

Ex 2095

Extract from the official log of the BRITISH CHEVALRY,
sunk 22 February 1944.

This is to certify that on February 22nd, 1944 at sea in the Indian Ocean at approximately 10:30 a.m., the vessel received a direct hit by torpedo in the engine-room. Something in the water had been reported to the bridge a few minutes previously, and the Second Officer sighted the track of two torpedoes approaching the starboard quarter. He immediately attempted to take avoiding action. One torpedo passed harmlessly astern, but the other struck in way of the engine room immediately below the galley. An attempt to send a radio message was made but it was found that the apparatus was damaged beyond repair.

An attempt to ascertain the extent of the damage was made, but within three or four minutes of the explosion the engine room was filled with water sufficient to cover the upper platform. The two after boats were rendered useless and the crew aft came amidships and orders were given to clear away two midships boats and four rafts on main decks.

After considering the condition of the vessel which has been rendered totally incapable of proceeding under her own power, the Master decided to abandon ship temporarily in order to prevent further loss of life should another attack be made. Although very much down by the stern the vessel did not appear to be going to founder and it was thought we might return aboard later.

The two boats with all survivors left the ship, and as they drew away the submarine was sighted coming to the surface. One of the boats, a motor boat in charge of the Chief Officer passed the boat under oars in charge of the Master and received instructions to round up the rafts which were floating away. About 5 minutes later the submarine commenced shelling, and according to reports the shots were in line with the Master's boat. Later attention appeared to be made more at shelling the ship, and not until the submarine was within about quarter of a mile of the ship did she score any direct hits. About 20 rounds in all were fired and the ship finally sunk by a third torpedo on her port side. The vessel finally sank at about 11:30 a.m.

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During the sinking of the ship a roll call was made and casualties were found to be:

S. Morrison	4th Engineer
R. O'Neil	Fireman
J. Gallagher	Fireman
T. Byrne	Fireman
J. Sayers	Ship's cook
G. Hobbins	Galley boy
K. Bagshaw	Apprentice

After sinking the vessel the submarine then opened fire on the two lifeboats with light machine gun fire. A white flag of truce was displayed from the Master's boat and machine-gunning ceased. Attempts to signal by semaphore were made. The submarine closed the boats and waved us alongside. It was noted that the submarine was manned by Japanese. They intimated that they required the Master to board her, which he did. The boats were then ordered to carry on and the submarine moved off.

After the boats had been proceeding for about 5 minutes in company the submarine suddenly altered course and steered for them, and on passing heavy machine gunning of the boats commenced. Most of the crew dived into the water and some lay down inside the boats. The machine gunning lasted until about 2 p.m. when one boat containing Radio equipment etc. had been sunk and the other left in a sinking condition. The sub made off in a S. W.'ly direction.

Strenuous efforts were then made by the surviving members of the crew to bale out the remaining boat, and at about 5 pm had been successfully made in a condition to be of use. Rafts and survivors in the water were then gathered together and a consultation was held amongst the officers. Another roll call was made and the names of those killed by machine gunning were as follows:

W. Dickinson	Chief Engineer	E. Penfold	Deck hand
C. Mann	2nd Engineer	H. King	Deck hand
C. Kennedy	1st Radio Officer	D. Merrill	Deck hand
C. Cookesley	Chief Steward	C. Keneally	A.B.
T. Beighton	Deck hand	W. Mitchell	Greaser
R. Saunders	Deck hand	J. Gillan	Greaser

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Wounded as follows:

J. Sloan	Deck hand	Lacerations from bullet right shoulder, under chin and back of neck.
G. Taylor	Deck hand	Bullet wound in chest and right forearm.
P. Noonan	ERS	Lacerations from bullet under chin.
L. Morris	A.B.	Laceration from bullet in head and bullet hole through right forearm.
L. Abbott	Deck hand	Bullet in buttock near anus, bullet extracted in boat.

Others had various cuts and abrasions.

After considering the chances of rescue it was decided that it would be hopeless to remain in the area. The boat in company with one raft and all available provisions moved off in an attempt to make land, using the most favorable conditions of wind, weather and currents, etc. Plans were made for making roughly a 1500 mile passage and a scale of rations calculated accordingly.

At 11:30 pm on 23 February 1944, Able Seaman L. Morris, suffering from wounds as described above lost his life by drowning. His wounds were such a character that he had been rendered insane and efforts were made by survivors on the raft to restrain him. He proved to be too violent to hold and during the struggling evaded the others, jumped overboard and disappeared from view before rescue could be effected.

On February 25, Friday, the engine rendered useless by seawater was dumped overboard and the occupants of the raft were transferred to the boat.

The subsequent proceedings of this report were such as might be expected during a period of great hardship and suffering of 38 men cast adrift for 37 days in an overcrowded boat. During this period morale in the boat was excellent, and the conduct and bearing of the men was at all times cheerful and courageous.

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Special mention may be made of three men - Mr. J. Edwards, 3rd Engineer, for calm bearing and cheerful influence on all; Petty Officer Frank Alder, donkeyman, for valuable work rendered in first aid and the care of the sick and wounded; Able Seaman Harry Belcher, for his outstanding ability and brilliant seamanship.

On Wednesday 20th March at 1114 GMT, the boat was sighted by M. V. DELANE and rescue was effected.

(signed) P. Payne, 1st Mate
W. R. Mountain, 2nd Mate