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BATTLE SUMMARY No. 13

ACTIONS WITH ENEMY DISGUISED RAIDERS

1940-1941

1942
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Attention is called to the penalties attaching to any infraction of the Official Secrets Acts.

C.B. 3081 (5)

BATTLE SUMMARY No. 13

ACTIONS WITH ENEMY DISGUISED RAIDERS 1940-1941

1942

TRAINING AND STAFF DUTIES DIVISION
(HISTORICAL SECTION),
NAVAL STAFF,
ADMIRALTY.

(T.S.D. 965/42)
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[Note.—For list of Battle Summaries, issued or in preparation, see page 3 of cover.]
INTRODUCTION

1. This Battle Summary deals with eight actions fought with enemy merchant ship raiders up to the end of 1941. During this period of 28 months Axis merchant ship raiders sank one British cruiser, one armed merchant cruiser, and 618,108 tons of merchant shipping.* Their own losses were three out of the seven identified during that period, and two other ships, which were probably supply ships.

These figures may be compared with those of the last war. In 1914-18, 51 months, ten armed merchant raiders sank 427,433 tons out of a total of 12,741,781 tons, or 3.3 per cent. Of the ten raiders, four were sunk, three were interned, one was wrecked, and two got back to Germany.

The action between the Sydney and Kormoran off the west coast of Australia on 19th November, 1941, may be compared with that between the Alcantara and Greif on 28th February, 1916, in the North Sea. The Alcantara, approaching within torpedo range, was torpedoed, but before she sank she opened a heavy fire on the Greif and sent her to the bottom.

The principal lesson to be drawn from the Alcantara’s action was the necessity of keeping well out of torpedo range. After the armed boarding steamer Ramsey had been torpedoed by the disguised minelayer Meteor in the Moray Firth on 8th August, 1915, the Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Jellicoe, issued an order warning ships to approach suspected vessels on the quarter and to avoid bearings on which torpedoes could be fired; also that the Master of the suspected ship should be required to bring his papers on board in his own boat.†

THE “ALCANTARA’S” ACTION, 28th JULY, 1940

2. On 15th July, 1940, H.M.S. Hawkins, flying the flag of Rear-Admiral Sir Henry Harwood, K.C.B., O.B.E., Rear-Admiral, South America Division, entered Montevideo for a 24-hour visit. Next day she sailed to patrol the Plate area. There had been recent indications that an enemy raider was in the North Atlantic, and on 17th July a report reached the Admiral that D/F bearings had placed a German vessel to the westward of the Cape Verde Islands on the 15th. This information, coupled with earlier reports of unidentified vessels off the coast of Ireland, indicated that a possible raider was bound for the South Atlantic. Admiral Harwood therefore ordered the armed merchant cruiser Alcantara,§ Captain J. G. P. Ingham, R.N., which was patrolling the Rio de Janeiro-Santos area, to patrol off Pernambuco, while the Hawkins moved up to the Rio-Santos area. To protect the important focal area of the Plate against a raid the Admiral intended to move both ships back to their original patrol areas by the time that the anticipated raider would be well to the southward of Pernambuco on the assumption that she was proceeding direct to the Plate at economical speed.

Next day, 18th July, the Admiral received news of the sinking by a raider in the West Indies area, on or about 13th July, of two British ships, the Davie
and King John, and of the sailing of the German tanker Rekum from Teneriffe on 17th July. It seemed very probable that the oiler intended to refuel the raider, and from 19th to 21st July the Hawkins patrolled off Rio. By 22nd July Admiral Harwood estimated that if the raider had come south from the position given by the D/F bearing on the 15th she would be south of the latitude of Pernambuco, and shortly after 4.30 p.m. he ordered the Alcantara, which had reached the Pernambuco area on the 20th, to proceed south to examine Trinidad Island, as this island had occasionally been used by German raiders in the last war. She was subsequently to patrol an area south-west of Trinidad at a distance of over 250 miles from the South American coast.

On the 23rd the Hawkins snelled from the Arnside north-east of Sao Sebastiao Island, and then patrolled the British shipping routes off the South American coast between Rio de Janeiro and the Plate. On 23rd July Admiral Harwood learned that a German submarine had sunk a Norwegian tanker near the Cape Verde Islands on the 18th. Clearly it was this submarine, and not a raider, that had been located by D/F on the 15th. Further reports from the West Indies, however, and the fact that three ships were overdue at Freetown, indicated the probability of there being one raider in the West Indies and another in the South Atlantic. During the 26th and 27th, therefore, the Hawkins continued patrolling the British shipping routes between Rio and the Plate.

During the forenoon of 26th July the Alcantara inspected the Island of Trinidad, and at noon next day was in 23° 25' S., 31° 47' W. At 10 a.m. on the 28th she was in 24° 39' S., 33° 7' W., steering N. 75° E. at 15 knots and then to full speed. By noon she was doing 20 knots and by 1 p.m. nearly 22. The day was fine and clear with a light breeze from the south-east. At 2 p.m., when the Alcantara was in 24° 3' S., 31° 56' W., the unknown vessel altered course to starboard, and, hoisting the German ensign, opened fire with a two-gun salvo at 16,000 yards, 2,000 yards beyond the unknown vessel's starboard. She altered course to intercept, but when the range had closed to 23,000 yards the unknown ship turned momentarily towards her and then turned away. The Alcantara, which had previously closed to 9,800 yards, was opening.

By 2.35 p.m. the Alcantara turning to starboard opened fire with her port battery obtaining a hit on the enemy's stern. The raider replied with three of her port guns, and dropped another smoke float. By this time the Alcantara's speed had dropped to 10 knots, and the enemy, steaming at something between 12 and 15 knots, drew rapidly away till only her topmasts were visible. The Alcantara continued to fire at extreme elevation, but the target was obscured by smoke. When the enemy emerged from it the Alcantara fired a few more rounds from her port battery at extreme range, and the raider replied with a few ragged three-gun salvos. At 3.15 p.m. the Alcantara was in 24° 10' S., 31° 51' W. Firing had ceased except for a few desultory rounds which fell short.

For some time the Alcantara had been almost stopped: the raider, after altering course as though to close her, turned round and steamed away at 15 knots with a slight list to port. When last seen at 3.30 p.m. she was steering south, 29,000 yards away. Thus ended a sharp but inconclusive action, during which the Alcantara had fired 152 rounds.

A close examination of the effects of the enemy's fire showed that she had used only shrapnel or similar "anti-personnel" shell throughout. Some had burst in the air and eight others instantaneously on impact. Their fragmentation was very great and as many as 500 perforations and dents were found near one step. Several times the Alcantara's speed had dropped to 10 knots, and at 2.30 p.m. the raider turned away, dropping smoke floats and firing two stern guns. The Alcantara continued to reply, but the range, which had previously closed to 15 knots and then to full speed. By noon she was doing 20 knots and by 1 p.m. nearly 22. The day was fine and clear with a light breeze from the south-east. At 2 p.m., when the Alcantara was in 24° 3' S., 31° 56' W., the unknown vessel altered course to starboard, and, hoisting the German ensign, opened fire with a two-gun salvo at 16,000 yards, 2,000 yards beyond the extreme range of the Alcantara's eight 6-in. guns, followed a few seconds later by two four-gun salvos.

One shell of the two-gun salvo fell 100 yards over, on the port quarter: one of the second salvo struck the Alcantara just abaft her dummy funnel, and another, bursting over her quarter deck by P 4 gun, killed its trainer, severed a number of fire control leads and put its range and deflection instruments out of action. It was probably this salvo that brought down her main aerial, which was shot away between 2.6 p.m. and 2.9 p.m. A shell of the third salvo hit the Alcantara abreast the stokers' mess deck, and another, bursting on her quarter deck, killed the Officer of Quarters. At 2.8 p.m. a hit on the water line abreast her first salvo falling short to the right. A hail of fragments flying around her...
Everything possible was done by the *Alcantara* to force the action, and it can only be ascribed to the fortune of war that an unlucky hit in the engine room reduced her speed and enabled the raider to escape.*

**THE “CARNARVON CASTLE’S” ACTION, 5th DECEMBER, 1940**

3. On 5th December, 1940, the armed merchant cruiser *Carnarvon Castle,*† Captain H. W. M. Hardy, R.N., fought an action with an enemy raider in the South Atlantic very similar to the *Alcantara’s* action of 28th July, 1940. These actions emphasised the heavy handicap under which both vessels laboured owing to their large silhouettes, short range guns, and primitive fire control opposed to smaller adversaries equipped with long range guns and modern fire control systems. While the *Alcantara’s* 6-in. guns were outranged by 2,000 yards the *Carnarvon Castle’s* guns were outranged by 3,000 yards, which gave her opponent 20 minutes of uninterrupted firing at a large target before she could get within range.

The following summary of the action is based largely on the *Carnarvon Castle’s* narrative.* At 6.42 a.m. on the morning of 5th December, 1940, H.M.S. *Carnarvon Castle* was in 30° 52’ S., 42° 53’ W., off the east coast of South America,§ steering S.35° W. at 18-3 knots, with orders to arrive at Montevideo on 9th December, when she sighted a suspicious vessel at a range of 19,000 yards, the extreme limit of visibility. The stranger was steaming directly away, and the *Carnarvon Castle* increased speed, signalled her to stop. She did not do so, and at 7.57 a.m. the *Carnarvon Castle* fired one round, which fell short. She replied within 30 seconds at a range of approximately 17,000 yards, with a four- or five-gun salvo. As this was 3,000 yards outside the maximum range of the *Carnarvon Castle’s* eight 6-in. guns, Captain Hardy turned to port to close the range and to bring all his starboard battery to bear. The enemy also altered course to port, but soon turned back to starboard.

These changes reduced the range, after 20 minutes, to 14,000 yards, and the *Carnarvon Castle*, opening fire, claims to have hit the enemy several times, setting her on fire aft and apparently reducing her port battery temporarily to one effective gun, with which she continued the action for some time. The enemy then turned to starboard behind a smoke screen, and on reappearing reopened fire with his starboard battery in four-gun salvos.

At 8.38 a.m. the *Carnarvon Castle* sighted two torpedo tracks approaching on slightly diverging courses, but, turning under full helm to starboard, was able to steer between them, and they passed harmlessly 50 yards away on either side.

By 8.44 a.m. the range was down to 8,000 yards when the enemy, bringing his port battery once more to bear, hit the *Carnarvon Castle* repeatedly, setting her on fire in several places. At 9.11 a.m., therefore, Captain Hardy decided to open the range and get the fires under control behind a smoke screen. All the *Carnarvon Castle’s* fire control communications were disabled and her guns in individual control. The haze had increased, and as the enemy was continually turning smoke on and off, spotting through the splashes of her shells became extremely difficult and hitting a matter of luck. The *Carnarvon Castle*, however, claimed a last hit at her extreme range of 14,000 yards, the shell bursting under the enemy’s bridge. The raider continued firing until the range had opened to 18,000 yards, and although the *Carnarvon Castle* altered course in an attempt to keep in touch, the enemy finally disappeared behind a smoke screen in the increasing haze, steaming at 18 knots in a north-easterly direction.

It was 11-15 a.m. before the *Carnarvon Castle* was able to extinguish all her fires, and in view of her extensive damage Captain Hardy steered for Montevideo, which he reached safely at 7 p.m. on 7th December. The ship was too damaged to be of any further service, though there was no immediate need to dock her.

The enemy ship was a long, low vessel of about 10,000 tons displacement, painted a very dark grey or black, with two masts, one funnel, straight stem and cruiser stern. As in the *Alcantara’s* action the enemy’s shell showed very high fragmentation, but in this action no shrapnel was used. The *Carnarvon Castle* had received no less than 27 direct hits: all her electrical and voicepipe communications were shot away, her engine-room telegraphs and telephones cut, her wireless aerial destroyed, all her boats, except one, were riddled, her galley completely wrecked, the main exhaust pipe from her engines extensively cut, and her fore peak was flooded. Commodore F. H. Pegram, the Commodore Commanding the South America Division, who visited her the following day, considered that she had put up a gallant and spirited action against a superior enemy.*

**THE “LEANDER” SINKS THE “R.A.M.B.I”, 27th FEBRUARY, 1941**

4. On 27th February, 1941, H.M.S. *Leander,*† New Zealand Division, Captain R. H. Bevan, R.N., fought a successful action in the Indian Ocean with the Italian raider *R.A.M.B.I.*

At 10.37 a.m.‡ on the morning of 27th February, the *Leander* was patrolling northward off the Maldivian Islands in about 1° N., 78° 30’ E., at 20 knots, when she sighted a vessel steering eastward on a steady course at a comparatively high speed right ahead: she increased to 23 knots to close, and as she gradually approached, her suspicions were aroused by the stranger’s resemblance to the R.A.M.B.I. class of Italian banana freighters and by a gun on her forecastle. She therefore went to action stations at 11.15 a.m. when the range was 11,000 yards, keeping her turrets trained fore and aft. At 11.25 a.m., when the range was down to 10,000 yards, she ordered the stranger to hoist her colours. Four minutes later the stranger hoisted the red ensign. The *Leander* then ordered her to hoist her signal letters, and after a delay of 5 minutes she hoisted GJYD. It was then 11.34 a.m. As these letters did not appear in the “Signal Letters of British Ships” nor in the “Signal Letter Index,” the *Leander,* at 11.41 a.m., made the secret challenge, to which there was no reply.

Captain Bevan therefore decided to board, and at 11.45 a.m. ordered the stranger by lamp and flags to stop instantly. She did not reply, but at 11.50 a.m., just as the *Leander* was about to fire across her bows, she hoisted the Italian mercantile ensign and started training her guns.

The *Leander* at once trained her own turrets. She was just before the stranger’s beam with the stranger bearing Red 95. At 11.53 a.m., without further warning, the stranger suddenly opened fire, and the *Leander* replied

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* For signals sent by *Alcantara* during the action see Appendix A.
† *Carnarvon Castle,* 20,063 gross tons, 18 knots, guns, eight 6-in., 14,000 yards range.
‡ It is not easy to follow the course of the action from the report, as few times are registered and the track chart attached to it is not to scale. See Plan 3 and Notes on Plans, page 26.
§ See Plan 2.
immediately with a broadside at 3,000 yards. The enemy's fire was short and erratic. When the Leander had fired five rapid salvos Captain Bevan ceased fire and signalled to the enemy "Do you surrender?" The enemy, who had not fired more than three rounds a gun, was already on fire and abandoning ship. No crews remained at her guns, and she had struck her ensign. She had turned to starboard, and the Leander, stopping on her starboard quarter, lowered a boarding boat with orders to save the burning ship if possible. Two lifeboats were leaving the ship, stragglers were jumping overboard and climbing down her sides. An Italian officer in the water warned the boarding boat not to approach the burning ship as it was loaded with ammunition. The boat therefore lay off and watched the fire spread slowly aft until a heavy explosion before the bridge sent flames and smoke shooting high overhead. The raider was lying head to wind, and the fire continued to spread aft until at 12.43 p.m. a very heavy explosion, evidently of the after magazine, sent the stern hurtling into the air. Five minutes later the raider disappeared in 1° N., 68° 30' E., leaving only a patch of oil burning on the surface of the sea.

Meanwhile the Leander had picked up her boarding boat and 103 Italian survivors, including the captain of the R.A.M.B.I., who stated emphatically that he had not scuttled his ship. Steaming away from the scene of action the Leander passed through the floating wreckage. The Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, Vice-Admiral R. Leatham, C.B., considered that the R.A.M.B.I. might well have become a serious menace to shipping and that the Leander was to be commended for ridding the seas of a potential raider before it had time to do any harm. At a range of only 3,000 yards, however, she was perhaps fortunate to escape the fate which befell the Australian cruiser Sydney less than nine months later.

**THE "VOLTAIRE," APRIL, 1941**

5. Early in April, 1941, the British armed merchant cruiser Voltaire,† Captain J. A. P. Blackburn, D.S.C., R.N., left Trinidad for Freetown with orders to pass through two areas west of the Cape Verde Islands on the way.

On 5th April the Commander-in-Chief, America and West Indies, Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Kennedy-Purvis, K.C.B., informed the Commander-in-Chief, South Atlantic, Vice-Admiral Sir Robert Raikes, K.C.B., C.V.O., D.S.O., that according to a German communiqué the Voltaire had been sunk by a German cruiser and that he had ordered the Canadian armed merchant cruiser Prince David to proceed along her track at her best possible speed. On 11th April Admiral Raikes informed the Admiralty that nothing had been heard of the Voltaire though she had been due at Freetown on the 9th.

Late on the 15th the Commander-in-Chief, America and West Indies, informed the Admiralty that the Prince David had sighted a patch of very heavy oil covering an area of 3 square miles, together with charred wood, clothes and newspapers in 14° 31' N., 40° 32' W., half-way between the West Indies and the Cape Verde Islands, at 2.30 p.m. on 7th April. This was the Voltaire's estimated position on the 4th, and the Admiralty considered that it was probably her wreckage that the Prince David had sighted. As there were no survivors no details are available of the Voltaire's encounter, but it seems possible that like the Alcantara and Carnarvon Castle she was outranged and...

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* That is at 1248Z—5 J 0718 G.M.T.
† M.07842/41, the report of the destruction of the R.A.M.B.I. does not include a track chart and there are no data available for the construction of a plan.
‡ See Section 87
§ Voltaire, 13,300 tons, 14-5 knots, guns, eight 6-in., 14,000 yards range.

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**THE "CORNWALL" SINKS RAIDER No. 33, 8TH MAY, 1941**

6. On 8th May, 1941, H.M.S. Cornwall‡‡ fought an action with an enemy raider in the Indian Ocean.

On 7th May at 5.55 a.m. the Cornwall near the equator in 0° 2' S., 56° 55' E., steering 160° at 12 knots with orders to refuel at the Seychelles when a raider report reached her from the S.S. British Emperor. Altering course to 340° at 6.25 a.m. she increased to 20 knots to close the enemy's position without an unduly heavy consumption of fuel. At this position was 500 miles away, in 8° 30' N., 56° 25' E., she anticipated a prolonged search.

A scheme for the search with the aid of aircraft was worked out on the principle of closing the enemy's "furthest on" line and then starting a Vignot search to cover before dark the largest possible variation of the enemy in speed and course. At 7.56 a.m. the Cornwall increased to 24 knots; but at 8.15 a.m., on receipt of a signal from the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, Vice-Admiral R. Leatham, turned north at 25½ knots to cover the gap between the Seychelles and the islands of the Chagos Archipelago to the eastward.

As Admiral Leatham was unaware of her exact position, the Cornwall decided to regard his signal as an instruction and to proceed with her own original scheme of search as the most practical manner of complying with it.

The scheme and the Cornwall's movements can best be followed by referring to the attached plan§ and to the record of the courses she steered.** The search before dark was designed to cover the raider's courses between 144° and 190° and speeds between 13-4 and 16-6 knots.

Between 4 p.m. and 4.15 p.m. the Cornwall launched both her aircraft, recovering them shortly after 7 p.m. At 7 p.m. she altered course N. 15° E. to get on to the line of the main Vignot search. This was made out for a mean speed of 13 knots from one hour after the time of the raider report, on the assumption that the raider would require an hour to deal with the British Emperor and would then steam at high speed until dark, when she would ease down. At 9.30 p.m. the Cornwall altered course to 113° and reduced to 16-6 knots to search on this line while the moon was up.

The direction of search was correct, but the search was unsuccessful for, though by 3.30 a.m. next morning, 8th May, the Cornwall was close to the enemy, who claims to have sighted her as she turned against the setting moon, several hours were to pass before she herself sighted the raider. From 3.30 a.m.

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* It is now known that H.M.S. 'Voltaire' was sunk by Raider E (Santa Cruz), the raider engaged by the 'Carnarvon Castle' on 5th December, 1940. According to repatriated prisoners of war, the enemy, which was small and very fast, opened fire at very long range. Her first salvo crippled the 'Voltaire', which sank after three hours' continuous shelling. A number of survivors were picked up by the raider. See W.I.R., Raider Supplements, Nos. 2 and 3, and N.I.D. 09133/43.*

†† Or possibly detected her by R.D.F. See Plan 4.

§§ Plan 4.
** In Appendix B.
immediately with a broadside at 3,000 yards. The enemy's fire was short and erratic. When the Leander had fired five rapid salvos Captain Bevan ceased fire and signalled to the enemy, "Do you surrender?" The enemy, who had not fired more than three rounds a gun, was already on fire and abandoning ship. No crews remained at her guns, and she had struck her ensign. She had turned to starboard, and the Leander, stopping on her starboard quarter, lowered a boarding boat with orders to save the burning ship if possible. Two lifeboats were leaving the ship, stragglers were jumping overboard and climbing down her sides. An Italian officer in the water warned the boarding boat not to approach the burning ship as it was loaded with ammunition. The boat therefore lay off and watched the fire spread as a result of a heavy explosion before the bridge sent flames and smoke shooting high overhead. The raider was losing head to wind, and the fire continued to spread aft until at 12.43 p.m. a very heavy explosion, evidently of the after magazine, sent the stern hurtling into the air. Five minutes later the raider disappeared in 1° N., 68° 30' E., leaving only a patch of oil burning on the surface of the sea.

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in view of her slow speed, out-maneuvered also. Nothing is definitely known about her end, nor of the identity of the vessel which destroyed her, though Admiral Raikes states that it was probably the German armed merchant ship raider Santa Cruz.

THE "CORNWALL," SINKS RAIDER No. 33, 8TH MAY, 1941

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The scheme and the Cornwall's movements can best be followed by referring to the attached plan and to the record of the courses she steered. The search before dark was designed to cover the raider's courses between 144° and 190° and speeds between 13-4 and 16-6 knots.

Between 4 p.m. and 4.15 p.m. the Cornwall launched both her aircraft, recovering them shortly after 7 p.m. At 7 p.m. she altered course N. 15° E. to get on to the line of the main Vignot search. This was made out for a mean speed of 13 knots from one hour after the time of the raider report, on the assumption that the raider would require an hour to deal with the British Emperor and would then steam at high speed until dark, when she would ease down. At 9.30 p.m. the Cornwall altered course to 113° and reduced to 16½ knots to search on this line while the moon was up.

The direction of search was correct, but the search was unsuccessful for, though by 3.30 a.m. next morning, 8th May, the Cornwall was close to the enemy, who claims to have sighted her as she turned against the setting moon, several hours were to pass before she herself sighted the raider. From 3.30 a.m. to 5.30 a.m. Cornwall was in view of the raider, but it was not until 7.30 a.m. that she herself sighted her. The raider was a German armed merchant ship raider Santa Cruz.

* That is at 1248Z—7018 G.M.T.
† Cornwall, cruiser, 10,000 tons, 31-5 knots, guns, eight 8-in., eight 4-in. H.A.
‡ Times are Zone—5.
§ According to Cornwall's report (M.012944/41) "on receipt of the C-in-C, East Indies, 0546Z/7 May." Note that 0546Z in C-in-C's signal (Greenwich time) is 1046 in Cornwall's time (Z—5), but according to Cornwall's dock log the Cornwall increased to 24 knots at 0736 and to 25½ knots at 0815, more than two hours before the C-in-C made the signal. Time of receipt and text of signal are not given in M.012944/41 nor in T.S.D. 546/41.
¶ Plan 4.
** In Appendix B.
†† Or possibly detected her by R.D.F. See Plan 4.
until dawn the Cornwall steered 143° at 13 knots. At dawn, between 6.30 and 7 a.m., she launched both aircraft to cover a variation of 3 knots on either side of the enemy’s estimated speed; and at 6.35 a.m. increased to 18 knots.

At 7.7 a.m. one of the aircraft sighted a merchant ship of the suspected type steaming about 13 knots, 228°, some 85 miles westward of the Cornwall, but made no report before returning about 8 a.m. At 8.25 a.m. the Cornwall altered course to 255° to close the suspect and increased speed, at first to 20 knots and then, at 8.34 a.m., to 23 knots. It was about 9.30 a.m. when she recovered her aircraft. Though she hoped that it had not been sighted, later information proved that it had been detected, probably by R.D.F. On this as on all other occasions the aircraft approached and left the suspicious ship in the direction away from the cruiser, a ruse apparently successful in hiding the cruiser’s actual position.

At 10.15 a.m. the Cornwall catapulted her second aircraft with instructions to close the still unidentified ship and discover, if possible, whether she were a raider or not. When the aircraft returned at 12.23 p.m. it reported that the unknown vessel was steaming at least 15 knots and had hoisted signal letters. These were identified as those of the Norwegian S.S. Tamerlane, which she closely resembled, though the Tamerlane was not in the Cornwall’s list of expected ships.

It was then past noon and it was clear that the Cornwall must increase speed to get within striking distance of the suspect with plenty of daylight in hand. She accordingly increased to 26 knots and at 1 p.m. to 28 knots. At 1.45 p.m. she catapulted an aircraft with orders to keep her informed of the bearing, course, and speed of the still unidentified vessel. She estimated the suspect to be within 32 miles unless he had altered course. When the aircraft returned it was able to give an accurate bearing of the unknown ship which was in sight from the air, and a few minutes later, at 4.7 p.m., was sighted from the bridge of the Cornwall, bearing 282°, Green 50.

At 4.12 p.m. the Cornwall altered course to close, but the stranger turned away, stern on, steering 300°. At 4.19 p.m., therefore, the Cornwall altered course to bring her fine on the starboard bow in order to close as quickly as possible to 12,000 yards without crossing her track. At 4.30 p.m. the stranger began making “Raider reports,” stating that she was the Norwegian S.S. Tamerlane. The plane in the air was therefore told to inform her that the ship chasing her was a British cruiser and that she should stop engines. The Cornwall turned at the same time to give her a good broadside view, and then resumed the chase.

At 4.56 p.m., when the range was down to 19,000 yards, the Cornwall signalled three times “Heave to or I fire,” and backed this up with one warning round of 8-in. over and to the left, but though the stranger disobeyed the order, the Cornwall refrained from opening direct fire, still thinking that she might be a normal merchant ship whose master was gallantly determined not to stop. An order was therefore given for the second aircraft to take off and drop a 250-lb. bomb close to the suspect, and, if that did not stop her, to drop the other on her forecastle. It was some time, however, before this order reached the aircraft.

At 5.10 p.m. the Cornwall again signalled “Heave to or I fire,” and followed this with another round of 8-in. As the range was then inside 12,000 yards, she turned to port to open it. This apparently convinced the stranger that the Cornwall was about to open fire in earnest, for when the 8-in. shell fell near her she turned to starboard, and then, making a large alteration to port, opened fire with five guns just before 5.15 p.m.*

* According to the Cornwall’s deck log the Cornwall opened fire at 5.15 p.m. This does not agree with her report in M.012944/41.
At 6.50 p.m. power was restored, but she lay stopped in the wreckage until 9.40 p.m., when, after making temporary repairs, she went ahead and steered once again for the Seychelles.

Although the *Cornwall* had found and sunk the enemy the Admiralty considered that the conduct of the operation left much to be desired. They regarded the scheme of search as well designed, but when, at 7.7 a.m., her aircraft sighted a merchant ship of the type for which it was searching, it should have reported the fact at once instead of waiting until its return to the ship at 8 a.m. As a result of this failure to make an immediate report the *Cornwall* continued to steam away from the enemy for nearly an hour, which might have been vital, while her other aircraft was kept unnecessarily in the air.

It was considered, too, that the *Cornwall* should have kept the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, informed of events and of her intentions. With the information at his disposal he could then have informed her that no friendly merchant ship was anywhere near. She appears, however, to have been unduly concerned with the possibility of her wireless being intercepted by the raider's direction finder.

The *Cornwall* was engaged on a definite raider hunt and employing, quite correctly, both aircraft for the search. When the suspicious ship was sighted by one of them it could have shadowed her while the other was recalled and refuelled in readiness to relieve the shadower, thus ensuring that the suspect by one of them it could have shadowed her while the other was recalled and refuelled in readiness to relieve the shadower, thus ensuring that the suspect could have been watched from 7.25 a.m. onwards. As it was the advantage of having two aircraft was lost and the enemy was left unwatched from 7.25 a.m.

By one of them it could have shadowed her while the other was recalled and refuelled in readiness to relieve the shadower, thus ensuring that the suspect could have been watched from 7.25 a.m. onwards. As it was the advantage of having two aircraft was lost and the enemy was left unwatched from 7.25 a.m.

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The Admiralty considered that during this phase the rigid adherence to wireless silence resulted in essential reports not being made from the aircraft to the *Cornwall* when the signal letters were hoisted by the suspect, and from the *Cornwall* to the Commander-in-Chief when these had been identified as the *Tamerlane*'s. In view of the nature of the operation and the obvious importance of making contact with the suspicious ship as quickly as possible, the Admiralty considered, too, that the *Cornwall* should have brought all her boilers to immediate notice at 8 a.m., the time of the aircraft's first report, instead of waiting until 12.50 p.m. when the report of the second sighting reached her.

Throughout the period between the surface sighting of the raider and the time when she opened fire the *Cornwall* held on to the idea that the suspect might still prove to be a friendly neutral although in view of her suspicious behaviour all the evidence was very much against it. The Admiralty considered that the *Cornwall*, by allowing herself to close to a range of under 12,000 yards contrary to her expressed intentions, showed a lack of attention to the changing situation. It is quite clear from her report that this was fully appreciated at the time. The error of closing a very suspicious ship was intensified by her temporary inability to open fire, which left no alternative but to turn away and close 'A' arcs at a critical moment, which might easily have resulted in the raider's escape and in much more serious damage to herself than she actually suffered.

**Notes:**
- Owing to the shortage of Fleet Air Arm personnel the *Cornwall* had no qualified observer for her second aircraft.
- In M.012944/41.
- An Admiralty message re *Cornwall*'s action, dated 16th December, 1941, is in Appendix D.
foremast where the cruiser could not see them. It is reasonable to suppose
that this was a *ruse de guerre* to induce the *Sydney* to close and investigate, for
her signal to the *Kormoran* to hoist the letters clear was repeated continuously
before the raider complied with it.

The *Sydney* had all guns and tubes trained when she came up with the
*Kormoran*. In reply to her signal "Where bound?" the raider was unable to understand as in the International Code they mean *‘You
should prepare for a cyclone, hurricane or typhoon.’* They were, in fact, the
second and third letters of the *Strat Malakha*’s secret signal 11KP. The
*Sydney* then ordered the *Kormoran* to show her secret letters, and Captain
Detsmers not knowing how to reply decided reluctantly to fight. The two
ships were steaming in a westerly direction at 15 knots on parallel courses, the
*Sydney* on the *Kormoran*’s starboard beam. Only a mile* separated them when the
*Kormoran* suddenly dropped her gun screens and, hoisting the German
ensign, opened fire with four of her six 6-in. guns. Her first salvo hit the
**Chief** cruiser’s bridge. The *Sydney* immediately replied with a salvo which went over,*
but her second set the raider’s fuel tanks on fire. In the meantime the
*Sydney* replied with a torpedo which also missed its mark. Both ships were
now burning fiercely and the *Sydney* was 6 feet down by the bows.

 Barely half an hour had passed since the *Kormoran* opened fire, but the
action was virtually over. The *Kormoran*, which had fired 480 rounds and three
torpedoes, was lying stopped with a fierce fire in her engine-room. The *Sydney*
with all her superstructure smashed and her boats destroyed, was steaming
slowly* away in a south-easterly direction under a dense cloud of smoke. At
11 p.m. Commander Detsmers decided to abandon the *Kormoran*, and shortly
after midnight an explosion hastened her end. By this time all trace of the
*Sydney* had disappeared and she was never seen or heard again.

**THE “DEVONSHIRE”’S” ACTION, 22nd NOVEMBER, 1941**

8. On 22nd November, 1941, H.M.S. *Devonshire,* Captain R. D. Oliver,
D.S.C., R.N., sank an enemy vessel in the South Atlantic.

At 5.20 a.m. that morning Captain Oliver despatched his Walrus aircraft
to carry out an anti-submarine patrol and long range search ahead of the ship.
When the Walrus returned at 7.10 a.m. it reported sighting a merchant ship in
4° 20’ S., 18° 50’ W. From the aircraft’s description Capt. Oliver suspected that the
reported vessel might well be an enemy raider and he immediately altered course to close her at 25 knots.

*See Plan 5. According to some of the witnesses the range was only 1,200 metres.
† According to one witness the *Sydney*’s first salvo hit the *Kormoran* amidsthips.
‡ The aircraft was warming up when the engagement began.
§ At about 3 knots.
¶ For a brief description of the *Kormoran* and her cruise, see Appendix C. An Admiralty
message re *Sydney*’s action dated 16th December, 1941, is in Appendix D.
* Devonshire, cruiser, 9,850 tons, 32½ knots, guns, eight 8-in., eight 4-in. H.A.
foremast where the cruiser could not see them. It is reasonable to suppose that this was a ruse de guerre to induce the Sydney to close and investigate, for her signal to the Kormoran to hoist the letters clear was repeated continuously before the raider complied with it.

The Sydney had all guns and tubes trained when she came up with the Kormoran. In reply to her signal "Where bound?" the Kormoran replied: "Batavia." The Sydney then apparently hoisted the letters IK, which the raider was unable to understand as in the International Code they mean "You should prepare for a cyclone, hurricane or typhoon." They were, in fact, the second and third letters of the Straat Malakka's secret call sign IIKP. The Sydney then ordered the Kormoran to show her secret letters, and Captain Detmers, her first salvo hit the Sydney's ensign, opened fire with four of her six 6-in. guns. Her first salvo hit the cruiser's bridge. The Sydney immediately replied with a salvo which went over, but her second set the raider's fuel tanks on fire. In the meantime the Kormoran had hit the Sydney with a torpedo which apparently put her forward turrets out of action, and with a salvo which shot her aircraft to pieces at a range so close that the men round it could be plainly seen.

About 4.40 p.m. the Sydney turned to port and passed so close astern of the Kormoran that some of the raider's crew thought that she would ram her. Although an uncontrollable fire was raging in the Kormoran all her guns were still in action. The Sydney's after turrets, too, were firing, and at 4.50 p.m. she fired four torpedoes which missed the raider ahead and astern. The Kormoran replied with a torpedo which also missed its mark. Both ships were now burning fiercely and the Sydney was 6 feet down by the bows.

 Barely half an hour had passed since the Kormoran opened fire, but the action was virtually over. The Kormoran, which had fired 450 rounds and three torpedoes, was lying stopped with a fierce fire in her engine-room. The Sydney, although her superstructure was smashed and her boats destroyed, was steaming slowly away in a southerly direction under a dense cloud of smoke. At 11 p.m. Commander Detmers decided to abandon the Kormoran, and shortly after midnight an explosion hastened her end. By this time all trace of the Sydney had disappeared and she was never seen or heard again.

THE "DEVONSHIRE'S" ACTION, 22nd NOVEMBER, 1941


At 8.20 a.m. that morning Captain Oliver despatched his Walrus aircraft to carry out an anti-submarine patrol and long range search ahead of the ship. When the Walrus returned at 7.10 a.m. it reported sighting a merchant ship in 4° 20' S., 18° 50' W. From the aircraft's description Captain Oliver suspected that the reported vessel might well be an enemy raider and he immediately altered course to close her at 25 knots.

See Plan 5. According to some of the witnesses the range was only 1,200 metres.

† According to one witness the Sydney's first salvo hit the Kormoran amidships.

‡ The aircraft was warming up when the engagement began.

# At about 3 knots.

|| For a brief description of the Kormoran and her cruise, see Appendix C. An Admiralty message re Sydney's action dated 16th December, 1941, is in Appendix D.

Devonshire, cruiser, 9,850 tons, 32 knots, guns, eight 8-in., eight 4-in. H.A.

An hour later, at 8.9 a.m., the masts of a ship came into sight bearing 160° in 4° 12' S., 18° 42' W. There was a moderate breeze from the south-east and a slight sea with a short slow swell. The visibility was 10 miles. The Devonshire at once turned east to fly off her aircraft, which was catapulted at 8.20 a.m. with orders to identify the unknown vessel if possible. By this time Captain Oliver's suspicions were thoroughly aroused by the manœuvres and appearance of the ship, which closely resembled Raider No. 16, with the exception of moveable fittings such as ventilators and sonar posts. He therefore manoeuvred the Devonshire at 26 knots, and kept her at a range of between 12,000 and 18,000 yards from the unknown ship to frustrate possible torpedo attack.

Immediately after the Walrus had taken off, the stranger turned 20 points to starboard and made off in a south-easterly direction. At 8.37 a.m. the Devonshire fired two salvos spread to right and left, intended to provoke a return fire and establish the stranger's identity as a raider beyond doubt, or to induce her to abandon ship and avoid unnecessary bloodshed, especially as she probably had a number of British prisoners on board.

The stranger at once stopped and, turning round, transmitted by wireless at 8.40 a.m. the warship raider report; "RRR RRR RRR RRR de Polyphemus 4° 20' .S., 18° 35' W. 0940 G.M.T." It was significant that the " R's " were in groups of three and not of four and that no signal letters were included. Captain Oliver could not ignore the possibility that the ship might be the genuine Polyphemus, which was a vessel of similar appearance with a counter stern, and having been reported at Bilbao on 21st September was within reach of his position. To remove all doubts he made a signal to the Commander-in-Chief, South Atlantic, Vice-Admiral A. U. Willis, C.B., D.S.O., at 9.5 a.m., asking if this were the real Polyphemus. The aircraft was also asked what type of stern the stranger had and replied at 9.31 a.m. that she had a cruiser stern and a hull similar to the Atlantis. All doubts, however, were removed at 9.34 a.m. when the Commander-in-Chief signalled: "No, repetition No." One minute later, at 9.35 a.m., the Devonshire opened fire at 7,000 yards. Her first salvo hit and started a fire which, she reports, eventually spread to the enemy's magazine and blew her up. The enemy set up an efficient smoke screen, but made no attempt to return the Devonshire's fire.† By 9.39 a.m. the Devonshire fired 30 salvos, and Captain Oliver checked fire and turned eastward to clear the enemy's smoke screen. He then tried indirect firing by R.D.F. range, but gun blast put the R.D.F. transmitter out of action. At 9.43 a.m. the enemy was visible once more, and according to the aircraft the aircraft was maintaining a steady 15 knots. The Devonshire therefore reopened fire until 9.56 a.m., when the enemy was seen to be heavily on fire and down by the stern. Captain Oliver thought that she had consistently attempted to draw him to the south-eastward, and was determined to steam no further in that direction than he could help. At 10.2 a!., however, there was a heavy explosion on board her. It was followed by another at 10.14 a.m., and two minutes later she sank.

Captain Oliver's next anxiety was to recover his aircraft, which had a damaged propeller, and he successfully picked it up at 10.40 a.m. It reported that almost certainly an enemy submarine was present. He was therefore unable to stop and rescue survivors, as he could not have done so without running a grave risk of being torpedoed.†
At 3.15 p.m. the Walrus set out again on a similar patrol with orders to search to the southward for an hour and then at right angles to the mean line of advance for another hour before rejoining the ship.

At 4.33 p.m. the Dorsetshire sighted the masts of a ship bearing 032°, about 18 miles away at the extreme limit of visibility. The sea was calm with a slight swell. Although the Walrus was still out of sight to the southward, Captain Agar decided to close the unknown vessel at once and if necessary to recall the aircraft. He therefore turned to 031° and increased to 25 knots. The stranger soon began making smoke, but remained hull down. She had apparently increased to full speed on sighting the Dorsetshire, and was steering away from her. Captain Agar therefore increased to 30 knots and made a recall, which failed to reach the Walrus.

At 5.8 p.m. the Dorsetshire sighted several small patches of oil on the water, and Captain Agar, suspecting the presence of an enemy submarine, turned away to starboard. About this time he sighted an object resembling a submarine's conning tower 8 miles away on the port bow, but at 5.20 p.m. identified it as a power-boat with four or five other boats in tow. Although he could not entirely reject the possibility that the vessel he was chasing was a British ship which had mistaken the Dorsetshire for an enemy cruiser he assumed that she was an enemy raider or supply ship. To reduce the risk of attack by a submarine he kept the Dorsetshire moving at high speed outside a range of 16,000 yards. In these circumstances he could neither prevent the enemy from scuttling herself nor could he capture her. At 5.31 p.m. he fired two warning shots at 24,000 yards, one right and one left of the target. By this time the enemy had stopped and was lowering boats. He therefore withheld his fire in case she had any captured British merchant seamen on board, and continued zig-zagging outside her range, but inside his own.

By 5.44 p.m. the Dorsetshire had crossed the enemy's bows, and although the range was 17,000 yards, Captain Agar was able to see the boats moving away from her side. At 5.51 p.m. he observed that the enemy, who had a definite list to port, was on fire. The fire spread rapidly until 6.5 p.m., when a large explosion forward settled her fate. It was evident that the enemy's self-destruction was certain and Captain Agar at once turned away to clear the area as quickly as possible. At 6.21 p.m. the enemy sank in 27° 50′ S., 3° 55′ W., leaving only a trail of smoke and a number of survivors in boats. By 7.10 p.m. the Dorsetshire had recovered her Walrus aircraft, and Captain Agar despatched it again at 7.35 p.m. to reconnoitre the area of the boats.

In the failing light observation was difficult, but as the aircraft circled round at a height of 400 ft. it was able to establish that there were fourteen boats and two large rafts in the position where the ship had gone down. It estimated that each boat contained at least 25 survivors and that the total number of survivors was 500. The Walrus then examined the boats which the Dorsetshire had sighted at 5.8 p.m. They were still 4 or 5 miles from the survivors' boats and were fully loaded with packages and crates. It appears possible that they were actually transferring these stores to a submarine when the Dorsetshire arrived, but so fast the aircraft saw nothing of it.

The Dorsetshire had left Freetown on 26th November to search for enemy ships in the relatively calm area 720 miles south west of St. Helena. At 7 a.m. on 1st December she flew off her Walrus aircraft in 26° 45′ S., 6° 25′ W., to reconnoitre to the southward for an hour and then at right angles to the mean line of advance for another hour before rejoining the ship.

At 11 a.m. the Dorsetshire altered course to 111° and increased to 18⅓ knots. At 3.15 p.m. the Walrus set out again on a similar patrol with orders to search to the southward for an hour and then at right angles to the Dorsetshire's mean line of advance for another hour before rejoining the ship.

RAIDER HUNT, 4th-6th November, 1941

10. In addition to the eight actions against enemy raiders and suspected raiders, fought during 1940 and 1941, there have been a number of cases in 1942 when enemy vessels were encountered but not identified as such. There was also at least one instance in 1941 of a raider report leading to a protracted search when no enemy armed raider was present.

On 4th November, 1941, the R.F.A. oiler Olwen reported a surface raider attack at 5.30 a.m. G.M.T. in 3° 4′ N., 22° 42′ W.† The Dorsetshire was at sea, and the Commander-in-Chief, South Atlantic, Vice-Admiral A. U. Willis, after ordering her to investigate, instructed the cruiser Dunedin to leave Freetown with the special service vessels Queen Emma and Princess Beatrix and join in the search.

When the Dorsetshire, Captain A. W. S. Agar, intercepted the Olwen's raider distress signal at 6 a.m. she turned east immediately to close the position, which was 600 miles away, and at 6.45 a.m. increased to 20 knots, the maximum speed of the armed merchant cruiser Canton which was with her. Captain Agar knew that the U.S. cruiser Omaha and U.S.S. destroyer Somers, being well to the north-west of the enemy's reported position, would be able to support the Canton, and ordered her to 7.45 a.m. to make for a position in 5° N., 27° 30′ W., to intercept the raider should she steer a north-westerly course, while the Dorsetshire steamed south-east at 24 knots to intercept her to the southward. He was unaware that the U.S. cruiser Memphis was near the position given by the Olwen.

Admiral Willis, not knowing that the Dorsetshire and Canton had parted company, ordered them at 9.31 a.m. to search a sector to the southward of the

* See end of Section 9. An Admiralty message re 'Dorsetshire' action dated 18th December, 1941, is in Appendix D.
† Dorsetshire, cruiser, 9,975 tons, 32 knots, guns, eight 8-in. and eight 4-in. H.A.
‡ Times are Z—1.
§ From 'Dorsetshire's' deck log.
| From Plan 6
| From "B" turret.
| At 5.30 p.m. the order to fire was given at 5.28 p.m.
†† The enemy had turned to starboard before stopping.
Although Captain Oliver had suspected that the enemy vessel might well have been a raider, there is no real evidence to show that she was armed, and it seems most probable that she was acting as a submarine supply ship.

THE "DORSETSHIRE"'S ACTION, 1st DECEMBER, 1941


The Dorsetshire had left Freetown on 26th November to search for enemy ships in the relatively calm area 720 miles south and west of St. Helena. At 7 a.m. on 1st December she flew off her Walrus aircraft in 26° 45' S., 6° 25' W., to reconnoitre to the south-east, but it returned without sighting anything. At 11 a.m. the Dorsetshire altered course to 111° and increased to 18½ knots. At 3.15 p.m. the Walrus set out again on a similar patrol with orders to search to the southward for an hour and then return.

At 5.44 p.m. the Dorsetshire sighted several small patches of oil on the water, and Captain Agar, suspecting the presence of an enemy submarine, turned away to starboard. About this time he sighted an object resembling a submarine's conning tower 6 miles away on the port bow, but at 5.50 p.m. identified it as a power-boat with four or five other boats in tow. Although he could not entirely reject the possibility that the vessel he was chasing was a British ship which had mistaken the Dorsetshire for an enemy cruiser he assumed that she was an enemy raider or supply ship. To reduce the risk of attack by a submarine he kept the Dorsetshire moving at high speed outside a range of 16,000 yards. In these circumstances he could neither prevent the enemy from scuttling herself nor could he capture her. At 5.51 p.m. he fired two warning shots at 24,000 yards, one right and one left of the target. By this time the enemy had stopped and was lowering boats.** He therefore withheld his fire in case she had any captured British merchant seamen on board, and continued zig-zagging outside her range, but inside his own.

At 5.51 p.m. he observed that the enemy, who had a definite list to port, was on fire. The fire spread rapidly until 6.50 p.m., when a large explosion forward settled her fate. It was evident that the enemy's self destruction was certain and Captain Agar at once turned away to clear the survivors was 500. The wounded was brought on board and taken to sea at 5.30 p.m. They were still 4 or 5 miles from the Dorsetshire and were fully loaded with packages and crates. It appears possible that they were actually transferring these stores to a submarine when the Dorsetshire arrived, but if so the aircraft saw nothing of it.

The Dorsetshire's and Dorsetshire's actions added to anti-raider tactics a problem in addition to the usual one of distinguishing friend from foe, namely, that of distinguishing between an enemy supply ship and a raider. The problem of dealing with enemy raiders hinges largely on rapid identification as such, but in neither of these cases was there any real evidence that the enemy vessel was a raider. The fact that neither opened fire nor attempted to entice the cruisers within torpedo range appears to show that they were unarmed. Captain Agar suspected that the enemy was acting as a submarine supply ship, a duty never performed by raiders in the last war, nor, as far as is known, in this one. By scuttling herself she made her identification as a raider unnecessary, which solved the Dorsetshire's most difficult problem.

RAIDER HUNT, 4th-6th NOVEMBER, 1941

10. In addition to the eight actions against enemy raiders and suspected raiders, fought during 1940 and 1941, there have been a number of cases in 1942 when enemy vessels were encountered but not identified as such. There was also at least one instance in 1941 of a raider report leading to a protracted search when no enemy armed raider was present.

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When the Dorsetshire, Captain A. W. S. Agar, intercepted the Olwen's raider distress signal at 6 a.m. she turned east immediately to close the position, which was 600 miles way, and at 6.45 a.m. increased to 20 knots, the maximum speed of the armed merchant cruiser Canton which was with her. Captain Agar knew that the U.S. cruiser Omaha and U.S. destroyer Somers, being well to the north-west of the enemy's reported position, would be able to support the Canton, and ordered her at 7.45 a.m. to make for a position in 5° N., 27° 30' W., to intercept the raider should she steer a north-westly course, while the Dorsetshire steamed south at 24 knots to intercept her to the southward. He was unaware that the U.S. cruiser Memphis was near the position given by the Olwen.

Admiral Willis, not knowing that the Dorsetshire and Canton had parted company, ordered them at 9.31 a.m. to search a sector to the southward of the

* See end of Section 9. An Admiralty message re Devonshire's action, dated 16th December, 1941, is in Appendix D.
† Dorsetshire, cruiser, 9,975 tons, 32 knots, guns, eight 8-in. and eight 4-in. H.A.
‡ Times are Z—1.
§ From Dorsetshire's deck log.
‖ See Plan 6.
*l From " B " turret.
** At 5.30 p.m. The order to fire was given at 5.28 p.m.
†† The enemy had turned to starboard before stopping.
enemy's reported position* and the Dунedin, Queen Emma and Princess Beatrix to search a sector to the south-eastward of it.

At 3 p.m. on 5th November Admiral Willis informed the British ships that the U.S. cruiser Memphis and the U.S. destroyers Davis and Jouett had searched for the position of the attack without result until 7 p.m. on the 4th. He added that the U.S. cruiser Omaha and the U.S. destroyer Somers were searching for survivors before proceeding to a position in 5° S., 34° W. That evening, at 6 p.m., he signalled that if nothing further were heard of the raider by dusk on 6th November the Dorsetshire and Canton were to search on a northerly course between 26° 30' W. and 30° W. to 2° N. The Dorsetshire would then return to Freetown, but the Canton would continue on patrol. The Dунedin, Queen Emma and Princess Beatrix were to search on a northerly course to 5° N. before returning to Freetown.

Next morning, 6th November, a new light was shed upon the situation. At 10:30 a.m. the Queen reported that the raider signal had been made when an unseen enemy, probably a submarine on the surface, had fired on her in the dawn light. At 11.33 a.m. Admiral Willis informed the Dorsetshire, Canton and Dunedin that as the attack had certainly not been made by a raider they were to act forthwith on his signal of 6 p.m. on 5th November. No fewer than ten British and American warships had searched for two days for a raider with no actual existence. The search, however, was not fruitless, for at 8.45 a.m. on 6th November the Omaha and Somers captured the German supply ship Odenwald in 0° 35' N., 27° 45' W., and took her into an American port.†

ENEMY VESSELS SIGHTED BUT NOT ENGAGED, 1942

11. On 13th March, 1942, at 7.25 p.m.,* H.M.S. Durban, steaming 257°, on passage from Durban to Simonstown, at 13 knots with one engine broken down, sighted a ship in 33° 53' S., 20° E., steering east at 10 knots, 11 miles ahead. As the stranger would pass fairly close the cruiser maintained her own course and speed, and at a distance of 6 miles sighted the boat using a red Aldis lamp in the failing light. The absence of any reply being not unusual, the Durban then asked "What ship?" using a white Aldis lamp. The stranger replied that she was the Levernbank, bound from New York to Durban, and wished the cruiser good-night. Her silhouette corresponded to that of a Bank Line ship.

The weather was too rough for boarding, and the Durban, facing the familiar difficulty of identifying a ship in poor light without closing to a dangerously short range, allowed the stranger to proceed. There can be little doubt, however, that the unknown ship was the ex-British ship Speybuck, captured by the Germans in January, 1941, and probably acting as an enemy minelaying raider.‡

At 11.30 a.m. next day, 14th March, 1942, a bare sixteen hours after the Durban had allowed the spurious Levernbank to proceed unmolested, the armed merchant cruiser Cheshire was in 38° 11' S., 20° 10' E., 258 miles away to the southward, when she sighted an unknown vessel hull down. At 11.30 a.m. she turned to intercept, and the stranger after momentarily altering course towards her turned away. This, being contrary to recognition procedure, was a suspicious manoeuvre. Half an hour later, however, the stranger passed the Cheshire on an opposite course only 3 miles away. To the Cheshire's signal "What ship?" she replied that she was the Inverbank, bound from Montevideo to Melbourne, and convinced, from her appearance, that she was a genuine Bank Line vessel, the Cheshire allowed her to proceed without further question.

The real Inverbank, however, was on passage from Montevideo to Freetown. Though there is no proof that the vessel which falsely assumed her identity was an enemy raider, it seems possible that she was the false Levernbank which had deceived the Durban 258 miles away on the previous evening.* The Commander-in-Chief, South Atlantic, Vice-Admiral E., C. Tait, C.B., M.V.O., thought that it may have been providential that the Cheshire did not make the secret recognition signal. With a possible enemy raider within 7,000 yards, and with her own ship's company quite unprepared and not even at action stations, the result might easily have been the mysterious and regrettable disappearance with all hands of one of His Majesty's valuable armed merchant cruisers.†

Six weeks later, at 8.43 a.m., on 26th April, 1942, a Seafox aircraft, patrolling from the armed merchant cruiser Pretoria Castle, sighted an unknown vessel in 1° 17' N., 24° 34' W., steaming about 257° at 8 knots.

The Seafox had left the Pretoria Castle at 6.45 a.m. to carry out a routine reconnaissance with orders to return at 9.15 a.m. The observer was told that so far as was known no ships were in the area, but that he was to return immediately and report any suspicious vessel sighted.

When therefore the unknown steamer came into sight at 8.43 a.m. he ordered the pilot to approach within half a mile and, circling round before coming down for a closer view, called her up on his Aldis lamp. She replied with identification flags GSLD, but he had no means of decoding them nor of discovering her identity. The Seafox made a thorough inspection at close range but saw nothing suspicious. The vessel was of about 5,000 tons, with one funnel, two slightly raked masts, samson posts on fore side of mainmast, one derrick hoisted aft, but no structure on the well decks. She had normal defensive armament, but apparently no A.A. guns. The only unusual features were roundels painted on the hatch covers. At 9.10 a.m. the Seafox turned to rejoin the Pretoria Castle, 40 miles away.

When the Pretoria Castle failed to sight the aircraft by 9.5 a.m. she called it up and learned that it expected to be back at 9.40 a.m.; but at that hour it was still out of sight. Ten minutes later, however, just as it sighted the ship, the aircraft, running out of petrol, was forced to alight, signalling as it came down "S.O.S. 270°. 5 miles." The Pretoria Castle closed, but the distance proved to be 12 and not 5 miles. The sea was choppy with a heavy swell. All attempts to pick the aircraft up failed, and it was not until 12.10 p.m. that the observer could report the unknown ship which had hoisted identification letters GSLD. These belonged to the S.S. Anglo-Canadian, but this name was not on the Pretoria Castle's shipping list, and she decided to make a further inspection. The suspect's estimated mean line of advance was roughly parallel to her own course, and to get well ahead she held on at 16 knots until 1.15 p.m. before turning to intercept. Though she anticipated that the suspect would be

* If so she must have covered the distance at an average of 16 knots.
† For details see N.L.11382/42.
‡ For details see N.L.6145/42.
§ "You should make your secret letters."
†† According to the Durban only 25 per cent. of merchant ships answer the NNJ signal correctly.
¶ For details see N.L.11362/42.
in sight by 5 p.m., it had not been sighted half an hour later when she turned to 107° to cross the stranger's probable track. At 5.45 p.m. she asked if the Anglo-Canadian were in the area only to be told that this ship had arrived at Bombay on 19th April. Further air reconnaissance was impossible as the Pretoria Castle's second aircraft was unserviceable, and although she continued to search till well after dark she saw nothing of the suspicious vessel.*

* For details see N.L.9557/42.

APPENDIX A*

H.M.S. "ALCANTARA"—W/T MESSAGES† SENT IN ACTION
ON 28th JULY, 1940

IMPORTANT:—Commander-in-Chief, S.A., R.A.S.A.D., from ALCANTARA.

HAVE SIGHTED SUSPICIOUS MERCHANT SHIP IN POSITION 024° 23' S., 032° 31' W., STEERING 040°. I AM CHASING AT MAXIMUM SPEED BUT NOT GAINING. 1328z/28.

(This message was broadcast at 1410 in Naval Cypher using reserved Block Call Sign.)

IMMEDIATE:—Commander-in-Chief, S.A., R.A.S.A.D., from ALCANTARA.

MY 1328z. AM ENGAGING ENEMY ARMED MERCHANT SHIP. MY POSITION IS NOW 024° 03' S, 031° 58' W. 1500z/28.

(Broadcast at 1506z when main aerial was shot away during repetition. Message was then broadcast on auxiliary W/T at 1551z and at 1608z. Fleet Code.)

IMMEDIATE:—Commander-in-Chief, S.A., R.A.S.A.D., from ALCANTARA.

MY 1500z. COURSE AND SPEED OF ENEMY 180°, 15 KNOTS. MY SPEED REDUCED TO 10 KNOTS, HOLED IN ENGINE ROOM. MY POSITION NOW 024° 10' S., 031° 50' W. 1555z/28.

(Broadcast on auxiliary W/T 500 kcs., at 1642z and again at 1657z on main W/T using small broadcast aerial. Fleet Code.)

† None of these signals was received by the Hawkins which was a thousand miles away at the time.
APPENDIX B *

RECORD OF COURSES STEERED BY H.M.S. “CORNWALL”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Altered course to.</th>
<th>Speed.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1600</td>
<td>040°</td>
<td>25 knots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>015°</td>
<td>23 knots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2130</td>
<td>113°</td>
<td>16 1/2 knots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0838</td>
<td>252°</td>
<td>23 knots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1230</td>
<td>240°</td>
<td>26 knots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1245</td>
<td>230°</td>
<td>28 knots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1302</td>
<td>165°</td>
<td>28 knots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1609</td>
<td>250°</td>
<td>20 knots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1612</td>
<td>262°</td>
<td>25 knots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1619</td>
<td>285°</td>
<td>20 knots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1635</td>
<td>240°</td>
<td>20 knots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1642</td>
<td>290°</td>
<td>26 knots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1651</td>
<td>285°</td>
<td>28 knots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1701</td>
<td>320°</td>
<td>26 knots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1713</td>
<td>290°</td>
<td>20 knots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1716</td>
<td>240°</td>
<td>22 knots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1717</td>
<td>260°</td>
<td>Altered course towards wreckage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX C *

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE “KORMORAN” AND HER CRUISE†

According to her survivors the German raider Kormoran was the German S.S. Steiermark, a vessel of 9,400 tons, with a maximum speed of 18 knots, reduced, at the time of her action with the Sydney, to 15 or 16 knots by foul bottom. At this time she was disguised as the Straat Malakka with a black hull, black funnel, and buff superstructure, and was flying the Dutch flag. She had sailed as Raider No. 41 and received the name Kormoran at sea.

Her armament was not positively established but it appears to have been six 15-cm. (6-in.) guns, six torpedo tubes, four on deck and two submerged, and two 3.7-cm. A.A. guns. She also carried a number of mines, probably about 200, and one aircraft which, being difficult to hoist out, was not often used. She carried a number of disguises such as a second funnel and additional masts but as she was built on Dutch lines and flew a Dutch flag which for general purposes provided sufficient disguise these, too, were not used.

She left Germany on 4th December, 1940, and steered along the Norwegian coast before passing between Iceland and Greenland and down the Atlantic where she sank the following ships:

- Antonis (Gr.) 3,729 3° S., 30° W. 13th January.
- British Union (Br.) 6,987 26° 36' N, 30° 15' W. 18th January.
- Ari Star (Br.) 11,900 8° N., 15° W. 28th January.
- Eurylochus (Br.) 5,723 8° 15' N, 25° 14' W. 29th January.
- Agnita (Br.) 3,552 4° N., 23° W. 23rd March.
- Craftsman (Br.) 8,022 3° S., 21° W. 9th April.
- Nicolaos, D. L. (Gr.) 5,486 20° S., 22° W. 12th April.

On 27th March she captured the tanker Canadolite, 11,309 tons, in 15° N., 33° W., and sent her into Bordeaux. She entered the Indian Ocean in May and proceeded to the Bay of Bengal where she sank two vessels on 26th June, 1941, the Yugo-Slav ship Velbit, 4,133 tons, and the British ship Mareeba, 3,472 tons, in 8° N., 88° E. Her last victim was the Greek S.S. Stamatios G. Embirikos, 3,941 tons, which she sank near the Maldives Islands. Including the Canadolite she accounted for 68,274 tons of shipping.

* See Section 6.
† M. 05540/42.
APPENDIX D

MOST SECRET MESSAGE 1618A/16 December
Date: 16th December, 1941.

From Admiralty.

Analysis of encounters with enemy merchant raiders by H.M.S. Cornwall on 8th May, 1941, in the Indian Ocean; H.M.A.S. Sydney off the West Australian coast on 19th November, 1941; and H.M.S. Devonshire in the South Atlantic on 22nd November, 1941, brings out following points:

(A) Recognition:
1. Cornwall's raider reported herself as S.S. Tamerlane, who was not on the station.
2. Sydney's raider replied to a challenge that she was S.S. Straal Malakha, who had that day left Beira.
3. Devonshire's raider reported herself as S.S. Polyphemus then in New York.

Comment—
4. Enemy raiders will always disguise themselves and use the appropriate name in any signal whether by an RR message on 500 k/c or the reply to a challenge.

(B) Challenge procedure:
Merchand ship recognition procedure laid down in Recognition Manual and N.C.S.I. 371 does not appear to have been used. This is now only applicable to red ensign and some Dutch ships, but arrangements are in hand for its extension to U.S. and all Allied ships.

(C) Tactics:
There is a possibility that commanding officers under-estimate the offensive power of raiders. They should be warned that enemy raiders are often powerfully armed with guns and torpedoes and if fitted with modern R.D.F. may be able to open fire even at long range with great accuracy.

(D) U-Boats:
Commanding officers should be warned that all enemy vessels throughout the world may be accompanied by U-Boats and that the merchant vessel's tactics will be designed to lead the British ship towards the U-Boat.
Durban (crUISer) .................................................. Escorts Zealandia, November, 1941, 7; sights unidentified enemy vessel, 18th March, 1942, 11.

Eurylochus (Br. s.s.) ........................................... Sunk by Kormoran, 29th January, 1941, 7, Appendix C.

Greif (German armed raider, 1916) ...................................... Action with Alcantara, 28th February, 1916, 1.

Hardy, Capt. H. W. M., R.N. ........................................... Commanding Carnarvon Castle, engages enemy raider, 5th December, 1940, 3.


Hawkins (crUISer) .................................................. Flag of R.A. South America Division, July, 1940, 2.


Jevett (U.S. t.b.d.) .................................................. Searches reported raider position, 4th November, 1941, 10.

Kennedy-Purvis, Vice-Admiral Sir Charles, K.C.B. ...................................... Commander-in-Chief, America and West Indies, April, 1941, 5.

King John (Br. s.s.) ........................................... Sunk by raider, 13th July, 1940, 2.

Koolinda (Br. s.s.) .................................................. Picks up Kormoran survivors, November, 1941, 7.

Kormoran, Ex German s.s. Steismarsh (German armed raider No. 41) Lost in action with Sydney, 19th November, 1941, 1, 7; description and cruise of, Appendix C.

Leander (crUISer, New Zealand Division) ........................................... Sinks R.A.M.B.I, 27th February, 1941, 4.


Marcela (Br. s.s.) ........................................... Sunk by Kormoran, 26th June, 1941, Appendix C.

Memphis (U.S. cruiser) ........................................... Searches reported raider position, 4th November, 1941, 10.

Nikolaos D.L. (Gr. s.s.) ........................................... Sunk by Kormoran, April 12th, 1941, Appendix C.

Odenwald (German supply ship) ........................................... Captured by Omaha, 6th November, 1941, 10.

Oliver, Capt. R. D., D.S.C., R.N. ........................................... Commanding Devoushire, sinks enemy supply ship, 22nd November, 1941, 8.

Olven (R.F.A. oiler) ........................................... Reports raider attack, 4th November, 1941, 10.

Omaha (U.S. cruiser) ........................................... Captures Odenwald, 6th November, 1941, 10.

Pegram, Capt. F. H. (Commodore 2nd Class) Commodore, South America Division, December, 1940, 3.

Polyphemus (Br. s.s.) ........................................... Enemy submarine supply ship, reports herself as, 22nd November, 1941, 8, Appendix D.

Pretoria Castle (a.m.c.) ........................................... Aircraft from sights suspicious ship, 26th April, 1942, 11.

Prince David (Canadian a.m.c.) ........................................... Discovers wreckage, probably of Voltaire, 7th April, 1941, 5.

Princess Beatrix (special service vessel) Hunts for raider, 4-6th November, 1941, 10.

Queen Emma (special service vessel) Hunts for raider, 4-6th November, 1941, 10.

Raider No. 33 (German) ........................................... Sunk by Cornwall, 8th May, 1941, 6.

Raider No. 41 (German) ........................................... See Kormoran.

Raiders, enemy armed ........................................... Tonnage sunk by, 1914-18, and 1939-41, 1; problem of distinguishing from supply ships, 9.


R.A.M.B.I (Italian armed raider) ........................................... Sunk by Leander, 27th February, 1941, 4.

Rehum (German tanker) ........................................... Leaves Teneriffe, 17th July, 1940, 2.

Santa Cruz (German armed raider) May have sunk Voltaire, April, 1941, 5.

Somers (U.S. t.b.d.) ........................................... Captures Odenwald, 8th November, 1941, 10.

Steismarsh (German s.s.) ........................................... See Kormoran.

Speybach (Ex British s.s.) ........................................... Enemy minelaying raider, March, 1942, 11.

Stenatos G. Embirdikos (Gr. s.s.) ........................................... Sunk by Kormoran, 1941, Appendix C.
NOTES ON PLANS

PLAN 1

THE "ALCANTARA'S" ACTION
28th JULY, 1940

The diagram in the Alcantara's report (M.018572/40) shows the Alcantara's track, but not that of the raider. The report gives only the initial bearing of the enemy from the Alcantara and it has not been possible to produce a reliable track of his course. The raider's track in Plan 1, while conforming with all the available data, must therefore be regarded merely as a diagram of the enemy's probable movements.

PLANS 2 AND 3

THE "CARNARVON CASTLE'S" ACTION
5th DECEMBER, 1940

M.02910/41, "H.M.S. Carnarvon Castle, Report of Action with German Raider on 5th December, 1940," contains a diagram of the tracks of the Carnarvon Castle and the raider. The diagram is not to scale and the enemy's track differs in many respects from the data in the text of the report. The raider's track has therefore been redrawn in Plan 2 to conform as far as possible with the available data, but, as in Plan 1, it must be regarded merely as a diagram of the enemy's probable movements. The Carnarvon Castle's diagram is reproduced in Plan 3.
ACTION BETWEEN H.M.S. ALCANTARA AND A RAIDER.
JULY 28, 1940.

N.B. The enemy's track is based solely on Alcantara's Report (M.018572/40), (See "Note on Plans").

ZONE TIME +2.

Wind S.E. Force 3.

1400 Raider opened fire, range 16,000, 4 salvos.

1413 Raider hit.

1430 approx. Fired stern guns.

1435 Smoke.

Alcantara's track. ————
Raider's track. ————

C.B. 3081 (S).

AREA OF ACTION

Ilha da Trindade

BRAZIL

C.S. Thome

Rio de Janeiro

24'S

32°W

30°W.

50°

31°40'W
H.M.S. Carnarvon Castle's action with a German Raider, Dec 5th 1940.

This plan is based on a diagram (Plan 3), in M.02910/41, (See "Notes on Plans").

Zone Time + 2.

Wind N.E. Force 3.
H.M.S. CARNARVON CASTLE'S DIAGRAM from M.02910/41.

Track of H.M.S. CARNARVON CASTLE
Track of Raider

C.B. 3081 (5).

TSD/HS (163).
PLAN 4

ACTION BETWEEN H.M.S. CORNWALL
AND A GERMAN RAIDER
MAY 7-8 1941.

Zone Time - 5.

0555-0715/7
Raider sinks "British Emperor" in
8°30'N. 50°29'E.

RAIDER

Sights Cornwall and turns away.
0330/8 Moonset, 9°c to 143°
Flew off both 0650 9°c
0628 Turned on receipt
9°c report.

Recovered at 1900

Recalo

Flew off both 1015

1057 Energy in sight
1019 Altered course

RAIDER

CORNWALL

0515 Cornwall on passage
to Seychelles.

12 knots
0625 9°c to 340° on
"British Emperor"s raider alarm

8°30'N. 50°29'E.

Area of Action

C.B. 3081 (5).

TSD/NS. (182).
Sketch from “Interrogation of Kormoran’s survivors.” December 6th 1941.

PLAN 5

H.M.A.S. SYDNEY’S ACTION
NOVEMBER 19TH 1941.

Zone Time – 7

C. B. 306/ (3).

TSD/HS (184)
PLAN 6

H.M.S. DORSETSHIRE'S ACTION.
1ST DECEMBER 1941.

C.B. 3081 (5).

TSD/HS (183)
PLAN 8

Destruction of
Raider C. in
Atlantic by
H.M.S. DEVONSHIRE
22nd November 1941.

Times & positions of Raider
from data obtained from
A/F/C Table Plots

Enemy course & speed,
100', 15 km. From aircraft.

Explosion 1000. Sunk 1030.
LIST OF BATTLE SUMMARIES ISSUED OR IN PREPARATION.

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<th>Summary</th>
<th>Date(s)</th>
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<td>OPERATIONS AT ORAN,</td>
<td>23rd-26th July, 1940.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ACTION OFF CAPE SPADA, CRETE,</td>
<td>19th July, 1940.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>ATTACK ON Richelieu DAKAR,</td>
<td>8th July, 1940.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>OPERATIONS, CRETE,</td>
<td>20th May-1st June, 1941.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>OPERATIONS AGAINST Bismarck,</td>
<td>23rd-27th May, 1941.</td>
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<td>BARDIA, BOMBARDMENTS.</td>
<td>1940-1941.</td>
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<td>GENOA, BOMBARDMENT.</td>
<td>9th February, 1941.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ACTION OFF CAPE CALABRIA,</td>
<td>9th July, 1940.</td>
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<td>ACTION OFF CAPE SPARTIVENTO.</td>
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<td>ATTACK ON TARANTO.</td>
<td>11th November, 1940.</td>
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<td>Schornhorst and Gneisenau,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ST. NAZARE,</td>
<td>28th March, 1942.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ACTIONS WITH ENEMY RAIDERS.</td>
<td>1940-1941.</td>
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* In preparation.