

ADMIRALTY

24th May, 1918

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Report of Court of Enquiry into an attack on

H.M.S. EDGAR by an enemy submarine on

4th April, 1918

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A. M. S. Edgar.

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Court of Enquiry

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This image shows a blank, aged, cream-colored page, likely an endpaper or flyleaf of a book. The paper has a slightly textured appearance with some minor creases and discoloration, characteristic of old paper. The left edge of the page shows the binding of the book, and the overall tone is a warm, off-white or light beige.

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42

ATTACK ON H.M.S. "EDGAR" BY AN ENEMY SUBMARINE
ON 4th. APRIL, 1918.

No. 0607.

BRITISH COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.

The attached minutes, in duplicate, relative to an attack on H.M.S. "EDGAR" by an enemy submarine are submitted.



MALTA.

16th. April, 1918.

ADMIRAL SUPERINTENDENT.

II.

No. 699/2070/12.

The Secretary of the Admiralty.

Forwarded for the information of the Board, observing that the value of blister protection was remarkably demonstrated by the fact that "Edgar" proceeded into Malta at full speed on an even keel.

2.- It appears possible that the submarine was damaged.

Vice-Admiral.

27th April, 1918.

British Commander-in-Chief.

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9 MAY 1918
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a. J. G. H. S.

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27th April, 1918.

British Commander-in-Chief.

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Minutes of Court Inquiry held on board H.M.S. "EDGAR" on Friday 12th. April 1918, concerning the attack on H.M.S. "EDGAR" by an enemy submarine on 4th. April 18.

The following Officers constituted the Court:-

Captain E. R. Morant, D.S.O., R.N. H.M.S. "BIARRITZ" (President)
Engineer Commander H. W. Portch, R.N., H.M.S. "FORESIGHT"
Lieutenant O. North, R.N., H.M. Submarine "H.4".

Commander Noel Stephen Tindall, R.N. was called and cautioned that what he was about to say may be made use of against him.

1. Will you give the Court a short report of what actually happened on the occasion. ?
On the 4th. April ship was proceeding to steer South and West about the Medina Shoal. Whilst on a northerly course at 05.40 G.M.T. a torpedo struck the blister on the starboard side, in line with S.3 gun and apparently directly in line with the direction of the sun. I was in my cabin on the fore-bridge and saw the track of the torpedo immediately afterwards. I did not see the submarine, nor, apparently, did any of the lookouts. The ship immediately listed to star-board ~~ab~~ and obtained a list of about 5 degrees in five minutes. The port blisters were flooded forward and the ship uprighted.

2. Where was your escort at the time. ?
Ahead of ship, zig-zagging.
3. How many in the escort. ?
One destroyer.
4. Have you on board the R. message R.903. ?
Unfortunately I have returned all my confidential books.
5. Have you your sailing orders. ?
Yes.

The Sailing orders were produced and examined by the Court.

6. Previous to being torpedoed did you make any direct communication by wireless to Malta. ?
No.
7. Did you receive any ~~arrows~~ ^{allos}. ?
We had several submarine reports during the night of submarines in the vicinity of Malta.
8. Were they all plotted. ?
Yes.
9. Were any of these ~~arrows~~ ^{allos} in direct line you intended taking to Malta. ?
No.
10. How many look-outs had you. ?
Two 3-pounder guns crews on the forebridge, lookouts at the 6" V.L. gun on the forecastle in addition to the ordinary bridge lookouts, and one marine 3-pounder gun's crew aft.
11. Are these guns crews all in four hour watches. ?
Yes, four hour watches.

12. What was the state of the weather at the time. ?
Clear and smooth and with a light breeze.
13. After you were struck what did your escort do. ?
The escort immediately turned to starboard and proceeded in the direction of the track of the torpedo.
I fired one round of three pounder to give him the direction and he proceeded to drop depth charges.
A ship subsequently passed over the same spot and reported oil on the surface.
14. How long after the ship was struck did it take to right the ship. ?
From the time the blow was struck to the maximum list obtained was five minutes and the ship was uprighted at the end of ten minutes - a total of ten minutes.
15. Are all the valves worked from the upper deck. ?
Yes.
16. Did anyone see the discharge of the torpedo from the submarine, or the periscope. ?
No, but two men think they saw the torpedo break surface before the torpedo actually struck the ship.
17. Has the "Edgar" any depth charges. ?
The depth charges were not in place. The maximum speed of the ship is ten knots.
18. Do you think with a single escort that ahead is the correct position. ?
I consider now, that the "Hope" might, with better advantage, have been stationed between the ship and the sun.
19. Were you zig-zagging at the time. ?
Yes. The "Hope" was zig-zagging four points ahead.
20. What particular zig-zag were you doing at the time. ?
The "Edgar" was zig-zagging fifteen degrees and the escort zig-zagging 45 degrees on either bow.
31. Do you know how long you had been on a steady course, at the time. ?
Four minutes had elapsed since the last alteration of course.

Witness was allowed to remain.

Temporary Lieutenant Roland Blake, R.N.R. was called and cautioned that what he was about to say may be made use of against him.

22. Were you Officer of the watch on the 4th. April at the time H.M.S. "Edgar" was struck by a torpedo. ?
Yes.
23. Will you give a short narrative of what occurred. ?
I was walking up and down the bridge, keeping the usual look out and heard an explosion on the starboard quarter and turning round saw the top of the splash.
I gave orders to the guns crews to train round to the approximate position of the submarine and then went to collision stations.

24. Did you see anything of the submarine. ?
No.
25. What was the ship's actual course at the time. ?
I cannot tell you without looking at the log.
26. Was the ship carrying out a zig-zag. ?
Yes
27. Do you know of anybody in the ship who saw the submarine or periscope. ?
No.

Witness withdrew.

Lieutenant Reginald Douglas Beard, R.N.R., was called and cautioned that what he was about to say may be made use of against him.

28. Are you the Navigating Officer of H.M.S. "EDGAR". ?
Yes.
29. Before leaving Mudros did you proceed on board H.M.S. "Europa" and request that your exact time of arrival at Malta should be telegraphed. ?
Yes.
30. Did you plot the allos received on your passage. ?
Yes.
31. Have you got them on any chart. ?
No, I have not got them on a chart now. They were all on a chart but the chart has been cleaned up since.
32. Can you recollect if any of them were across your track. ?
The only thing it said in the war ^{warning} ~~news~~ was that submarines were south of Malta.
33. What R. Orders did you receive regarding approaching Malta. ?
Not to cross ~~the~~ north ^{end of} Medina Bank and to give it a good clearance on either side.

Witness withdrew.

Lieutenant Colin A. G. Hutchison, R.N. was called and cautioned that what he was about to say may be made use of against him.

34. Were you in command of H.M.S. "Hope" doing escort duty on the 4th. April. ?
Yes.
35. Will you give a short account of what happened and what you did on the occasion of H.M.S. "Edgar" being torpedoed. ?
I was Officer of the Watch at about D.535. We were approximately three points on the starboard bow of H.M.S. "Edgar" a distance of 800 yards, steering to cross the "Edgar's" bows from starboard to port. We had just altered to port to cross the "Edgar's" bows when an explosion was observed on the starboard side aft on H.M.S. "Edgar". My coxswain was on the bridge with me

and he took the wheel. Helm was put hard a port and speed increased to full speed (about twenty one knots).

Smoke screen was started and I turned ~~round ship~~ ^{around} and laid three depth charges in a triangular pattern where I considered the submarine to be

36. Did you see anything of the submarine, or track of a torpedo. ?

None at all.

37. Where were your look-outs. ?

Forward lookouts - one able seaman at the lower yard, this man was placed there ~~at~~ ^{on} my orders at daylight, as I anticipated a submarine would be in the vicinity.

One able seaman on the starboard side of searchlight platform and one able seaman on the port side of searchlight platform. Two able seamen looking out aft and acting as depth charge watch keepers. The signalman was also on the bridge.

38. What speed were you doing your zig-zagging at. ?

It is rather difficult to say as we had one engine out of action, but I should think about sixteen knots.

39. Did you see anything after you dropped your depth charges. ?

No.

40. Did you have all boilers connected up. ?

Yes.

41. Was one engine out of action the whole of the trip. ?

Yes

42. How long after the explosion in the "Edgar " did you drop the depth charges. ?

About three minutes

43. Do you know if anybody in your ship saw a periscope or any signs of the submarine. ?

I am certain no one did.

Witness withdrew.

Lieutenant Robert Trafford Martin, R.N.R. was called and cautioned that what he was about to say may be made use of against him.

44. Did H.M.S. "Hibiscus" pass over a spot where depth charges are supposed to have been dropped, on the 4th. of April 1918. ?

I passed over close to where the "Edgar" was torpedoed.

45. Did you see anything likely to give one to understand that a submarine had been destroyed. ?

I saw a track of oil about one mile in length, in places about one hundred yards wide; at the end of the track it was very thick indeed. It had a very strong smell and appeared to be shale oil.

46. Was there any wreckage at all. ?

None.

47. Can you tell the difference between the different kinds of oil on the water ?

No. I made that statement to the best of my knowledge.

48. What class of oil was it: ?

In the opinion of my Engineer Officer it would not be oil used in destroyers or other surface craft.

Witness withdrew.

Engineer Commander Frank Sidney Ainsworth, R.N., was called and cautioned that what he was about to say may be made use of against him.

49. Where were you at the time the torpedo struck the ship. ?

In my cabin.

50. Will you tell us what you did directly after. ?

I went up on deck and supervised the flooding of the blisters and when the ship was on even keel I went down to the engine room.

51. Will you give us a rough idea of the damage and what steps were taken to make same good. ?

The wing bulkhead of the engine room and number 76 transverse bulkhead were distorted. There was a hissing of air escaping which could not, at the time, be located, but it was quite obvious that both the lower Engineers Store underneath the platform of port dynamo, and the upper Engineers Store, which is situated on the deck above, were taking in water. I went up to the bridge and reported this to the Captain and asked for carpenters assistance for shoring. The Carpenter came down and he and the senior engineer shored the bulkheads and fitted wedges in the door leading from the upper Engineers store into the engine room. We found also that water had penetrated into the 44 oil tanks situated forward of the lower Engineers stores previously mentioned. After we got into harbour we found that

this occurred through the ventilating trunk leading from the ventilating fan aft, which runs practically the whole length of the ship through the wing compartments.

Since arriving in harbour we have cut that trunk and blank-flanged it and stopped all leakage into this compartment.

At present we have one compartment full and two others which are now accessible but require constant pumping.

52. At the time the torpedo struck the ship, she was doing 66 revolutions both engines ?

That is so.

53. You eventually proceeded at full speed. ?

Yes, approximately 71 revolutions.

Witness withdrew.

Commander Noel Stephen Tindall, R.N. recalled.

54. What was the speed of the ship at the time. ?
The speed through the water would be about 10 knots.
55. What was the speed of the ship through the water after she had been struck. ?
I consider the speed had been reduced by about one knot

Witness was allowed to remain.

Edwin Speight, Petty Officer, 225137 was called and cautioned that what he was about to say may be made use of against him.

56. Where were you at the time H.M.S. "Edgar" was struck, on the 4th April. ?
On the forecastle
57. What was your duty. ?
I was Petty Officer in charge of duty quarter clean guns.
58. What did you see. ?
I was talking to Leading Seaman Paffett at the forecastle gun and looking out to sea. I observed a small splash in the water about as small as a one inch aiming rifle would make. I called the leading seaman's attention to it and asked him if he saw anything, and pointed out the direction to look; almost immediately he saw the track of a torpedo. With that, he shouted out "torpedo starboard side". At the same time he jumped on to the gun platform. I gave orders to train right and closed the gun's crew up. ~~After~~ two seconds after that an explosion occurred. The Officer of the watch then gave us the bearing and object and then had the gun trained on the 60 degrees bearing on the object, ahead.
59. How long was it from the time you say Leading Seaman Paffett hailed the bridge and the explosion of the torpedo. ?
About two seconds. The torpedo was about fifty yards away.

Witness withdrew.

Alfred Paffett, Leading Seaman, J. 5626 was called and cautioned that what he was about to say may be made use of against him.

60. Where were you on the morning of the 4th. April when the ship was torpedoed. ?
On the forecastle.
61. What were your duties. ?
Lockout of the bow gun at cleaning quarters.
62. Did you see any signs of a periscope or torpedo. ?
I never saw the submarine, but I saw the track of a torpedo.
63. How far off. ?
Between fifty and sixty yards.

64. On seeing that, what did you do. ?
I shouted to the bridge "~~starboa~~ "torpedo starboard side, load, train right".
65. About how long after you hailed the bridge was it the torpedo exploded. ?
About a couple of seconds.
66. Roughly, could you judge what angle the torpedo was coming. ?
Two points abaft the beam.

Witness withdrew.

Lance Sergeant Charles Flynn, R.M.L.I. Po.16429 was called and cautioned that what he was about to say may be made use of against him.

67. Where were you on the morning of the 4th. April when this ship was torpedoed. ?
At the starboard after three-pounder gun on the shelter deck.
68. Did you see anything of a submarine or track of a torpedo. ?
Not before the ship was struck.
69. Did you see the track of the torpedo after the ship was struck. ?
Yes.
70. Can you give a rough idea of the bearing of the track.? About two points abaft the beam.
71. Had you seen a periscope could you have fired with the gun you were at. ?
On the starboard side, yes, but not on the port side with that gun.

Witness withdrew.

Walter Garforth, Ordinary Seaman, J. 48030 was called and cautioned that what he was about to say may be made use of against him.

72. Where were you on the morning of the 4th. April when the ship was torpedoed. ?
On the upper bridge.
73. Did you see anything of a submarine or track of a torpedo. ?
I saw the track of a torpedo after the ship had been struck.

Witness withdrew.

Frederick Ernest Gurney, Able Seaman, J. 33906 was called and cautioned that what he was about to say may be made use of against him.

74. Where were you on the morning of 4th. April ^{when} was the ship was torpedoed. ?

On the Upper bridge.

75. Did you see anything of a submarine or track of a torpedo before the ship was struck. ?
No.

Witness withdrew.

Dennis Betteridge, Able Seaman, J. 38764. was called and cautioned that what he was about to say may be made use of against him.

76. Where were you on the morning of the 4th. April when ship was torpedoed. ?
I was masthead lookout.

77. Did you see anything of a submarine or track of a torpedo before the ship was struck. ?
No.

Witness withdrew.

Frederick Hewlett, Able Seaman, J. 38785 was called and cautioned that what he was about to say may be made use of against him.

78. Where were you on the morning of 4th. April when the ship was torpedoed. ?
Starboard lookout on the bridge.

79. Did you see anything of a submarine or track of a torpedo before the ship was struck. ?
No.

Witness withdrew.

John Archibald Little, Seaman R.N.R. A. 8417 was called and cautioned that what he was about to say may be made use of against him.

80. Where were you on the morning of 4th. April when the ship was torpedoed. ?
At the starboard three-pounder gun on the forebridge.

81. Did you see anything of a submarine or track of a torpedo before the ship was struck. ?
No.

82. Were you keeping a good look out. ? Yes.

Witness withdrew.

Commander Noel Stephen Tindall, R.N. withdrew.

PRESIDENT.

[Signature]

CAPTAIN, R.N.

[Signature]

ENGINEER COMMANDER, R.N.

[Signature]

LIEUTENANT, R.N.

FINDING OF THE COURT.

After holding a strict and careful inquiry into the circumstances attending the attack on H.M.S. "EDGAR " by an enemy submarine on 4th. April 1918., the Court is of opinion that:-

1. No blame is attributable to anyone: apparently lookouts were well placed and the ship was on a zig-zag. When the track of the torpedo was sighted it was too late for the Officer of the Watch to take any steps to avoid the torpedo.
2. After the explosion all requisite steps were taken to localize damage and ensure the safety of the ship, and we concur with Commander Tindall's remarks, as specified in the last paragraph of his report.
3. The course steered was in accordance with the sailing orders received and the latest R. messages.
4. From the allos received the Commanding Officer was justified in maintaining his course.
5. The escort on this occasion took all necessary ~~precaution~~ steps and from the evidence of Lieutenant Martin R.N.R. of H.M.S. "HIBISCUS" it is possible that the submarine was damaged if not destroyed.
6. It is considered that where only one escort is provided, she should be stationed astern in preference to ahead.

PRESIDENT.

E. R. M. M. M. M.

CAPTAIN, R.N.

H. W. D. J. H.

ENGINEER COMMANDER, R.N.

North

LIEUTENANT, R.N.

Register No.

Minute Sheet No.

52

Noted.

Admiral
for DASD
13/5/18

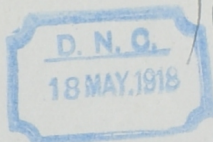
Noted.

Hoang

For D. O. D. (F.)

15/5/18

Noted. Malta has been requested
to send on full details of the damage
sustained by the ship. It is evident
from the Enquiry that the damage
is not extensive.



Proff
have
18/5

Noted.

Johnson
D. D. N. E.

19.5.18

Submitted for information.

W. R. Tuckey
21/5/1918

Seen

The last paragraph of the finding
of C of R is not concerned
in.

Ad 22.5.

Seen.

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23.5.18

Letter as above.
J.S. Forrest
23/5/1918.

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Draft

N.L. 23228.

Confidential

23rd May 1918.

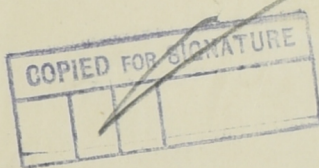
Sir,

With reference to your submission
of the 27th April last No 699/2070/12
forwarding the minutes of Proceedings
at a Court of Enquiry held to
investigate the circumstances
attending the attack on H.M.S. Edgar
by an enemy submarine on
the 4th idem I am so to acquaint
that the last ~~four~~ paragraphs of
the finding of the Court of Enquiry
is not concurred in.

[Signature]

[Signature]
diterman

I am &c.



24th May,

8

-: Confidential :-

Sir,

With reference to your submission, of the 27th April last, No.699/2070/12, forwarding the minutes of Proceedings at a Court of Enquiry held to investigate the circumstances attending the attack on H.M.S. "EDGAR" by an enemy submarine on the 4th idem, I am commanded by My Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to acquaint you that the last peragraph of the Finding of the Court of Enquiry is not concurred in.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

CHARLES WALKER.

in Commander-in-Chief,
Ships and Vessels,
MEDITERRANEAN.

289.5 Admitts 55
1/6/18

L 23228/18

C of V

Ref ~~please~~ for
information

W. H. Paul
#517

4/18. 22 II.
T. M.

6 JUN 1918
Noted.

Henry Skjinner

I.M.S. "Vernon".
5/6/18.

CAPTAIN.