and WAVE MONARCH, MV AASE MAERSK and MV SAN AMADO, ammunition carrier MV ROBERT MAERSK, CHASER and SPEAKER [with replacement aircraft] escorted by NAPIER, CRANE, AVON and FINDHORN.

Fuelling, and exchange of aircraft and stores and bombs, was carried out throughout the day.

GRENVILLE (D25) rejoined TF 57 as Senior Officer Destroyers, and WESSEX took her place as escort to TU 112.2.5.

After receiving mails and discharging excess complement the damaged QUILLIAM proceeded in tow of tug WEASEL to Leyte. NORMAN acting as escort. CTF 112 was requested to arrange for a larger tug to meet and relieve WEASEL.

(American tug USS TURKEY was sent out from Leyte, where the tow arrived safely on 28/5/45)

At 1800 hours FORMIDABLE was detached with orders to proceed to Manus and then Sydney to expedite repair of battle damage. She was escorted by destroyers KEMPENFELT and WHIRLWIND, both of whom were due for refit.

At 1915 the Fleet disengaged from the Tanker Group for the night.

23rd - At 0745 hours TF 57 reformed on the Tanker Group, and fuelling and exchange of stores was continued. Light cruiser HMNZS ACHILLES joined TF 57.

Owing to the plunger block on the centre shaft overheating and wiping in INDOMITABLE, her speed had to be limited to 22 knots.

At 1800 hours CHASER, SPEAKER and NAPIER were detached for Manus.

At 1815 hours TF 57 detached from the Tanker Group taking departure for the operations area with only 3 carriers in company.

CTF 57 had hoped to bombard Miyako on 24/5/45, but with the reduced number of aircraft available it was judged wiser to forego this plan in favour of an entire air effort.

24th - At 0510 hours AC 1 assumed tactical command.

At dawn visibility was low, sky overcast with rain and drizzle. Flying-off was postponed.

At 0900 four fighters flown off reported weather improving slowly in the vicinity.

At 1045 hours in position 23-40N, 126-52E the first strike was flown off against Miyako.

At 1245 hours the first strike was flown off against Ishigaki.

A further strike was flown off against each target.

At 1907 hours the last CAP was landed on and radar pickets were recalled. TF 57 then withdrew to the southward for the night.

At 1940 hours CTF 57 assumed tactical command.

25th - At 0510 hours AC 1 assumed tactical command

At 0600 hours in position 23-40N, 126-52E the first strike was flown off against Miyako.

A further two strikes against Miyako were flown off at 1115 hours and 1400 hours.

The returning strike from Ishigaki made contact with the submarine USS BLUEFISH, who reported that during the previous night lights had been observed on Ishigaki airfield. The submarine commander had therefore bombarded the airfield.

At 1910 hours the last CAP was landed on and radar pickets were recalled. TF 57 then withdrew to the southward for the night.

At 2200 hours KING GEORGE V (Flag Vice Admiral Rawlings CTF 57) with destroyers TROUBRIDGE, TENACIOUS and TERMAGANT detached from TF 57 and set course for Guam.

(The remaining ships of TF 57 under command of AC 1 set course for area COOTIE to top off ships, with fuel as necessary for them to reach Manus)

(The following signals were subsequently exchanged between C IN C PAC and CTF 57:

CTF 57. Info C-in-C, BPF. C IN C PAC ADV 5th Fleet

From COM 5th Fleet

I would express, to you, to your officers and to your men, after two months operations as a Fifth Fleet Task Force, my appreciation of your fine work and co-operative spirit. Task Force 57 has mirrored the great traditions of the Royal Navy to the American Task Forces.

Spruance. COM, 5th Fleet Info C IN C PAC ADV C.-in-C, BPF.

From CTF57

We are proud to have been in a position to lend a hand in this crucial operation and hope we may continue so doing until Victory. Will pass your generous message with great personal pleasure, to all of the British Pacific Fleet who have been honoured by serving under you.

Regret my Flagship and I were not able to greet you on your return to Guam)

(The objective of the British Pacific Fleet [TF 57] had been to:

(a) Render the six Japanese airfields unusable to the enemy by constant bombing and cratering of the runways, plus destruction of buildings.

(b) Destroy enemy aircraft on the ground and in the air

(c) Prevent aircraft originating in Formosa from using the islands as a staging area to attack the American fleet at Okinawa or reinforce land based aircraft in Japan.

The objective had generally been achieved, but as Vice Admiral Rawlings [CTF 57] reported, 'however thoroughly the airfields were neutralised by day, the enemy was determined and able to effect repairs by night'. One of the reasons the Japanese could do this was because the strike Avengers were dropping 1000lb semi-armour piercing bombs that were surplus to the FAA

attacks on the TIRPITZ; these weapons were useless for cratering runways.

During TF 57's period of operations against the Sakishima Gunto, the Force was at sea for 62 days, broken by eight days spent in Leyte Gulf. In the course of its operations TF 57 flew 4852 aircraft sorties and discharged 875 tons of bombs and rocket projectiles. About one hundred Japanese aircraft were destroyed and more than seventy damaged.

During the second part of the operations, nine oilers supplied the fleet with 87,000 tons of fuel oil and 756 tons of aviation spirit, enabling it to remain at sea for a month between 700 and 900 miles from its base.

TF 57 carried out almost 8,000 aircraft sorties with the loss in action of 85 aircraft. Half that number again was lost to kamikaze strikes.

The TF 57 aircraft carriers suffered 70 deaths and 34 seriously wounded from kamikaze attacks)

(Admiral King USN, CinC US Navy, in his report to the Honourable James Forrestal, Secretary of the Navy, wrote:

A fast British carrier task force, under the command of Vice Admiral Rawlings, was assigned to Admiral Spruance's Fifth Fleet to assist in the air support operations for the Okinawa assault.

From 26 March to 20 April, and again from 4 May to 25 May, planes from this force rendered valuable service in neutralizing the enemy air installations on Sakishima Gunto, southwest of Okinawa. Carriers of the force were subjected to frequent attacks by suicide planes, but none of them was put out of action. Battleships and cruisers of the force bombarded Miyako Jima on 4 May with satisfactory results)

26th - En route to Guam.

Noon position 20-04N, 132-08E

At 1700 hours Altered course to 122¼

At 1800 hours sighted one Coronado aircraft on patrol

27th - En route to Guam.

At 0846 hours sighted one Coronado aircraft on patrol.

Noon position 16-01N, 138-49E

At 2000 hours reduced speed to 19 knots.

28th - At 0715 hours land in sight, reduced speed to 17 knots and altered course to 100¼.

At 0905 hours stopped one mile off Orote Point, Guam, where all ships embarked pilots and the British Naval Liaison Officer to the CinC Pacific Fleet, Acting Captain H.S. Hopkins, R.N. boarded KING GEORGE V.

At 0920 hours entered Apra Harbour.

At 0940 hours KING GEORGE V secured to buoy whilst destroyers TROUBRIDGE and TERMAGANT proceeded to a tanker to fuel. The TENACIOUS anchored and fuelled from tanker after the TERMAGANT had finished topping up.

Vice Admiral Rawlings, 2inC British Pacific Fleet called on Admiral Nimitz, the CinC US Pacific Fleet immediately after arrival in Guam, and in the evening dined ashore at Admiral Nimitz' invitation.

29th - At 1030 hours Admiral Nimitz wearing 'white undress', came on board KING GEORGE V where he inspected the Marine Guard of Honour and was afterwards introduced to the Senior Officers, Commanding Officers of destroyers, and Senior Staff Officers. Nimitz then addressed the assembled company, which included a representative team of officers and men from the three destroyers.

At 1630 hours an 'at home' was held on board KING GEORGE V, the invitation being extended by the Vice Admiral Rawlings, 2inC British Pacific Fleet, Captain and Officers of the ship to the United States Authorities at Guam. The number attending had unfortunately to be limited but about 100 Officers and a few military and naval nurses attended the party, which was held on the Quarter Deck.

In the evening, the Vice Admiral Rawlings, entertained Admiral Nimitz and other senior United States Officers to dinner on aboard KING GEORGE V.

(The welcome given to this small representative portion of the British Pacific Fleet was most warm, and every facility, both social and recreational, was extended to the Officers and men of the Flagship and accompanying destroyers. An issue of beer was made to the ship's companies in the canteen ashore, and motor transport was put at the disposal of Officers and ratings for sightseeing tours of the Island. Practically 50% of the ship's companies were landed each day)

30th - At 0700 hours KING GEORGE V sailed from Apra Harbour, preceded by destroyers TROUBRIDGE,

TERMAGANT, and TENACIOUS, who formed an A/S screen as soon as the harbour was cleared.

At 0715 hours set course 270¼, 24 knots for Manus.

At 0835 hours altered course to 195¼ and commenced zigzag.

Between 0850 and 1015 hours, KING GEORGE V carried out long range and close range firings at two sleeve targets provided by CTG. 94.10. Destroyers carried out similar practices between 1030 and 1145 hours.

At 1200 hours TROUBRIDGE carried out firing at smoke burst target.

Noon position 12-10N 143-35E

At 1700 hours altered course to 190¼.

31st - At 0325 hours altered course to 145¼ and resumed zig zag

Noon position 03-43N, 144-07E.

The Captain of the Fleet, Captain E.W. Longley Cook RN, was transferred to TENACIOUS for passage to Manus and thence to Sydney by air, so as to arrive before the Fleet.

June

1st - At 0255 hours course was altered to 175¼, speed 22 knots.

At 0600 hours off Manus, in TBS touch with destroyer GRENVILLE.

At 0630, hours, TROUBRIDGE, TERMAGENT, and TENACIOUS were detached to Manus. Screen was then taken over by destroyers GRENVILLE, UNDINE, URCHIN, and WESSEX. Speed was increased to 23 knots, course as requisite to pass through the off lying islands.

At 0720 hours, passed destroyer TEAZER northbound to Manus.

At 1030 hours contacted oiler RFA DINGLEDALE and proceeded to fuel on course 185¼, speed 9 knots.

At 1100 hours, GRENVILLE went alongside KING GEORGE V and transferred mail and correspondence.

Noon position 03-31S, 147-10E

At 1440 hours sighted CRANE southbound

At 1445 hours completed fuelling and course set for Viking Strait at 23 knots.

At 2100 hours passed aircraft carrier IMPLACABLE, outbound from Sydney, and escort to port, northbound to Manus.

2nd - At 0415 hours altered course to 125¼.

At 0730 hours altered course to 150¼.

Noon position 9-32S, 151-30E

At 1655 hours altered course 180¼, speed 22 knots.

At 2000 hours altered course to 170¼.

3rd - At 0700 hours altered course to 165¼

At 0900 hours passed escort carrier BEGUM, northbound from Sydney carrying airframes to MONAB IV, HMS Nabaron, at Manus.

Noon position 18-13S, 153-17E.

At 2100 hours altered course to 175¼.

4th - At 2100 hours altered course to 175¼.

Noon position 26-49S, 154-43E.

At 1700 hours altered course to 195¼.

5th - At 0658 hours reduced speed to 17 knots.

At 0730 hours altered course to 255¼.

At 0920 hours reduced speed to 16 knots.

At 1115 hours altered course to 275¼.

Noon position 33-47.5S 152-04E

At 1200 hours manoeuvred as necessary to close Sydney harbour entrance.

At 1420 hours destroyer took station astern

At 1440 hours embarked pilot and proceeded up Sydney harbour

At 1530 hours KING GEORGE V secured at No. 6 WOOLLOOMOOLOO.

(5/6/45 the main body of the British Pacific Fleet arrived at Sydney on this day. The objective of the Fleet returning to Sydney was to facilitate the storing of ships, repair the carriers' battle damage, boiler cleaning, and generally store for the next operational period.

Four days' leave was granted to each watch whilst in Sydney, the resultant invasion being

quickly dispersed by the hospitable Australians who accommodated in their own homes a large percentage of the libertymen for the period of their leave)

18th - At Sydney where their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester honoured Vice Admiral Rawlings, 2iC British Pacific Fleet, with their presence on board KING GEORGE V for luncheon.

(19/6/45 Commander Hutchinson RN, Staff Officer Operations to the Vice Admiral Rawlings 2iC British Pacific Fleet, Commander Smeeton RN, Staff Officer Air Plans, Commander Lewin RN, Staff Fighter Direction Officer, both on staff of the Vice Admiral Commanding, First Aircraft Carrier Squadron, together with Captain Ewen, USN LO, with the Pacific Fleet left Sydney by air for Leyte, to discuss forthcoming operation with the Staff of Admiral Halsey, Commander US Third Fleet. The party returned to Sydney on 25/6/45)

24th - At Sydney where again their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester honoured Vice Admiral Rawlings with their presence on board KING GEORGE V for luncheon.

28th - At 0730 hours the ships of the British Pacific Fleet, now designated TF 37, started to leave Sydney Harbour, split into the following groups so as to facilitate individual practice requirements:

TG 37.1 KING GEORGE V (Flag CTF 37 and VA2iCBPF)

TG 37.2 FORMIDABLE (Flag AC 1) and attendant destroyers WESSEX and WRANGLER. [IMPLACABLE and VICTORIOUS and attendant destroyers TERPSICHORE, and TEAZER joining on passage]

TG 37.3 BLACK PRINCE, EURYALUS and HMCS UGANDA with NEWFOUNDLAND joining on passage.

TG 37.4 BARFLEUR (Flag RA (D)), GRENVILLE, URANIA, UNDINE, URCHIN, UNDAUNTED and ULYSSES.

(In the orders for passage, it was arranged that each Task Unit, under its Flag Officer, should proceed independently, making the most of all opportunities for carrying out individual practices, keeping within 30 miles of KING GEORGE V during the day, and closing to radar touch by nightfall. The aircraft carriers were ordered to follow a track approximately 10 miles to the Eastward of the route of the main force, otherwise acting independently for flying practices. Throughout the passage economy of oil in destroyers was the determining factor)

At 1030 hours destroyers carried out sleeve target firing.

At 1145 hours KING GEORGE V, GAMBIA and BLACK PRINCE carried out long and close rang AA firing position in 75 degrees South Head, 10 miles. The sleeve targets were towed by Naval Aircraft from NAS NOWRA.

29th - At 1000 hours KING GEORGE V carried out range and inclination exercises with GAMBIA and BLACK PRINCE and on completion, the cruisers carried out radar calibration exercises with KING GEORGE V at 10,000 yards.

Noon Position 29-10S, 154-52E

At 1500 hours the EURYALUS joined CS 4 from Brisbane.

30th - At 0300 hours a Radar contact was obtained with a group of ships bearing 280 degrees, 21 miles. These were identified as destroyers QUICKMATCH, QUIBERON, QUALITY and QUADRANT who, to ease the fuelling situation, had been sent previously to fuel at Brisbane before proceeding independently from there to join AC 1 and relieve WESSEX and WRANGLER.

Bombardment communication exercises between KING GEORGE V and EURYALUS

Dummy Air Reporting Exercises carried out by the cruisers.

Noon position 22-46S, 156-07E.

At 1200 hours IMPLACABLE, escorted by destroyers TEAZER and TERPSICHORE, joined AC 1.

NEWFOUNDLAND and GAMBIA (Flag CS4) joined the other two cruisers of CS 4. These ships had sailed from Manus.

At 1800 hours Rear Admiral CS, Rear Admiral E J P Brind, transferred his flag from GAMBIA to NEWFOUNDLAND

At 1930 hours TF 37 commenced night encounter exercise. For this exercise, KING GEORGE V was assumed to be a damaged battleship, with three 6in cruisers in company, returning to base. The attacking force under RA (D) consisting of TG. 37.4 with the BLACK PRINCE and EURYALUS attached.

At 2040 hours the exercise was completed.

At 2050 hours WESSEX was detached by AC 1 to return to Sydney.

At 2050 hours WRANGLER was detached by AC 1 to proceed to Brisbane to fuel, and for onward passage to Manus.

July

1st - At 1015 hours EURYALUS who was suffering from leaking boiler tubes which were estimated to require 48 hours to repair, detached from TF 37 and proceeded to Manus.

Noon position 16-19S, 156-33E

At 1450 hours TERPSICHORE and TEAZER joined TG 37.4, having been detached by AC 1 on account of their low percentage of fuel remaining.

2nd - At 0830 hours KING GEORGE V carried out bombardment communication exercise with BLACK PRINCE.

At 1000 hours KING GEORGE V carried out 5.25in throw off shoot, using BLACK PRINCE as a target.

Between 1030 and 1130 hours, destroyers carried out Rapid Open Fire Exercises.

Noon position 10-08S, 154-37E

Destroyers exercised manoeuvres during the afternoon and at 1500 hours, formed screening diagram No. 36 on KING GEORGE V.

At 2000 hours the cruisers, having exercised independently during the day, carried out Night Encounter exercises which were completed at 2300 hours.

3rd - Bad weather postponed until 1000 hours the AA throw off firing which had been scheduled for 0800 hours.

Fighters (from the 1st Carrier Squadron) carried out a strafing attack on the Fleet which had been disposed in a circular formation so as to exercise coordination of gun control.

Noon position 06S, 149-03E

At 1800 hours destroyer BARFLEUR, who had suffered slight damage from prematures during the practice firing, was instructed to proceed ahead of TF 37 to effect repairs at Manus.

4th - At 0945 hours TF 37 commenced close range firing at sleeve targets towed by naval aircraft from Ponam Island, (MONAB IV, HMS Nabaron)

At 1100 hours KING GEORGE V entered Seeadler Harbour, Manus, followed by the remainder of TF 37.

Waiting at Manus to join TF 37 was HMNZS ACHILLES who had just completed a refit in one of the floating docks in Seeadler Harbour.

5th - TF 37 was at Manus where they stored, ammunitioned, and fuelled in preparation for the forthcoming operation.

(TF 37's stay at Manus, which was of 36 hours duration, was taken up more or less completely by meetings to discuss the best way of utilizing the forces at our disposal and of adapting these forces to American methods when the British and American Task Forces were operating in company. A considerable amount of American operation orders was received on board the Flagship on arrival at Manus which, together with our own operational orders, had to be distributed to the Task Force before sailing)

6th -

(Early in the morning CTF 37 signalled COM US 3rd Fleet:

I hereby report Task Force 37 for duty with the 3rd Fleet. We are much looking forward to this out first operation under your orders)

At 0600 hours TF 37, consisting of KING GEORGE V (Flag of CTF 37 & VABPF), FORMIDABLE (Flag AC 1), VICTORIOUS, IMPLACABLE, NEWFOUNDLAND (Flag of CS 4), BLACK PRINCE, EURYALUS, ACHILLES, UGANDA, GAMBIA, BARFLEUR (Flag of RAD), GRENVILLE (Captain D4), UNDINE, URANIA, URCHIN, ULYSSES, QUIBERON, QUICKMATCH, QUALITY, QUADRANT (Captain D 24), TENACIOUS, TERMAGANT, TERPSICHORE, TEAZER, WRANGLER and NORMAN sailed from Manus for Operations under Commander Third Fleet.

UNDAUNTED was delayed owing to boiler defects and sailed at 1730 hours to join TF 37.

At 0730 hours sleeve target firing carried out with aircraft from Ponam Island.

Noon position: 01-09S, 148-17E

At 1330 hours carrier aircraft carried out simulated Kamikaze attacks on the Fleet.

At 1400 hours TF 37 carried out an Air Warning and engaging exercise.

At 1550 hours fighter direction exercises were carried out.

7th - At 0430 hours TF 37 carried out a night air interception exercise

At 1010 hours KING GEORGE V, cruisers, and destroyers carried out A.A. throw off firing at aircraft provided by the carriers.

At 1120 hours commenced fuelling destroyers from KING GEORGE V and light cruisers UGANDA, NEWFOUNDLAND and ACHILLES.

Noon position: 03-12N, 153-04E

At 1545 hours whilst BARFLEUR was fuelling alongside KING GEORGE V, the Rear Admiral Destroyers took the opportunity of going on board KING GEORGE V for discussions with the Vice Admiral, Rawlings, CTF 37.

At 1900 destroyers WRANGLER and NORMAN detached to return to Manus.

8th - At 0855 hours aircraft from FORMIDABLE were flown off for gunnery, Kamikaze, height calibration and bombardment communication exercises.

At 1040 hours a fighter direction exercise with aircraft flown off from the VICTORIOUS was carried out.

Noon position: 7-23N, 156-31E

At 2112 hours TF 37 commenced manoeuvring exercises by TBS.

9th - Between 0500 to 0830 hours course of speed of TF 37 was adjusted as necessary to pass large convoys and a number of single ships sailing in both directions and apparently en route for Eniwetok and Guam and vice versa.

At 0515 hours A.A. throw off shoots.

At 1015 hours dive bombing exercise with strafing attacks by fighters using live ammunition. A height calibration exercise was carried out simultaneously.

At 1050 hours jackstays were rigged fore and after for aircraft from VICTORIOUS to practice message drops on to KING GEORGE V.

At 1100 hours one aircraft carried out 'window' dropping exercises to practice radar operators in selection of target etc.

(Window was the British code name for strips of aluminium foil which were dropped from aircraft as a radar countermeasure. It is now known as Chaff)

Noon position: 13-28N, 157-26E

At 1725 hours the Rear Admiral Destroyers, together with his communication officer and that of the 4th CS came on board for discussions with the CTF 37.

At 1830 hours air warning and engagement exercises were carried out.

10th - At 0830 hours aircraft practiced forming up and followed this up with an attack on the Fleet. Before the aircraft were flown on, another message drop exercise was carried out on KING GEORGE V.

Noon position: 19-10N, 158-54E

At 1240 hours UNDAUNTED joined TF 37 and required topping up after a fast passage.

At 1345 hours KING GEORGE V, FORMIDABLE and VICTORIOUS commenced fuelling BLACK PRINCE, UNDAUNTED and TENACIOUS.

At 1835 hours the carriers practiced night deck landing training and two Avengers provided targets for a night air warning and engaging exercise.

11th - At 0900 hours TF 37 carried out A.A. throw off firing.

Noon position: 24-58N, 159-59E.

At 1210 hours a most realistic massed air attack on TF 37 was staged by carrier aircraft.

At 1810 hours night air warning and engaging exercise. During this exercise TF 37 took evasive action and the screen was ordered to make smoke as necessary.

At 2100 hours TF 37, using an imaginary aircraft plot controlled by KING GEORGE V, carried out dummy blind fire exercise.

12th - At 0900 hours TF 37 carried out sleeve target firings.

At 1030 hours fighter direction exercise carried out.

Noon position: 30-34N, 157-29E

At 1445 hours TF 37 passed second oiling group, comprising oilers RFA WAVE MONARCH, MV SAN ADOLPHO and MV SAN AMBROSIO escorted by frigates FINDHORN and DERG and minesweeper HMAS GAWLER to the eastward, en route to the fuelling area.

At 1600 hours damage control exercise with concurrent emergency conning, steering, and communications exercises were carried out.

At 1900 hours a night air warning and engaging exercise was carried out.

13th - At 0137 hours TF 37 RVed with the first oiler group of DINGLEDALE, SAN AMADO, WAVE EMPEROR, escorted by frigates USK and BARLE.

At 0430 hours TF 37 commenced fuelling and D.S.B. routine around the Fleet.

Noon position: 33-52N, 154-45E

At 1840 hours TF 37 disengaged from the oiling force for the night.

14th - At 0113 hours TF 37 detected by radar the US Logistic Group, TG 30.8 and course altered to pass to the Westward.

At 0400 hours TG 37 re-commenced oiling.

At 1155 hours the QUIBERON reported a sub contact. KING GEORGE V cast off from the oiler and the Fleet was turned 50degrees to starboard.

At 1200 hours the contact was reported as non sub and TF 37 resumed the oiling course.

Noon position: 35-08N, 152-31E

At 1210 hours because of trouble with fuel hoses, KING GEORGE V was changed over from the SAN AMADO to the WAVE EMPEROR to continuing fuelling.

At 1837 hours TF 37 disengaged from oiling force for night.

(WAVE EMPEROR being empty was sent back south to Eniwetok escorted by the BARLE as it was evident, as it had been throughout the planning stage, that the tanker capacity would be a most critical and anxious factor. In the event this move was to prove invaluable and justified the risk of moving one of our best oilers with a solitary escort. Fortunately, the submarine threat developed near the Philippines and not on the Eniwetok run)

15th - At 0545 hours re-commenced oiling. KING GEORGE V fuelled from DINGLEDALE, and UGANDA from SAN AMADO thus completing the fuelling of TF 37, with the exception of some of destroyers who, by this time, required topping up again.

Noon Position: 35-49N, 151-36E.

At 1400 hours TF 37 disengaged from oiling force and set course to RV with COM 3rd US Fleet.

At 1635 hours the carriers carried out sleeve target firing.

16th - At 0430 hours TF 37 sighted the US Task Force TF 38 to the westward and TF 37 manoeuvred so as to pass to the eastward of the US Fleet which had by then commenced to oil.

(TF 38 was in fact the US Third Fleet. The CinC of the US Third Fleet was Admiral Halsey who flew his flag in battleship USS MISSOURI. TF 38 consisted of three task forces TF 38.1, TF 38.3 and TF 38.4 and in total contained 17 aircraft carriers, 8 battleships, 19 cruisers and 59 destroyers. Tactical command of TF 38 was exercised by Vice Admiral J.S. McCain flying his flag in the aircraft carrier USS SHANGRI-LA)

At 0710 hours TF 37 altered course to close battleship USS MISSOURI (Flag of Admiral Halsey, CinC the US Third Fleet)

At 0745 hours QUADRANT and TERMAGANT closed KING GEORGE V and FORMIDABLE respectively to transfer CTF 37 and AC 1 and their staffs to the MISSOURI for a conference with the Commander Third Fleet.

(Admiral Halsey knew Rawlings and Vian only by their reputations, but he was reluctant to meet with them. The source of Halsey's reservation was the issue of full operational control of the British fleet. Without that control, he realized that the inclusion of the British in his command would be a difficult matter. He tried to rectify the issue with a message to Nimitz proposing that he use the British Pacific Fleet on the flank of U.S. naval forces. Nimitz rejected this proposal, as his agreement with Fraser and King that the British be self-sufficient made it impossible to accept Halsey's idea. Nimitz ordered Halsey to 'Operate TF 37 separately from TF 38 in fact as well as in name.' Nimitz was being rather legalistic in his view of his agreement with Admiral Fraser.

Halsey began a conference of naval leaders aboard his flagship by explaining that the strikes against the home islands were designed to weaken enemy resources before the invasion started. Then he gave Rawlings three options:

1 - The British could operate as a component element of the fleet; Halsey would provide them with the orders he gave his US detachments, which the British were strongly recommended to consider as 'suggestions.' That would allow the Allies to concentrate their power against the

Japanese and make the British ships for all practical purposes a task force under U.S. command.

2 - Rawlings could operate as a semi-independent force separated by 60 to 70 miles of ocean from U.S. ships.

3 - The Royal Navy could operate totally on its own.

Halsey recalls that Rawlings never hesitated in his response: 'Of course, I'll accept number 1.' The British admiral impressed Halsey. A British liaison officer assigned to Halsey's ship observed, 'The days conversation in the Third Fleet flagship could not have been more cordial and at their end the fleet commander sent for me to tell me how confident he felt about the prospects of cooperating with the British.' The Royal Navy officers he met with felt the same way. Vian stated later that Halsey 'showed he was fully aware of our difficulties, and from that moment onwards, by kindly word or deed, he availed himself of every possible opportunity to offer encouragement and to smooth our path'.)

At 0815 hours C.S. 4 assumed tactical command of TF 37 during the absence of CTF 37 and AC 1.

At 1040 hours destroyer USS FRANK KNOX closed KING GEORGE V to transfer correspondence and operation orders.

At 1050 hours to familiarize the Americans with the type of planes employed in the British Pacific Fleet, a 'recognition' flight of Seafires and Fireflies was flown over the ships of TF 38.

Noon position: 38-33N, 146-57E

At 1500 hours a 'recognition' flight, this time by American type planes, was flown over TF 37 by TF 38.

At 1515 hours CTF 37 and AC 1 returned on board Their respective flagships.

At 1600 hours TF 38 disengaged having completed oiling and with TF 37 in company set course for the flying off position (37-10N, 143-19E.).

(On 16/7/45 the Potsdam conference, code name TERMINAL, commenced, in which amongst other subjects, the future prosecution of the war against Japan was discussed. On this day also the USA carried out the first atomic bomb test at Alamogordo, New Mexico. On 17/7/45 President Truman receives a message from Los Alamos, New Mexico, 'Babies born successfully,' code words meaning the atomic bomb test was a complete success)

17th -

(The mission of the US third Fleet, of which the British Pacific Fleet [TF 37 comprising one battleship, four aircraft carriers, eight light cruisers and 18 destroyers,] was now an integral unit, was:

1 - To reduce enemy tactical air forces.

2 - To attack strategic targets on the mainland.

3 - To explore Japanese defences in northern Honshu and Hokkaido.

4 - To destroy Japanese shipping.

These operations were to soften up the Japanese defences and undermine military and civilian moral in preparation for Operation OLYMPIC, the invasion of Southern Kyushu)

At 0330 hours AC 1 assumed tactical control of TF 37 and the cruiser radar pickets were detached to their stations.

(The US third Fleet employed destroyers equipped with ADR Radar, known as Tomcats, as radar pickets. The BPF only had ADR [Aircraft Direction Radar which provided range, bearing and height and incorporated a large vertical circular map that was transparent and which was covered with grid references of 360°] in some of the cruisers; so these were used as radar pickets. Since the radar pickets operated at least 50 miles from TF 37 it meant they were not available for their main function of AA defence)

At 0350 hours, in low cloud and poor visibility, when TF 37 was approximately 250 miles north east of Tokyo the first Ramrod of Fireflies, armed with 60lb rockets from IMPLACABLE and Corsairs from VICTORIOUS took off to attack the airfields in the Miyagi Prefecture including Sendai and Matsushima. The Ramrod crossed into Japan at the mouth of the Abukuma river.

(A Ramrod was a combined fighter-bomber mission whose primary goal was the destruction of a ground target)

At 0630 hours a Seafire CAP was launched from the IMPLACABLE.

At 0830 hours, although the weather over Japan was good, in the launch area it had deteriorated such that all flying was cancelled.

In the afternoon KING GEORGE V and destroyers QUALITY and QUIBERON detached from TF 37.

The remainder of TF 37 with TF 38 moved off south easterly.

AC 1 assumed tactical control.

At 1700 hours KING GEORGE V, QUALITY and QUIBERON joined US Task Unit TU 34.8.2 comprising five battleships, two light cruisers, and ten destroyers under the command of Rear Admiral Oscar C. Badger USN, flying his flag in battleship USS IOWA, to bombard the heavily industrialized Mito-Hitachi area of Honshu. The weather was overcast with rain; visibility was three miles so the shoot was conducted by Radar. The aircraft carrier USS BON HOMME RICHARD, who had embarked AI radar-equipped Hellcats, provided a night CAP for TU 34.8.2.

At 2310 hours the bombardment commenced. No enemy opposition was encountered during the operation.

Battleships fired 1797 shells into the target area, of which KING GEORGE V contributed 267 x 14in shells and the five US battleships 1238 x 16" shells and 292 x 6" shells. Damage was caused to the Taga and Mito Works of Hitachi Manufacturing Company and the Yamate Plant and the copper refining plants of Hitachi Mine.

18th - At 0110 the bombardment ceased and KING GEORGE V, QUALITY and QUIBERON detached at high speed to rejoin TF 37.

The weather in the flying off area was slightly better than the previous day.

At 0530 hours the first aircraft from TF 37 flew off to carry out Ramrods against targets Northeast of Tokyo; the strike included the first Seafire Ramrod by 801 and 880 Sqds.

At 0730 hours KING GEORGE V, QUALITY and QUIBERON rejoined TF 37.

At the end of the day flying TF 37 moved off south easterly towards the replenishment area.

CTF 37 assumed tactical control.

19th - TF 37 en route to the replenishment area.

20th - Early in the morning, in approximate position 31N, 150E, TF 37 RVed with Task Unit TU 112.2.6 which comprised oilers RFA WAVE MONARCH, MV SAN AMBROSIO and MV SAN ADOLPHO, victualling stores issue ship MV GLENARTNEY 9795grt, 18 knots, escort carriers ARBITER and STRIKER with replacement aircraft and airframes, escorted by NAPIER, NIZAM, PHEASANT, WHIMBREL, REDPOLE, FINDHORN and GAWLER; following which replenishment of the vessels of TF 37 commenced.

INDEFATIGABLE, escorted by destroyers WRANGLER and WAKEFUL arrived with TU 112.2.6 to join TF 37.

Replenishment continued throughout the day with TF 37 steering a south westerly course.

At dusk TF 37 detached from TU 112.2.6.

21st - Early in the morning TF 37 RVed with Task Unit TU 112.2.6 and re-commenced replenishment.

Replenishment continued throughout the day with TF 37 steering a south westerly course.

At dusk TF 37 detached from TU 112.2.6.

22nd - Early in the morning TF 37 RVed with Task Unit TU 112.2.6 and re-commenced replenishment.

Replenishment continued throughout the day with TF 37 steering a south westerly course.

Destroyer NAPIER detached from TU 112 and joined TF 37.

At dusk TF 37 detached from TU 112.2.6 and steered north westerly at 23 knots towards the operational area off the island of Shikoku.

23rd - TF 37 en route to operational area.

24th - At 0300 hours AC 1 assumed tactical control.

At 0345 hours in approximate position 32N, 135E the CAP was flown off and first Ramrod launched against the port of Tokushima on the island of Shikoku, a well defended target with around 200 AA guns

During the course of the day 416 sorties were flown of which 260 were against targets in the Inland Sea and the Islands of Shikoku, Kyushu and Honshu. In these sorties a Firefly of 1772 Sqd was the first British aircraft to overfly Tokyo; and an Avenger of 848 Sqd became the first British aircraft to bomb Japan.

A Ramrod of six Avengers of 849 Sqd from VICTORIOUS, two Corsairs from FORMIDABLE and two Fireflies INDEFATIGABLE carried out a strike against shipping in Beppu Bay, Kyushu. During the sortie they located the escort carrier KAIYO 13600 tons, in the north of the bay and carried out an attack in which she was hit by bombs from the Avengers. KAIYO was seriously damaged and driven aground by her crew to prevent her sinking.

(This was the only attack on an enemy aircraft carrier carried out by the FAA in the war)

During the day the FAA had flown 131 CAP sorties and 284 Ramrod sorties dropping a total of 93 tons of bombs. At dusk all aircraft were recovered and CTF 37 assumed tactical command and TF 37 steered easterly.

25th - At 0300 hours AC 1 assumed tactical control.

At 0345 hours the CAP was flown off and first Ramrod was launched. The targets were the same as the day before. In the evening a group of bogies was intercepted approaching TF 37; they turned out to be Aichi B7A's, reporting name GRACE. Hellcats from FORMIDABLE intercepted the attackers, shooting down three and driving off the remainder.

At dusk, after all aircraft had been landed on, CTF 37 assumed tactical control and steered southerly towards the replenishment area, 'BRITISH TIZZY'.

26th - In the morning TF 37 RVed with Task Unit 112 which consisted of oilers HMS OLN 12660grt, 16 knots [the OLN was a new vessel and equipped for abeam refuelling], RFA's WAVE GOVERNOR 8190 grt, 15 knots and WAVE KING 8190 grt, 15 knots, MV CARELIA 8038 grt, 12 knots, and MV GLENARTNEY, ammunition issuing ship MV ROBERT MAERSK 2294 grt, 14 knots, stores issuing ship MV CORINDA 3376 grt, 12 knots, and escort carriers CHASER, RULER and SPEAKER, escorted by light cruiser ARGONAUT, destroyers NORMAN and NEPAL, sloops CRANE, PHEASANT, WOODCOCK and REDPOLE, frigates ODZANI and DERG and minesweeper HMAS PIRIE.

Following the RV the replenishment commenced.

KING GEORGE V refuelled from the OLN by the abeam method.

At dusk TF 37 detached from TU 112 for the night.

(26/7/45 the Potsdam declaration, which was an ultimatum demanding the immediate unconditional surrender of the armed forces of Japan, was agreed by the President of the United States, the President of the National Government of the Republic of China, and the Prime Minister of Great Britain. The declaration ran to 13 clauses. Clause 13 stated 'we call upon the Government of Japan to proclaim now the unconditional surrender of all the Japanese armed forces, and to provide proper and adequate assurances of their good faith in such action. The alternative for Japan is complete and utter destruction'. The declaration was passed to the Japanese ambassador in Switzerland on 27/7/45. The Japanese, however, ignored the ultimatum, prompting President Truman to approve plans to drop atomic weapons on Japan)

27th - In the morning replenishment re-commenced.

KING GEORGE V re-ammunitioned from ROBERT MAERSK embarking 94 x 14in shells and 155 cordite cases. This was the first time a RN battleship had re-ammunitioned with heavy calibre shells whilst under way.

ARGONAUT joined TF 37.

HMCS UGANDA detached from TF 37 for Pearl Harbour then Esquimalt.

(UGANDA detached from TF 37 and returned to Canada following the passing of Canadian legislation preventing service in Pacific by any personnel who had not volunteered for this duty)

At the end of replenishment TF 37 detached from TU 112 and steered north westerly back towards the operational area.

28th - At 0330 hours AC 1 assumed tactical control.

At 0400 hours, in approximate position 31-30N, 134E, the CAP was flown off and first Ramrod was launched. The targets were the port of Harima, attacked by 20 Avengers, and targets of opportunity, mainly in and around the Inland Sea. The naval base of Maizuru was attacked by fighters.

FAA aircraft sank coast defence ship No 4 in Ise Bay and the coast defence ship No 30 off Yura.

At dusk all aircraft were recovered and CTF 37 assumed tactical command.

29th - At 0330 hours AC 1 assumed tactical control.

At 0400 hours the CAP was flown off and first Ramrod was launched but was recalled when it was found that fog was obscuring the targets.

At 1200 hours KING GEORGE V screened by destroyers UNDINE, ULYSSES and URANIA, and designated Task Unit TU 37.1.2, detached from TF 37 and steered northerly to RV with the US Task Unit TU 34.8.1., to carry out a bombardment of the city of Hamamatsu.

(TU 34.8.1 was under the command of Rear Admiral John F Shafroth USN and consisted of battleships SOUTH DAKOTA, flag Rear Admiral Shafroth, MASSACHUSETTS, and

INDIANA, 4 heavy cruisers and 10 destroyers. Aircraft carrier BON HOMME RICHARD was attached to provide a CAP and spotter aircraft. The city of Hamamatsu was a transport hub, with several important armament factories, including the Nakajima aircraft factory, Suzuki Motors et al. The target for KING GEORGE V was the Japanese Musical Instrument Company which was manufacturing propellers)

Before the bombardment commenced, destroyers URANIA and ULYSSES were in collision in which the ULYSSES sustained slight damage

At 2319 hours 20075 yards from her target, KING GEORGE V opened fire; she fired 265 x 14in shells, of which only seven hit the target.

During the bombardment the UNDINE twice opened fire on small groups of ships, which were probably fishing boats.

At 2356 hours fire was checked and KING GEORGE V steered east the southerly to rejoin TF 37.

This was the last time KING GEORGE V or any other British battleship fired their main armament in 'anger'.

30th - At 0330 hours AC 1 assumed tactical control.

At 0400 hours the CAP was flown off and first Ramrod was launched but the first strike was again confronted by fog over the coast. The targets for the day were airfields around Tokyo and the Maizuru naval base.

At 0600 hours KING GEORGE V and destroyers UNDINE, ULYSSES and URANIA rejoined TF 37.

After the last aircraft had been recovered TF 37 set course southerly away from Honshu and towards the replenishment area. CTF 37 assumed tactical command.

31st - At 0900 hours TF 37 RVed with TU 112 which consisted of oilers HMS OLANA, RFA's WAVE GOVERNOR and WAVE KING and the MV CARELIA stores supply ships MV GLENARTNEY and MV CORINDA, ammunition issuing ship MV ROBERT MAERSK, escort carriers CHASER, RULER and SPEAKER, the corvette converted to a radar and radio maintenance ship HMNZS ARBUTUS, escorted by destroyers NORMAN and NEPAL, sloops CRANE, PHEASANT, WOODCOCK and REDPOLE, frigates ODZANI and DERG and minesweeper HMAS PIRIE, in replenishment area, BRITISH TIZZY.

When GAMBIA and ACHILLES came upon the ARBUTUS they gave her a rousing welcome.

At 1000 hours replenishment commenced. The weather in the area was less than ideal, with a heavy swell running caused by a succession of typhoons to the east of the area. However, because the British were now mastering replenishment at sea (RAS) the weather did not affect the operation as much as it would have done just a few weeks ago.

KING GEORGE V again refuelled by the abeam method and was able to take on fuel at 840 tons per hour. (KGV maximum fuel capacity 4100 tons, average capacity 3886 tons).

KING GEORGE V also re-ammunitioned, embarking 80 x 14in shells and 64 cordite cases from ROBERT MAERSK.

During the replenishment the Rear Admiral destroyers, Rear Admiral Edelsten was transferred by jackstay from BARFLEUR to the SPEAKER for passage back to Manus.

At dusk TF 37 detached from TU 112 for the night.

August

1st - In the morning TF 37 continued with replenishment from TU 112.

At dusk TF 37 detached from TU 112 for the night.

2nd - In the morning TF 37 continued with replenishment from TU 112.

At dusk TF 37 detached from TU 112 for the night.

3rd - In the morning TF 37 continued with replenishment from TU 112.

On completion of the RAS, TF 37 set course northerly for the operational area.

4th - En route to the operational area a special signal was received from Fleet Admiral Nimitz to all units of the US third Fleet ordering them to cease offensive strikes and stay at least 300 miles from the coast of Japan and sail northerly.

(During the day, destroyer USS BENHAM joined TF 37 she was carrying British Liaison Officers who had come to confer with Vice Admiral, Sir Bernard Rawlings about the

forthcoming dropping of the first A Bomb)

5th - Sailing north easterly.

(During the day the BENHAM detached from TF 37 as she was leaving Rawlings signalled, 'Very sorry to release the first American Man-of War I have had under my command')

6th -

(At approximately 0245 hours three B29 Superfortress' of the 509th Composite Group took off from the North Field airbase on the Island of Tinian. At 0815 hours over the city of Hiroshima [seaport, industrial centre and headquarters of the Japanese 2nd Army, position 34-23N, 132-26E] one of the B29's, Enola Gay, piloted by Colonel Paul Tibbets dropped the first uranium-based Atom Bomb, code named LITTLE BOY. The effect of the blast was the equivalent of 12700 tons of TNT, fires destroyed a built-up area of about four square miles and huge damage was done outside that area. An estimated 140,000 people died from either the direct, or indirect effects of the bomb)

At 0815 hours TF 37 was steering a north easterly course in approximate position 34-30N, 146E, they were 770 miles west of the explosion.

At 0900 hours TF 37 RVed with TU 112 which consisted of oilers RFA's WAVE KING and DINGLEDALE and MV SAN AMADO 7365grt, 12 knots, stores supply ships MV GLENARTNEY and SS FORT WRANGELL 7213grt, 10 knots, ammunition issuing ship MV ROBERT MAERSK, escort carriers ARBITER, CHASER and RULER, escorted by destroyers NORMAN and NIZAM, sloop PHEASANT, frigate BARLE and minesweepers HMAS BALLARAT and BURNIE.

At 1000 hours TF 37 commenced replenishment.

At dusk TF 37 detached from TU 112 for the night.

7th - In the morning TF 37 continued with replenishment from TU 112.

Destroyer NIZAM detached from TU 112 and joined TF 37.

In the late afternoon TF 37 detached from TU 112 and steered north westerly towards the operational area.

8th - On arrival at in the operational area the weather was unsuitable for flying operations so TF 37 turned south easterly seeking better weather.

Due to the weather conditions no offensive action was carried out.

(At 1700 hours Moscow time on 8/6/45 the Japanese ambassador to Russia, Naotake Sato was summoned to a meeting with the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, Vyacheslav Molotov. At the meeting he was informed that at 1800 hours Moscow time, midnight 8/8/45 Japanese time, the USSR would declare war on Japan. Within one hour of the meeting the Soviet army invaded Japanese-occupied Manchuria)

(On 8/8/45 Admiral Halsey circulated advanced copies of his Operation Plan 10-45 for the initial occupation of Japan and setting up Task Force 31, the Yokosuka Occupation Force. The plan included a symbolic British Force comprised of seamen and Royal Marines)

9th - At 0330 hours AC 1 assumed tactical control.

At 0400 hours in approximate position 38-35N, 144-12E the first CAP and Ramrods were launched. The target of the first Ramrod was the port of Matsushima.

At 0500 hours TF 37 was in approximate position 39N, 145-30E and steering west south westerly when GAMBIA (flag Rear Admiral Eric James Patrick Brind), NEWFOUNDLAND and destroyers TENACIOUS, TERMAGANT and TERPSICHORE, forming Task Unit TU 37.1.8, detached from TF 37 to RV with US Task Unit TU 38.8.1. Whilst flying over Onagawa Bay, a Ramrod led by Lieutenant Grey RCNVR, sighted a number of Japanese ships and dived in to attack. Furious fire was opened on the aircraft from army batteries on the ground and from warships in the Bay.

At 0920 hours Lt Robert Hampton 'Hammy' Gray flying Corsair Mk IV KD658 115/X, from 1841 Squadron on FORMIDABLE selected for his target an enemy warship. He swept in oblivious of the concentrated fire and made straight for his target. His aircraft was hit and hit again, one bomb was shot off and the airplane caught fire, but he kept on. He pressed on to within fifty feet of the Japanese ship and let go his bomb. He scored a direct hit, hitting the AMAKUSA below the No. 2 gun platform and penetrating into the engine room before exploding. His target, the escort AMAKUSA, of the Etorofu Class, 870 tons, 3 x 4.7" and 4 x 25mm, sank almost immediately in position 38-

26N, 141-28E, with the loss of 71 crew. Lieutenant Gray did not return from the mission.

(On August 31, 1945, Lt. Hampton Gray was officially awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, and on November 13, 1945, he was further awarded the Victoria Cross. This was only the second VC awarded to the FAA in the whole war)

GAMBIA, NEWFOUNDLAND and destroyers TENACIOUS, TERMAGANT and TERPSICHORE forming TU 37.1.8 RVed with US TU 38.8.1 to carry out a bombardment of the Japan steel works and docks at Kamaishi.

(TU 34.8.1 was under the command of Rear Admiral John F Shafroth USN and consisted of battleships SOUTH DAKOTA, flag Rear Admiral Shafroth, MASSACHUSETTS, and INDIANA, heavy cruisers CHICAGO, BOSTON, QUINCY and SAINT PAUL and 10 destroyers. US aircraft maintained a CAP over the force)

At 1254 hours from an average range of 14,000 yards, the force opened fire. They made four passes and in total fired 803 x 16" shells, 1,383 x 8" shells and 733 x 6" shells. The bombardment caused more damage than the July bombardment and large quantities of pig iron were destroyed. The sounds of the bombardment were broadcast live on radio in the U.S.

At 1450 hours the bombarding force checked fire and departed from the scene to return to their respective Task Forces.

During the retirement TU 37.1.8 was attacked by enemy aircraft, which were engaged by the ships of the Task Unit. GAMBIA was credited with shooting one down.

(At 0349 hours three B29 Superfortress' of the 509th Composite Group took off from the North Field airbase on the Island of Tinian. The first B29 to take off was Bockscar piloted by Major Charles "Chuck" Sweeney; this aircraft was carrying a Plutonium atomic bomb code named Fat Man. The other two B29's were the Great Artiste and the Big Stink; both were carrying recording instruments, but Big Stink also carried two British observers, Group Captain Leonard Cheshire VC and Professor William G. Penney.

At 0910 hours Bockscar reached the RV and immediately spotted Great Artiste. The Big Stink was nowhere in sight. The two aircraft then circled for 40 minutes waiting for the Big Stink which failed to show.

At 0950 hours, Bockscar and The Great Artiste finally head in the direction of Kokura. The Big Stink was nowhere to be seen. The additional 30 minutes that Bockscar and the Great Artiste took to wait ended up costing the mission clear, visual bombing conditions over Kokura. These crucial minutes saved Kokura from utter destruction and placed Nagasaki forever in the history books.

At 1020 hours the two B29's arrive over Kokura. They found that visibility over the city was obscured by clouds and smog. Sweeney's orders were specific in that the atomic bomb had to be dropped visually on the target.

At 1132 hours Sweeney made the decision to reduce power to conserve fuel and head for secondary target, Nagasaki, 95 miles to the south.

At 1156 hours Bockscar and the Great Artiste arrive over Nagasaki.

At 1202 hours Fat Man explodes with a force of 22,000 tons of TNT. Three shock waves were felt by both planes. Approximately 40% of Nagasaki was destroyed and out a population of 270,000, approximately 70,000 people were dead by the end of the year.

Although the Big Stink missed the RV Group, Captain Cheshire and Professor Penney did see the Nagasaki detonation from the air at a distance)

At 1202 hours, the time of the explosion TF 37 was approximately 880 miles to the north east of Nagasaki. During the day the aircraft of TF 37 flew 137 CAP sorties and 258 Ramrod sorties dropping 105 tons of bombs. At dusk following recovery of all aircraft CTF 37 assumed tactical control.

At approximately 2100 hours GAMBIA, NEWFOUNDLAND and destroyers TENACIOUS, TERMAGANT and TERPSICHORE rejoined TF 37.

10th - At 0330 hours AC 1 assumed tactical control.

(At 0230 hours The Japanese Supreme War Guidance Council held a meeting. After the meeting their readiness to accept the Potsdam Declaration was transmitted to the US Government through the neutral Governments of Switzerland and Sweden. The official reply of the US

Government was received on the 13/8/45, but the Japanese learned the purport of the reply from a San Francisco broadcast on the 12/8/45. The Supreme War Guidance Council reconvened on the 13/8/45 and continued the meeting until late at night, discussing the American reply)

At 0400 hours the first CAP was launched.

At 0500 hours the first Ramrod was launched. The target was shipping in Onagawa Bay, and targets of opportunity in northern Honshu.

During the day aircraft of TF 37 flew 132 CAP sorties and 227 Ramrod sorties dropping 90 tons of bombs.

At dusk all aircraft were recovered and CTF 37 assumed tactical command.

TF 37 withdrew to the east for replenishment.

11th - En route to replenishment area.

12th - In the morning TF 37 RVed with TU 112 and turned on to a south westerly course and commenced replenishment.

(During the British Pacific Fleet's operations against the Japanese, Replenishment at Sea - RAS - was always a problem; but by mid August the supply situation had become critical. Also it had been planned that by mid August the BPF would return to Manus and if necessary to their main base at Sydney for repair, re-supply and rest. However, the indications were that the Japanese may well be about to surrender and Rawlings wanted to keep at least a token British Force in the area.

Admiral Nimitz' orders specified that the Allied fleets were to continue pressure on Japan until the 13/8/45, a problem for both Halsey's Third Fleet and Rawlings' TF 37. Halsey's fleet needed resupply and rest, both of which could not be had at sea, and Rawlings' force was scheduled to return to Manus on the 10th.

Halsey's Third Fleet though didn't have any RAS problems since the USN had now built up a large and sustainable Fleet Train. In the event both Halsey and Rawlings compromised, Halsey retained most of the Third Fleet off Japan and Rawlings would keep a token force on station that would refuel from the US Fleet Train)

At dusk TF 37 detached from TU 112 for the night

13th - In the morning TF 37 RVed with TU 112 and commenced replenishment.

Mid morning, FORMIDABLE, VICTORIOUS, IMPLACABLE, BLACK PRINCE, EURYALUS, ACHILLES, GRENVILLE, UNDINE, URANIA, URCHIN, ULYSSES, QUIBERON, QUICKMATCH, QUALITY and QUADRANT detached from TF 37 and set course for Manus.

KING GEORGE V refuelled from US oiler the USS SABINE 7470 grt, 18 knots. Whilst KING GEORGE V was along side SABINE, battleship USS MISSOURI (Flag of Admiral Halsey) went alongside the other side and as Halsey stated in his memoirs. 'I went across to 'the Cagey Five' as we called her, on an aerial trolley, just to drink a toast with Vice Admiral Rawlings.'

On completion of replenishment the remaining units of TF 37, namely, KING GEORGE V, INDEFATIGABLE, GAMBIA, NEWFOUNDLAND, BARFLEUR, TROUBRIDGE, TENACIOUS, TERMAGANT, TERPSICHORE, TEAZER, NAPIER, NIZAM, WAKEFUL and WRANGLER were re-designated TG 38.5 and were fully integrated into the US Third Fleet, under the command of Vice Admiral John S McClain USN.

Around midday TG 38.5 turned on to a south easterly course.

During the day aircraft from INDEFATIGABLE carried out 21 Ramrod sorties against targets in the Tokyo area.

They also flew 42 CAP sorties.

14th - TG 38.5 steering south westerly.

(Early in the morning US aircraft dropped leaflets over Japan containing the Allied peace proposals; up to this time the Japanese population were not aware of these proposals. When this event was brought to the Emperors attention, fearing a backlash by the Japanese military, Hirohito convened an immediate meeting with Suzuki and his government. Following the meeting Hirohito asked the Swiss government to relay to the Allies a message stating that he had issued an Imperial Rescript that denoted Japanese acceptance of the provisions of the Potsdam Declaration. The message also stated that he was ordering his commanders to cease fire and to surrender their forces, and to issue such orders as might be required by representatives of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, General MacArthur. The

decision to accept the Potsdam Declaration and agreeing to surrender was broadcast by Domei Tsushinsha, the Japanese Federated News Agency)

At midday TG 38.5 was in approximate position 33-30N, 144E at which point they turned westerly and steered WNW towards Honshu.

(At 1900 hours, President Truman announced that a cease fire was in effect, and that the war was over)

15th - TG 38.5 steering WNW towards Honshu.

Early in the morning INDEFATIGABLE was authorised to carry out a strike against kamikazes on Kisarazu airfield, 30 miles south of Tokyo.

Three Seafires of 887 and four Seafires of 894 Squadrons were assigned as escorts to six Avengers of 820 Squadron and four Fireflies of 1772 Squadron, for the dawn strike.

At 0545 hours when the Ramrod was over Odaki Bay, they were jumped by ten Mitsubishi A6M5 (Zeke) and four Mitsubishi J2M Raidens (Jack) of the 302nd Kokutai. In the ensuing dogfight, the Seafires claimed seven shot down, three probable's and four damaged. While this was a confused action with some US Navy Hellcats flying nearby also joining in, it is very possible that Sub-Lieutenant Gerry Murphy, who destroyed two Zeros, fired the last shots of the final dogfight of the Second World War. One Seafire and an Avenger were lost. The pilot of the Seafire, Sub Lt Fred Hockley RNVR, was captured and executed after the cease fire.

At 0900 hours Admiral Nimitz signalled all US naval forces including TG 38.5, 'Japan has surrendered, cease all offensive actions, take all war time precautions for defence'.

Admiral William F. Halsey's cease fire order to the US Third Fleet, which included TG 38.5 was memorable, he signalled, 'It now gives me great pleasure to order all units of Magnolia (code name for TF 38) to cease fire. However, fire on all enemy planes, not vindictively, but in a friendly sort of way.'

At 1120 hours KING GEORGE V signalled TG 38.5 with a flag hoist 'End Hostilities and splice the Mainbrace', this was just after INDEFATIGABLE had recovered her aircraft. As the signal was being hoisted a Japanese Yokosuka D4Y Judy aircraft came out of cloud and headed straight for INDEFATIGABLE. Fortunately he was followed by a US Corsair from the TF 38 CAP that shot him down and he splashed between INDEFATIGABLE and GAMBIA with bits of the crashed plane falling on GAMBIA.

Following this incident, all forces remained alert and CAP's were continued.

During the day 47 CAP sorties were flown.

16th - TG 38.5 remained on patrol approximately 150 miles southeast of Tokyo, replenishing as necessary from the USN Fleet Train.

Vice Admiral Rawlings addressed the ships companies of TG 38.5; his speech was also broadcast to the US Third Fleet.

(On 16/8/45 the Admiralty sent the following message to all British naval vessels:

'The surrender of the Japanese Empire brings to an end six years of achievement in war unsurpassed in the long history and high tradition of the Royal Navy.

The phase of naval warfare which came to an end three months ago enriched the record of British sea power by such epic actions and campaigns as the Battle of the Atlantic, the domination of the Mediterranean, the maintenance of the Russian supply lines and the great combined operations of 1943 and 1944. The world wide story is completed with the inspired work by sea and air of the British Pacific Fleet and the East Indies Fleet. The Board are deeply conscious of the difficulty and novelty of the problems facing the British Pacific Fleet, the patience and skill with which they were overcome, and the great contribution in offensive power made by the Task Force operating with our American Allies. No less memorable is the work of the East Indies Fleet in the protection of India and Ceylon and in operational support of the Burma campaign,

At this moment our eyes are turned to the Far East and it is fitting to recall in remembrance those who gave their lives in the days of disaster in 1941 and 1942. To their relatives and to the relatives of all officers and men of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines and of the Naval Forces of the Commonwealth and Empire and of all in Admiralty service who have paid the full price of victory, the Board extend their profound sympathy.)

17th - TG 38.5 remained on patrol approximately 150 miles south east of Tokyo.

18th - Off the south coast of the Island of Honshu, TG 38.5 was joined by battleship DUKE OF YORK (Flag CinC

BPF Admiral Frazer) and destroyers WAGER and WHELP.

19th - TG 38.5 remained on patrol off Honshu.

(On 19/8/45 Japanese delegates lead by Lt Gen T. Kawabe, who had become Vice Chief of the General Staff in April, plus fifteen other members arrived in Manila to discuss the surrender arrangements with General MacArthur. These arrangements included the entry of Allied warships into Tokyo Bay and for naval and marine forces to land in the vicinity of Yokosuka Naval Base on L-Day, which was scheduled for 26/8/45)

20th - TG 38.5 carried out a RAS.

(Mid morning the high speed transports USS BAR, SIMMS and PAVLIC commenced the embarkation of British and Commonwealth seamen and Royal Marines who were to form the token Commonwealth force to be landed in Japan on L Day. BARR embarked approximately 160 from KING GEORGE V and GAMBIA, the SIMMS approximately 100 from NAPIER, NIZAM and GAMBIA and the PAVLIC 160 from GAMBIA and NEWFOUNDLAND)

(L-Day had been originally scheduled for 26/8/45 but on 20/8/45, a threatening typhoon forced Admiral Halsey to postpone the landing date until 28/8/45. Allied ships were to enter Sagami Wan, the vast outer bay, on L minus 2. On 25/8/45, word was received from General MacArthur that the anticipated typhoon would delay Army air operations for 48 hours, and L-Day was consequently set for 30/8/45 and the entry of the Sagami Wan ordered for the 28/8/45)

23rd - In preparation for entry in Tokyo Bay, KING GEORGE V, INDEFATIGABLE, GAMBIA, NEWFOUNDLAND, BARFLEUR, TROUBRIDGE, TENACIOUS, TERMAGANT, TERPSICHORE, TEAZER, NAPIER, NIZAM, WAKEFUL and WRANGLER were re-designated TF 37. DUKE OF YORK, WAGER and WHELP were designated TG 30.2

26th -

(With the typhoon imminent in the area of the Third Fleet operations and with the losses that incurred in the typhoon of 18/12/44 in mind; Halsey was not anxious to keep his ships, many of them small vessels crowded with troops, at sea in typhoon weather, and he asked and received permission from MacArthur to put into Sagami Wan one day early. Therefore the entry into Sagami Wan was bought forward to 27/8/45 and L-Day became 29/8/45)

27th -

(To facilitate the safe entry of the Allied Fleet into Sagami Wan, the Japanese were ordered to provide pilots. At 0800 hours the Japanese destroyer HATSUKAKURA with two Japanese emissaries, six interpreters, and thirteen pilots embarked, arrived off Sagami Wan and was met by destroyer USS NICHOLAS. The pilots were transferred to the NICHOLAS who then distributed them around the Allied Fleet; the pilots for the British ships were embarked on the WHELP. The Japanese emissaries were taken to meet with Rear Admiral Robert B. Carney, Halsey's Chief of Staff, and Admiral Badger on board MISSOURI to receive instructions for the surrender of the Yokosuka Naval Base and to guide the first Allied ships into anchorages. A problem that became apparent during the meeting concerned the sweeping of mines in the Uraga Strait at the entrance to Tokyo Bay. The Japanese had been warned as early as 15/8/45 to begin minesweeping in the waters in Tokyo Bay to facilitate the operations of the US Third Fleet. They said a lack of suitable minesweepers had prevented them from clearing Sagami Wan and Tokyo Bay)

In the morning TF 37 and TG 30.2 together with the US Third Fleet, guided by the local pilots, anchored in Sagami Wan. All ships were on the alert and ready for any treacherous move on the part of the Japanese, and battle ensigns were flown, but the entry was without incident.

KING GEORGE V had been continuously at sea for 52 days (since 6 July) and had steamed a total of 19,200 miles, a record for an RN battleship.

All the aircraft carriers, except USS COWPENS, remained out at sea ready to launch air strikes if there was any sign of Japanese treachery.

COWPENS and DesDiv 99 were detached to form TG 35.1.6, which conducted flight operations immediately off Sagami Wan during the afternoon.

(At sunset there was a strange phenomenon. The setting sun appeared to descend squarely into the crater of Mount Fujiyama, the spectacle had such symbolism that anyone with a camera endeavoured to get photographs of it because it clearly told of Japan's fate)

INDEFATIGABLE and destroyers BARFLEUR, TROUBRIDGE, TENACIOUS, TERMAGANT, TERPSICHORE, TEAZER, WAKEFUL and WRANGLER remained at sea with TF 58 off the Japanese coast to the east of Tokyo, with her aircraft ready to respond to any Japanese treachery.

(In the evening two British POW's hailed one of the US Third Fleet picket boats from the shore of Sagami Wan. They were picked up and taken on board light cruiser USS SAN JUAN, the command ship of a specially constituted Allied Prisoner of War Rescue Group. Their harrowing tales of life in the prison camps and of the extremely poor physical condition of the prisoners prompted Admiral Halsey to order the rescue group to stand by for action on short notice)

28th - At anchor in Sagami Wan.

(At about 0630 hours, US minesweepers REVENGE, TOKEN, TUMULT and POCHARD entered Uraga Strait and commenced to sweep north up the channel. The REVENGE thus became the first Allied ship to enter Tokyo Bay.

At 0900 hours the minesweeping force was followed into Uraga Strait by TG 31, the Yokosuka Naval Base occupation force. TG 31 comprised light cruiser USS SAN DIEGO (Flag Rear Admiral Oscar C. Badger USN), destroyers USS SOUTHERLAND, STOCKHAM, TWINING, YARNALL and WEDDERBURN and high speed transport USS GOSSELIN with photographers and members of the press embarked.

At 1300 hours TG 31 anchored off Yokosuka. The Japanese Base commander Vice Admiral Michitaro Totsuka then reported aboard the SAN DIEGO and in conference with Rear Admiral Badger they completed the necessary arrangements for the actual occupation of the naval base)

29th - L-Day

At 0500 hours TF 37 and TG 30.2 prepared to get under way from Sagami Wan to enter Tokyo Bay.

At 0545 hours TG 30.1 comprising USS MISSOURI (Flag Admiral Halsey) screened by destroyers USS NICHOLAS, TAYLOR and O'BANNON entered Uraga Strait and proceeded into Tokyo Bay. TG 30.1 anchored off Yokosuka at 0920 hours.

At 0555 hours TG 30.2 comprising DUKE OF YORK (Flag CinC BPF) and destroyers WAGER and WHELP entered Uraga Strait and proceeded into Tokyo Bay.

(There was a strong feeling among the crews of the ships of the British Pacific Fleet that DUKE OF YORK, who had not fired a shot in anger in the Pacific, should *not* have the honour of leading the Fleet into Tokyo Bay)

The US TF 35 (including TG 35.90 Support Force) followed TG 30.1.

At 0620 hours TF 37 comprising KING GEORGE V (Flag Vice Admiral 2ic BPF), GAMBIA, NEWFOUNDLAND, NAPIER and NIZAM entered Uraga Strait and proceeded into Tokyo Bay. TF 37 anchored off Yokosuka at 1030 hours.

(As the Allied ships were entering Tokyo Bay they were covered by an air umbrella of hundreds of planes from the TF 38 carriers off shore. Even larger numbers of US land-based fighters and bombers from Okinawa and Iwo Jima patrolled the skies over the Japanese homeland)

(The evacuation of POWs had been taken over as the function of the Supreme Commander General MacArthur. However the TF 38 carrier aircraft surveillance flights carried out at tree-top height with cameras had brought out a tremendous amount of detailed information about the conditions and health, etc of the Allied POW's. Therefore Admiral Halsey wanted to commence the recovery and evacuation at the earliest opportunity. But MacArthur had not approved the Navy's initial offer to start the evacuation as early as possible. However, the vast resources of the fleet hospital ships, evacuation vessels, food, clothing etc, were ready to swing into action. In the hope that the Navy would get the go ahead to at least initiate action around the waterfront, Admiral Halsey included the hospital ship USS BENEVOLENCE with the first

group of ships to enter Tokyo Bay)

(At 1200 hours following news of the condition of Allied POW's Fleet Admiral Nimitz authorized Halsey to begin POW rescue operations immediately.

At 1420/29/8/45 Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz arrived in Sagami Wan from US Naval Air Base, Tanapag, Saipan, in a PB2Y Coronado seaplane. After landing he boarded battleship USS SOUTH DAKOTA which then became his flagship. After Nimitz embarked, she got under way and entered Tokyo Bay)

(At 1300 hours light cruiser USS SAN JUAN, high speed transports USS GOSSELIN and REEVES and hospital ship USS BENEVOLENCE set course for the Omori POW camp which was situated on an artificial island off Tokyo. When the Americans arrived at the camp they found conditions unspeakable with evidence of brutality and wretched treatment. Under the command of Commodore Rodger W. Simpson USN they commenced immediate evacuation of the approximate 620 Allied inmates, of which about 230 were British, to BENEVOLENCE. The Americans also moved on to other camps in the Tokyo-Yokohama area.

At approximately 1910 hours the first RAMPs (Recovered Allied Military Personnel) arrived on board BENEVOLENCE and by midnight 739 men had been brought out.)

30th - At anchor in Tokyo Bay.

(The mission of the Fleet Landing Force, TG 31.3, that contained approximately 3000 seamen and marines from the US Third Fleet, 5400 marines of the US 4th Marines and approximately 420 British and Commonwealth seamen and marines; was to seize and demilitarize the Island Forts in the Uraga Strait and to seize and occupy Yokosuka Naval Base.

The landings had been based on an H-Hour for the main landing by the US 11th Airborne Division of 1000 hours, but last-minute word was received from MacArthur early on 30/8/45 that the first serials of 11th Airborne Division would be landing at Atsugi airfield at 0600 hours. Consequently, to preserve the value and impact of simultaneous Army-Navy operations, H-Hour was bought forward to 0930 hours)

At 0900 hours the first British Troops, seamen and marines, landed from USS PAVLIC at Fort 4 at the entrance to Tokyo Bay. PAVLIC then moved on to Fort 2 where British troops landed at 1015 hours. At both Forts the white surrender flag was flying and a small group of soldiers were standing near the landing ramp with a surrender flag. The surrender of the Forts was supposed to be to the British, but the Japanese would only surrender to the Americans, so the Stars and Stripes were raised by the British landing party. The landing parties found coastal guns had been rendered ineffective and the few Japanese remaining as guides and interpreters amazed the British with their cooperativeness.

At 1040 hours USS SIMMS landed her ANZAC troops on the island of Azuma Shima, which had been extensively tunnelled for use as a small boat supply base. Captain Buchanan RAN, CO of the NAPIER and Captain (D7) was the first ashore and accepted the surrender of the Island from the Japanese Naval Commander, who had been in charge of the base stores.

At 1100 hours the USS BAR landed D Company, four Platoons from KING GEORGE V and one from the GAMBIA, of the British Landing Force at Yokosuka Naval Base. The landing force was under the command of Lieutenant-Commander Davis-Goff RNZN from GAMBIA and he took the surrender of that section of the Azuma Shima base from Commander Yuzo Tanno, officer-in-charge of naval stores.

In the afternoon USS PAVLIC re-embarked the British Landing Force from the island forts, and with evacuated Japanese personnel, landed them at the Navigation School in the Yokosuka naval base. The landing force then took over the area between Azuma Shima and the area controlled by D Company.

(At 1030 hours USS SAN DIEGO (Flag Rear Admiral Oscar C. Badger USN) tied up alongside in the Yokosuka Naval Base and Rear Admiral Badger accepted the surrender of the Naval Base from the Japanese Base commander Vice Admiral Michitaro Totsuka)

(When Admiral Fraser was informed that evacuated British POW's were on board BENEVOLENCE he embarked on

WHELP and took passage to her. On board BENEVOLENCE he spoke with the POW's and learned of the conditions they had endured during their captivity. Admiral Fraser having listened to their grim stories was clearly affected by what he had seen and heard. When he returned to the DUKE OF YORK he was mad at the Japanese for their treatment of the POW's)

Escort carrier **SPEAKER** and frigate **DERG** arrived in Tokyo Bay from Manus. **SPEAKER** was without aircraft, having flown off all her aircraft to **INDEFATIGABLE** and **RULER**. She was however the first aircraft carrier to enter Tokyo Bay.

SPEAKER was to be used for the evacuation of British and Commonwealth POW's.

Within minutes of **SPEAKER** dropping anchor off the Omori POW camp, landing craft from the **USS GOSSELIN** came alongside to disembark POW's.

31st - At anchor in Tokyo Bay.

During the day heavy cruiser **HMAS SHROPSHIRE**, light cruiser **HMAS HOBART** and destroyers **HMAS WARRAMUNGA** and **BATAAN** arrived in Tokyo Bay.

(On board **USS MISSOURI** Admiral Halsey's flagship, preparations were underway to host the formal surrender ceremonies on 2/9/45. **MISSOURI** had been selected since she was named after President Truman's home state)

September

1st - At anchor in Tokyo Bay.

2nd - At anchor in Tokyo Bay.

(The surrender ceremony took place on **USS MISSOURI**, which was anchored in berth F 71, Tokyo Bay. It commenced at 0902 hours with an introductory statement by General MacArthur after which he directed the representatives of Japan to sign the two Instruments of Surrender. At 0904 hours Foreign Minister Shigemitsu signed, followed two minutes later by General Umezu. General MacArthur then led the Allied delegations in signing, first Fleet Admiral Nimitz as United States Representative, then the representatives of China, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, Australia, Canada, France, The Netherlands and New Zealand.

The chairs that the delegates sat on were supplied from **DUKE OF YORK**.

At 0914 hours Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser signed for the United Kingdom;

General Sir Thomas Blamey signed for Australia;

Colonel Lawrence Moore Cosgrave signed for Canada;

Air Vice Marshall Leonard M. Isitt signed for New Zealand.

Following a few brief remarks by MacArthur, the ceremonies concluded at 0925 hours.

During the surrender ceremony a massive flight of Hellcats and Corsairs from the US Task Group 38.1, which was cruising off the south coast of Honshu Island, flew overhead)

3rd - At 1300 hours **SPEAKER** escorted by **DERG** with **RFA WAVE KING** in company sailed from off Omori POW camp with 477 British and Commonwealth **RAMPs** embarked. **SPEAKER** was the first vessel to sail down Tokyo Bay with **RAMPs**. Every ship she passed had cleared the lower deck and their crews were on the deck cheering and waving.

At 1400 hours **SPEAKER** sailed passed **KING GEORGE V** from whom she received a tremendous round of cheering.

5th - **KING GEORGE V** and the remainder of the British Pacific Fleet reverted to RN control.

8th - **KING GEORGE V** provided a Royal Marine detachment to mount a guard at the British Embassy in Tokyo.

17th - The Union Flag was formally hoisted over the British Embassy in Tokyo by a Marine from cruiser **NEWFOUNDLAND** who's Royal Marine detachment had relieved the Marine guard provided by **KING GEORGE V**.

Post War Notes

HMS KING GEORGE V remained in the Far East as part of the Pacific Fleet after the surrender. During the immediate post war period the ship was deployed in support of the allied forces in Japan and visited Melbourne for an R&R period in late 1945. She took passage to UK from Hobart in January 1946 with a call at Cape Town the next month. After arrival at Portsmouth on 6th March she became Flagship of the Home Fleet until 1950 when placed in Reserve. Laid up in the Gareloch she was never re-commissioned and was placed on the Disposal List in 1957. Sold to **BISCO** for demolition by Arnott Young she was towed to Dalmuir on the Clyde to be de-equipped on 20th

January 1958. Demolition was completed at Troon where she arrived during May 1959.

Addendum

CONVOY ESCORT MOVEMENTS of HMS KING GEORGE V by Don Kindell

These convoy lists have not been cross-checked with the text above

Date convoy sailed	Joined convoy as escort	Convoy No.	Left convoy	Date convoy arrived
21/01/41	21/01/41	BHX 104	04/02/41	09/02/41
17/03/41	20/03/41	HX 115	28/03/41	03/04/41
01/03/42	06/03/42	PQ 012	10/03/42	12/03/42
10/03/42	22/03/42	PQ 013	28/03/42	31/03/42
21/03/42	22/03/42	QP 009	28/03/42	03/04/42
26/03/42	12/04/42	PQ 014	18/04/42	19/04/42
10/04/42	12/04/42	QP 010	18/04/42	21/04/42
10/04/42	28/04/42	PQ 015	02/05/42	05/05/42
28/04/42	28/04/42	QP 011	02/05/42	07/05/42
15/12/42	19/12/42	JW 051A	22/12/42	25/12/42
30/12/42	31/12/42	RA 051	03/01/43	11/01/43
15/02/43	24/02/43	JW 053	26/02/43	27/02/43
01/03/43	04/03/43	RA 053	05/03/43	14/03/43

(Note on Convoys)

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