

H.M.S. ARAB
G.P.O.
LONDON.

10th. May, 1940

From> The Commanding Officer.

To> The Naval Officer in Charge, ABERDEEN.
Copy to the Admiral Commanding 20th. Cruiser
Squadron, H.M.S. CARLISLE.

Sir,

I have the honour to submit the following recommendations
For gallantry before and during the evacuation of Namsos.

Sub Lieutenant E. T. Lees,
Coxwain David G. Spindler.

1145, 28th April. After the heavy bombing which set fire to ammunition on wharf at Namsos, I saw there was some hope of putting the fire out as no water supply was available at Namsos. Ran my bows into wharf, keeping engines slow ahead, ran hoses from Forecastle to fire 20 yard away. I sent all men aft, taking Sub - Lieutenant Lees and Coswain to man hoses. After two hours during, which could see constant bombing, there was no hope of putting fire out. These men knew that 40 tons of grenades were buried beneath the fire. Proceeded to assist HMT "Angle" in towing French ammunition ship S/S "Saumur" down Fjord under bombing attacks. A wire had fouled her propeller, stood by alongside until propeller was clear.

2300. Alongside wharf again embarking French troops. All my crew proceeded to load as much stores as possible for the French.

30th. Noon. Took off wounded from HMT "St. Goran", heavy bombing. By this time my speed had reduced to about 4 knots owing to castings in engine room broken by near missed bombs and something was wrong with shaft and propeller. After receiving signal from Carlisle saying Enemy ships and submarines were expected and they were to be engaged, decided that the "Arab" could be placed alongside cliff at south corner of Kroken Bay (Gaul was holed and beached in the bay) Which commanded the entrance to Namsen Fjord. Landed all machine guns and some French machine guns (stores which were never landed and I took liberty of using) also a bomb throwing gun mortar which had a range of 15 yards and about a hundred bombs for it. I had very good emplacements made just above the "Arab" and also 200 feet further up on another cliff. I had "Gaul" crew with me as well. A four-inch gun was bearing on the entrance and could be manned in one minute. Manropes led down the 200-foot cliff right on to the ship. Kept A/S watch.

Wednesday, 1st. 0530. HMT "Aston Villa" arrived and made fast about 100 yards south. I gathered her men to join up with "Arab" and "Gaul". Received orders to destroy A/S gear.

Noon. HMT "Gaul" bombed and sunk. 1700. "Aston Villa" bombed and set on fire with a direct hit. Sub - Lieutenant Lees and C. Hossack, Seaman, attended the wounded under heavy machine gun fire from the bombing planes. Made stretchers out of firtrees and carried wounded down cliff sides.

2000. Owing to the danger of "Aston Villa,s" magazine going up, I decided to move "Arab", asked Group Commander Congreve, who was on board the "Angle" permission to board my ship, but he decided that it was too dangerous. Decided that I would attempt to save my ship, Sub - Lieutenant Lees, J. Nicolson, sec. Engineer and myself boarded "Arab", cut lines and proceeded to move, Just clear when "Aston Villa,s" magazine exploded. Proceed alongside cliff in Kroken Bay and embarked "Aston Villa" and "Gaul,s" crews including wounded and the Surgeon of the destroyer "Griffin" who had been attending the wounded.

Thursday, 2nd. 0200. Transferred "Aston Villa,s" and "Gaul,s" crews to "Griffin". Ordered to leave Namsen Fjord.

Noon. Attacked by Heinkle 115 who made plain language visual message "go east or be sunk". A very polite reply was sent back. He must have been a novice as he circled us drawing closer each time,

machine gunning us. I held my fire to tempt him closer. He must have thought we had no ammunition as he banked just forward of the beam at a distance of 800 yards, let him have it with five Lewis Guns and Oerliken. Came down about two miles astern, did not attempt to save anyone as my speed was only five knots and wanted to get away from the land. Proceeded to head north west and then south to west of Orkneys then reported to Scapa. Total number of bombs dropped around us 131, total attacks in four days 31. Twenty-four of these attacks were by dive-bombers who flattened out at 2000 feet. They seemed to be old hands at the game. Seven attacks by high bombers who had very good aim. Machine gunned at Camps and Lewis gun positions on shore seven times, bombs dropped out only one man from "Gaul" hit by shrapnel ?broken arm?

<u>Casualties.</u>	"Aston Villa"	four wounded.
	"Gaul"	two wounded.
	"Arab"	two wounded.

We embarked all our stores except one Lewis Gun and navigational instruments and some food.

I should like to state that for three days no one slept more than one hour. Continuous watch was kept at machine gun posts although we were repeatedly bombed and machine gunned. Some of the crews were by this time getting rather demoralised. Our food was running short as we had an extra sixty men to feed and the Officers led by Sub Lieutenant Lees cooked the meals for all hands. Another man who was outstanding was Charles Newman, Seaman, always at hand to carry orders and to do anything that was necessary. We only had a fire for half an hour the whole time we were ashore guarding the entrance to the Fjord, the rest of the time living on bully beef and biscuits.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

You're obedient Servant,

Lieutenant, R.N.R.
Commanding Officer.
H.M.S. "Arab"