

Narrative of Loss of H.M. Trawler St. Goran

(Under the Command of the late Lt. Comm. W.C. McGuigan R.N.R.)

1. This ship with others of the 15th and 16th Striking Forces in company arrived at Namsos (Norway) from Aberdeen on Sunday morning 28th April having loaded stores and ammunition for the Royal Marine Howitzer Battery ex the transport "Chobris" at the entrance of Namsen Fiord. Colour Sergeant Swallow, R.M. accompanied these stores.
2. We arrived at Namsos at about 1000 on Sunday at the commencement of a severe air raid and were told to proceed to the mouth of the Fiord. We returned to Namsos at dusk that evening and on instructions from H.M.S. "Carlisle" jettisoned the ammunition before going alongside the pier to embark French troops which were subsequently disembarked to a French transport. On completion of this operation we again endeavoured to land the R.M. stores but were informed that nothing further could be taken on the wharf.
3. Monday 29th April was spent at sea to the west of Namsen Fiord on patrol. We returned to Namsos at night and enquired from the Commanding Officer H.M.S. "Bittern" regarding the disposal of the R.M. stores, she being the only H.M. ship in harbour. We were instructed to retain them on board meantime.
4. At approximately 0920 on Tuesday 30th April in a position about 110° 9' E 64° 32½' N enemy aircraft were heard and all hands closed up at action stations. The ship was manoeuvred to a position close under the North shore where it was hoped there would be some protection from the cliffs. At 0930 the Oerliken gun opened fire on one of three Heinkels which was diving to attack us. The first bomb fell about 50 yards on the port quarter causing no damage. At 0940 when the ship was within a few yards of the cliffs a second bombing attack was made, fire from the Oerliken and Lewis guns being maintained. The sighting of the former was difficult as the view was obscured by considerable smoke from the funnel.
5. Three bombs were dropped which fell close on the starboard side, just forward of the wheelhouse, abreast of the Oerliken gun platform and about 20 yards astern. At the same time the wheelhouse and the bridge were machine gunned. The Captain, Second Hand Glenton (at the wheel), Seaman Marlow (Bridge Lewis gun) and Signalman Parsons were killed instantly. Colour Sergeant Swallow who had insisted on helping at the guns was fatally wounded in the back. Leading Tel. Kent in the W/T office was wounded in the right arm. Leading Seaman Rilatt received slight shrapnel wounds, but in spite of these he continued with his duties.
6. A fire, which subsequently transpired to be bedding, broke out in the Mess Deck and the Magazine was therefore flooded. This fire was afterwards extinguished. The ship was found to be in the following condition. The A/S Bridge was completely shattered, the steering gear was out of action, the Oerliken gun and two of the Lewis guns were damaged by shrapnel. The topsides in the Mess Deck were punctured in several places and she appeared to have a slight list to starboard.
7. I decided that in view of the aerial activity the day before and the fact that there were no H.M. ships of any A/A strength in the Fiord that it would not be long before we were again attacked. As the ship was unmanageable and could offer no resistance I considered it advisable to abandon her till nightfall.
8. The C. B.s were jettisoned and the anchor dropped in the hope that it would hold though the shore was steep to. A small quantity of food was collected and the ship abandoned in the

boat and two Carley floats about 1100. Sergeant Swallow who was in great pain being carried in the stretcher.

9. We made for a position about half a mile to the Northward where the cliffs were not so steep. On our way we were overhauled by H. M. T. "Arab" and transferred our wounded to her. Commander Sir Geoffrey Congreve S. O. 16th S. F. was on board and I explained the situation to him.

10. At about 1130 we landed and almost immediately the ship, which was now out of view, was attacked.

11. Throughout the afternoon enemy aircraft flew low overhead making further attacks on the ship and we were obliged to take cover under rocks to avoid being seen.

12. At about 2200 (dusk) myself, Lieut: Brassey and eight Ratings returned to the ship leaving Sub: Lieut: Hamilton in charge of the Remainder. Though no direct hits had been made "St. Goran" had suffered considerably from the subsequent bombing and was making water through the Starboard bunker there being further damage to the topsides.

13. During our inspection of the ship H.M.S. "Carlisle" passed at speed and made a signal "German Destroyer and three submarines reported". This, coupled with the intense German Aerial activity, gave me the impression that the ship might fall into enemy hands. The ship could not proceed to sea without extensive repairs and as she was an A/S vessel with a complete spare set of equipment on board I felt that it would be disastrous if she were captured. I therefore reluctantly decided that the only course was to sink her. The seacocks were opened about 0200 on Wednesday 1st May.13. Bodies of those killed were handed over to a small fishing craft which came down with a messenger from the "CAPE PASSARO" (S.O. 15th S.F.). I sent a note back to Lt. Commander Sherwood informing him of my intention to sink the ship. As it subsequently proved to be impossible to transfer the dead to any homeward H.M. Ship they were buried in the Fiord the following day from the "CAPE PASSARO".

14. On returning to the shore we found the remainder of the party had been picked up by H.M.S. "Carlisle" and we decided to remain in the vicinity as she would probably return and pick us up.

15. At about 0400 "CAPE PASSARO" accelerated the sinking of "ST GORAN" by gunfire and she sank at about 0430.

16. Wednesday was again a day of considerable air activity and that night there was a thick fog in the fiord. At about 0230 on Thursday a small fishing boat was heard and when hailed came in to take us off. We arrived at Namsos at about 0400.

17. Later in the morning, there being no H.M. ship in the harbour, I proceeded to Brigade H.Q. at Spillum where I made a signal to the Admiralty via (War Office) reporting the loss (T.O.O. 1125/2/5).

18. The party took passage the following morning in H.M.S. York for Scapa.

19. I have pleasure in reporting that the entire ship's company behaved very well throughout the trying experience. Sub-Lieutenant Brassey was most resourceful in dealing with the wounded and during our period in the hills where he did much to keep the men in good spirits. I cannot speak too highly of him.

Alan Reid
Lieutenant R.N.V.R.

GLASGOW 8th May, 1940