

Account of the Naval Action.

Wednesday. May 31<sup>st</sup> 1916.

The Grand Fleet went to sea on Tuesday evening the 30<sup>th</sup> and steamed in an easterly direction towards the Shaggyrah. During the forenoon on Wednesday reports came in that the Battle Cruisers were in action with the German battle cruisers. A bit later the 5<sup>th</sup> Battle Squadron was also reported to be in action. The 5 Queen Elizabeths made up this squadron and are usually known as the Fast Battle Squadron. The 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Battle Squadrons were together in 6 divisions with the destroyers and light cruisers deployed all round them.

We went to "Action Stations" at 4.30 p.m. and saw the Battle Cruisers in action ahead of us on the starboard bow. Some of the other cruisers were firing on the port bow. As we came up the "Lion" leading our Battle Cruisers appeared to be on fire the port side of the fore-castle, but it was not serious. They turned up to starboard so as not to cut across the bows of the Fleet. As far as one could see only 2 German Battle Squadrons and all their Battle Cruisers were out.

The "Colossus" leading the 6<sup>th</sup> division with the "Collingwood" her next astern were nearest the enemy. The whole Fleet deployed at 5.0 and opened out. We opened fire at 5.37 p.m. on some German light cruisers. The "Collingwood's" second salvo hit one of them which set her on fire, and sank after two more salvos were fired into her. We then shifted on to another light cruiser and helped to sink her as well. Our next target was a battle cruiser, we think the <sup>Demington or Lutnow</sup> "DANMARK", and one of the "Collingwood's" salvos hit her abaft the after turret, which burst into a fierce flame. After this she turned away from us and disappeared

into the mist. By this time it was too dark to fire and we went to Night Defense stations. The 4" guns were manned to repel destroyer attacks. Our 12" firing was very good, though rather slow, as we could only fire at the flashes of the German guns. The range at the commencement was 10000 yds and ceased at 8000 yds. The German fired some of their torpedoes but only one of them took effect in the "Hulbrough"; the flagship of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battle Squadron. One of her boiler rooms one of her hydraulic rooms and one of her dynamo rooms were flooded and her speed was reduced to 14 knots. She succeeded in getting into the Heer bay. One torpedo passed ahead of the "Collingwood" and another astern. We had no casualties and no damage done to us, though we were "straddled" several times. That is some of the shot in a salvo <sup>firing</sup> shot of the ship and other over.

The "Solferino" was hit once in the superstructure which wounded 7 men, and put the main derrick out of action. The "Bachem" and "Alalaya" and "Morpheus" in the 5<sup>th</sup> Battle Squadron were hit. The latter had to go to Rosyth at once. The 2 former had a good many killed and wounded. The "Bachem" 28-killed, 41-wounded and the "Alalaya" 38-killed, 53-wounded. The <sup>was</sup> had <sup>was</sup> <sup>concentrated</sup> on by the German <sup>at once</sup> battle cruisers, and was hit by several salvos. She blew up in a huge sheet of flame and smoke, and when this sank down she had utterly disappeared.

The "Warner" was totally disabled and had to be abandoned. Several of our destroyers were sunk and some were taken in tow by others. Whether they ~~are~~ have all got in <sup>is</sup> <sup>not</sup> yet known.

The German Fleet all turned away from us after dark followed by our light cruisers and destroyers who

attached them during the night. The result is not yet known as to whether they accounted for any more of the enemy. We were not attacked at all during the night and everything was very quiet.

The Fleet steamed south 40 miles off the Danish coast all night. The Action was fought about 40 miles south of the Skagerrak and 40 miles off the Danish coast. We went to action stations at 2.0 a.m. on Thursday June 1<sup>st</sup> but there was no sign of the enemy to be seen. We saw a Skutza-long sloop at 4.0 a.m. who came out to make a report as to where we were. She was fired at by several ships. Her range was about 12000 yds. She made off as soon as we fired at her. We remained at action stations all day till 5.30 p.m. We returned to Scapa Flow at noon on Friday June 2<sup>nd</sup> and coaled and ammunitioned at once.

I was in A turret and watched most of the action through one of the trainer telescopes, as we were firing by Director, when the turret is trained in the swaying chamber and not in the gun house. At the commencement I was sitting on the top of A turret and had a very good view of the proceedings. I was up there during a lull, when a German ship started firing at us, and one salvo "straddled" us. We at once returned the fire. I was distinctly startled and jumped down the hole in the top of the turret like a hot rabbit!! I didn't try the experience again. The ship was in a fierce state on the main deck, tubes of water splashing about to prevent fire from getting a hold on the deck. Most of the cabins were also flooded.

The bands behaved splendidly and all of them in the best of spirits as their heart's desire had at last

been granted, which was to be in action with the Germans. Some of the turret's crew actually took on bets with one another that we should not fire a shot. A good deal of money must have changed hands I should think by now.

My impressions were very different to what I expected. I saw visions of the masts going over the side and funnels hurtling through the air etc.

In reality none of these things happened and we are still quite sound as before. No one would know to look at the ship that we had been in action.

It was ~~it~~ certainly a great experience to have been through and it shows that we are at war and that the Germans can fight if they like.