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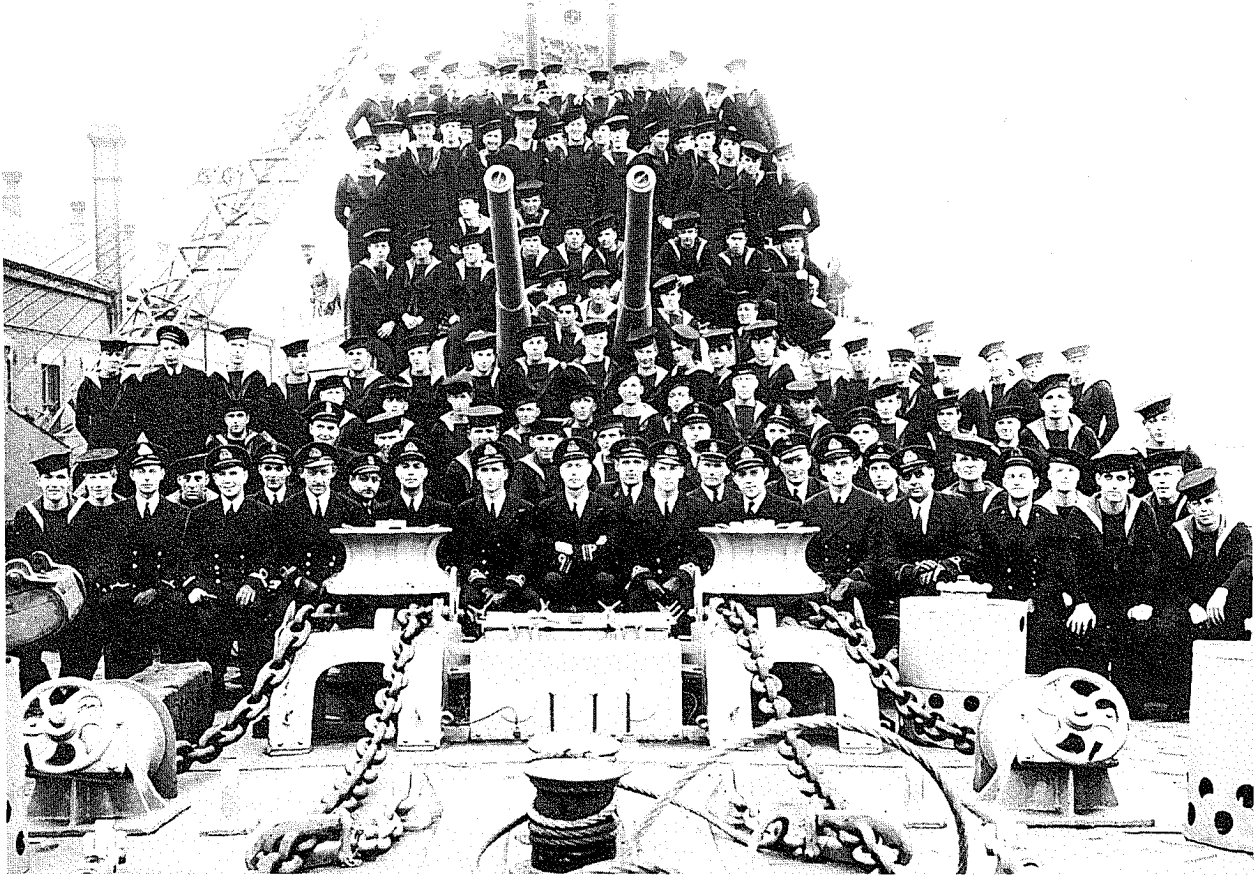
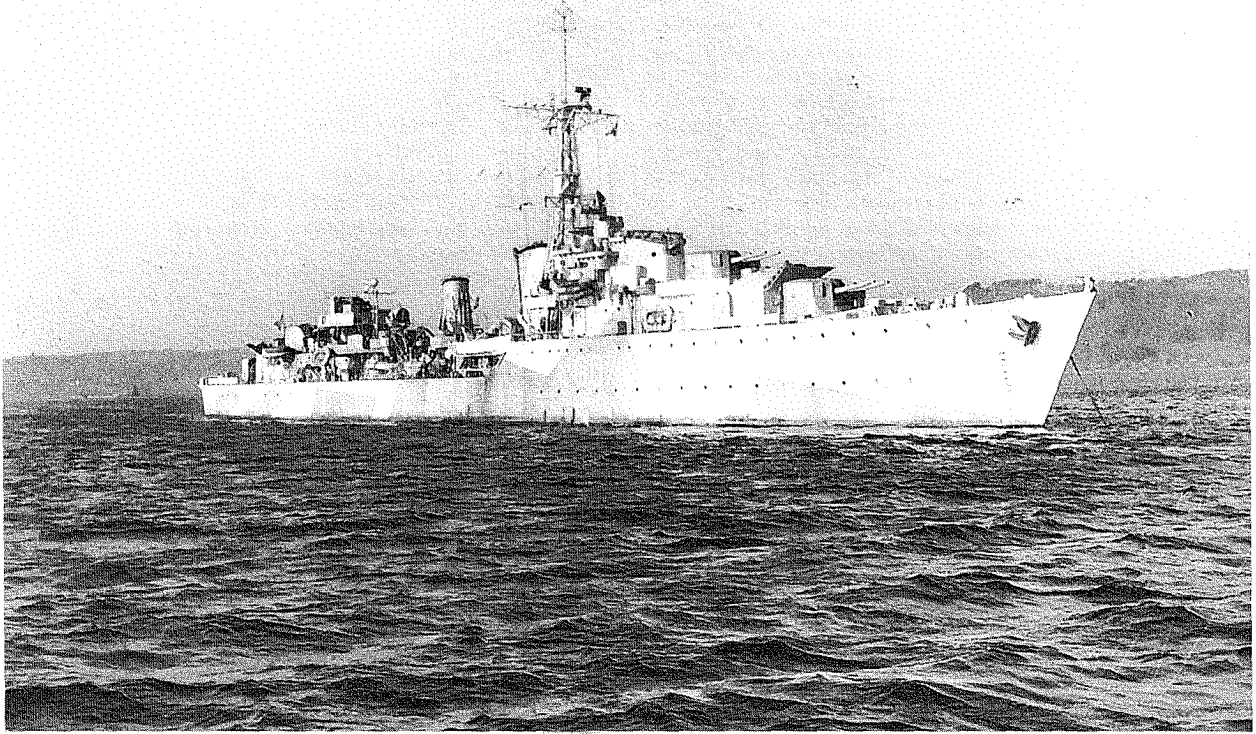
*HMCS Haida Naval Museum*

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# “I Will Never Forget the Sound of Those Engines Going Away”

## A Re-examination into the Sinking of HMCS *Athabaskan*, 29 April 1944

Peter A. Dixon

On the morning of 29 April 1944 the Canadian Tribal Class Destroyer HMCS *Athabaskan* was sunk in the English Channel after an engagement with the German Elbing Class Destroyers *T-24* and *T-27*. The official explanation from the “inquiry into the Loss of HMCS *Athabaskan*” claimed that *Athabaskan* sank because of two explosions, the first at 0417 hours, and the second at 0427 hours.<sup>1</sup> The first explosion was attributed to a torpedo from *T-24*.<sup>2</sup> The second explosion was believed to have occurred when fuel fires, caused by the first explosion, ignited the 4-inch magazine.<sup>3</sup>

While this may seem simple and complete, an examination of the source material reveals that there is much confusion as to the actual chain of events. This confusion is focused on the cause of the second explosion. Eyewitness accounts have *Athabaskan* being torpedoed twice on the port side. This explanation seems to have been discounted by the Board. Then there are *Athabaskan* and *Haida*'s reports of “three echoes” being seen on the radar and Commander DeWolf's assertion that German E-boats were involved. This assertion became the basis for Len Burrow and Emile Beaudoin's book *Unlucky Lady: The Life and Death of HMCS Athabaskan*. Yet this book raises more questions than it

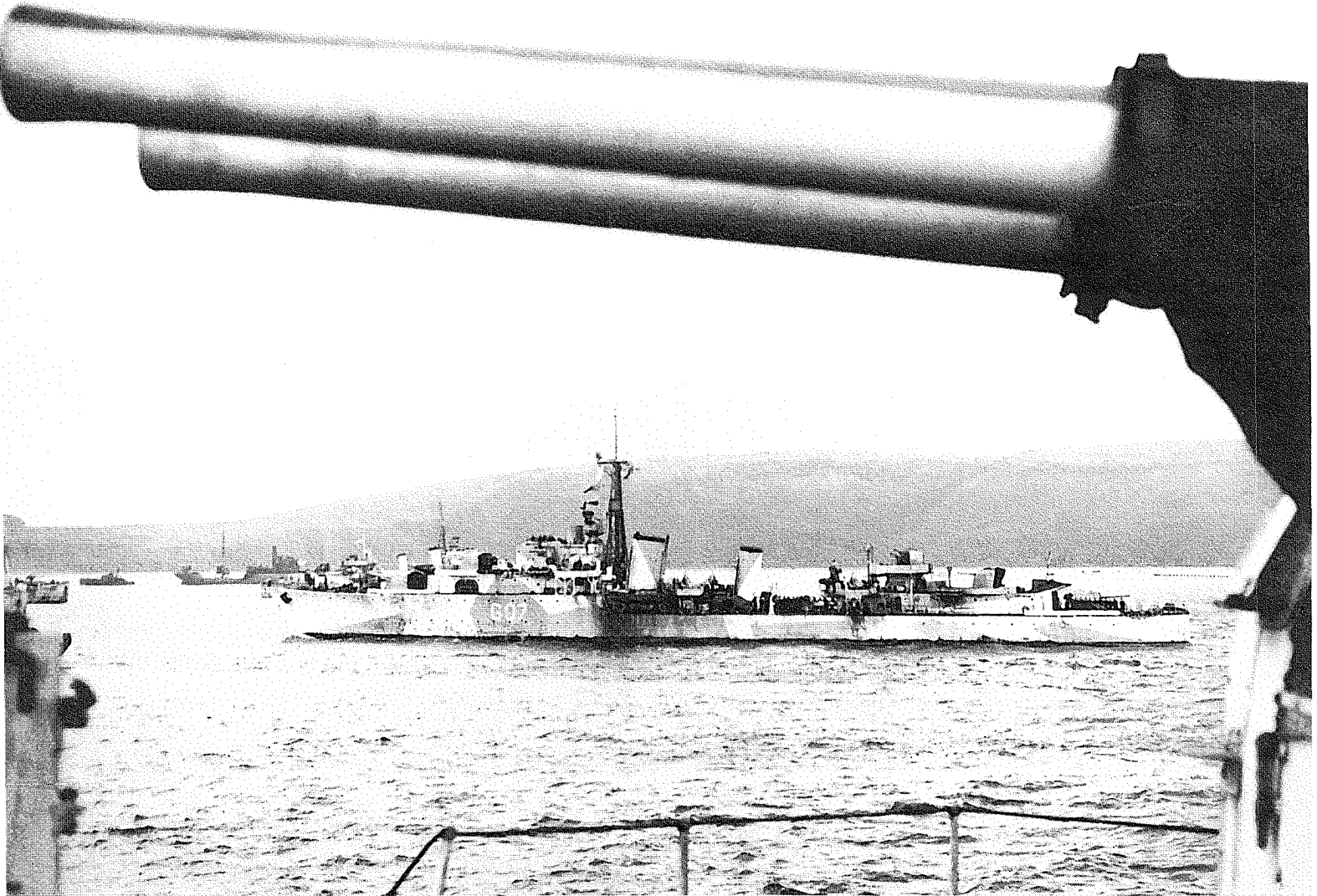
answers. The E-boat mystery has been put to rest by Michael Whitby, in his article “‘Fooling Around The French Coast’: RCN Tribal Class Destroyers in Action, April 1944.” He cites the German record of the action and states that the only German vessels involved were *T-24* and *T-27*. This has resulted in the British inquiry being deemed officially correct, with credit for the sinking being attributed to *T-24*. Yet this confusion is compounded by the statement in the inquiry's report that the members of the board: “did not consider [whether] any other ships were present.”<sup>4</sup> This is a curious statement. It is quite likely that another ship was indeed present. Unfortunately, it may have been the British Motor Torpedo Boat (MTB) 677 (commanded by Lieutenant A. Clayton, RNVR).<sup>5</sup>

All reconstructions of the action on 29 April 1944 have centred on the movements of *Haida* and *Athabaskan* beginning at 0400 hours. Yet the actions of all of the other participants must be reviewed to fully understand the situation. The movements of the other forces have, to date, been ignored. When the positions of the Tribals, the minelayers and the MTB's are plotted together, the inferences become astounding.

It was a very tense time for the Plymouth Command. Men and material were pouring into British ports for the upcoming invasion. German destroyers and E-boats still posed a threat to this activity. During the morning of 26 April, Force 26, consisting of the British cruiser HMS *Black Prince*, and the destroyers HMS *Tartar*, HMS

**Opposite - Top:** HMCS *Athabaskan*, Plymouth, England, March 1944. (NAC PA 115356)

**Bottom:** Ship's Company, HMCS *Athabaskan*, Devonport, England, September 1943. (NAC PA 131800)



*HMCS Athabaskan returns to Plymouth after the night action of 25/26 April 1944.*

*(Photo courtesy of author)*

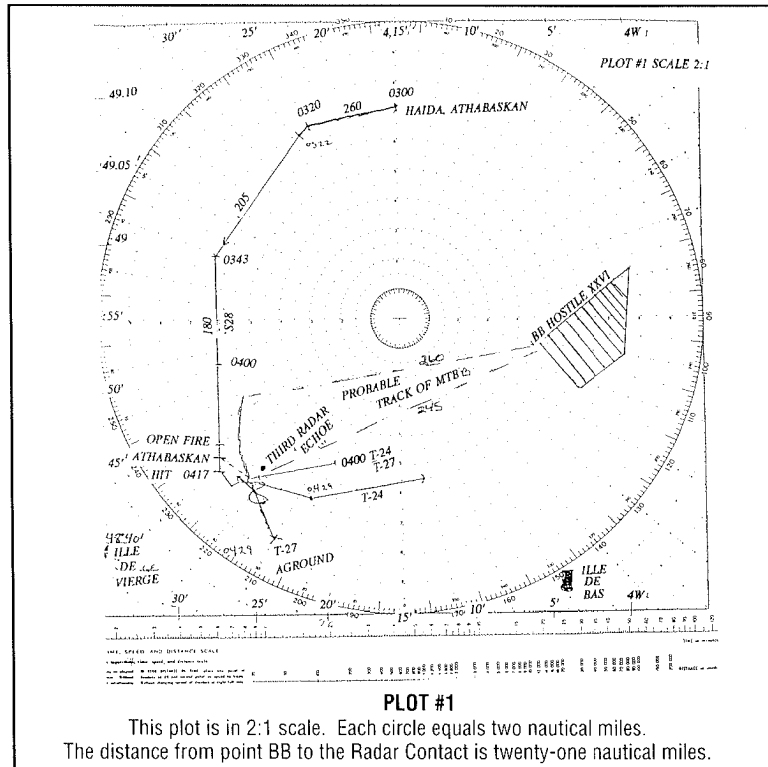
*Ashanti*, with the Canadian Tribals HMCS *Athabaskan*, HMCS *Haida*, and HMCS *Huron* engaged the German Elbing class destroyers *T-29*, *T-27*, *T-24*. *T-29* was sunk by *Haida* and *Huron* while *T-27* and *T-24* escaped with damage. This engagement was regarded as "very successful"<sup>6</sup> and served to affirm the tactics of the 10th Destroyer Flotilla. The unfortunate consequence for *Athabaskan* was that during this action HMS *Tartar* sustained damage, while HMS *Ashanti* and HMCS *Huron* were involved in a minor collision that put them out of action, requiring drydocking. *Haida* and *Athabaskan* remained the only ships available for operations.

Success was short lived as disaster struck the Allied forces on the night of April 27. Nine

German E-boats from the 9th Torpedo Flotilla attacked a convoy off Lyme Bay sinking LST 507 and LST 537 and torpedoing LST 289 with a loss of 197 sailors and 441 soldiers.<sup>7</sup> The fact that the destroyer force sent to intercept them missed and allowed them to escape unscathed must have been bitter to Plymouth Command.

"Operation Hostile XXVI" was scheduled for the night of 28-29 April. Hostile Operations were British minelaying missions as part of Operation Neptune and the Normandy invasion. Hostile XXVI was to be conducted by the 10th Minelaying Flotilla consisting of eight minelayers which were to be screened by MTB 677 (Senior Officer) and MTB 717 of the 52 MTB Flotilla.<sup>8</sup> *Haida* and *Athabaskan* were to be the "Support Force."<sup>9</sup>

This aspect of the engagement has until now been totally ignored by historians. Yet the position of the minefield and its proximity to the subsequent destroyer engagement is crucial to understand events. (See Plot 1)



The minefield was an eight-mile pentagon with point BB being 16.7 miles northeast of Ile de Bas. *Haida* and *Athabaskan* were to the west of this point, patrolling a box from 49 10'N to 49 5'N and from 04'W to 4 10'W. This deployment would allow the two Tribals to intercept any threat heading north. The minelaying was to be completed by 0330 hours and *Haida* and *Athabaskan* were to return to Plymouth at 0345 hours at 20 knots. They were not expected to meet the enemy. The two Tribals arrived at their patrol position at 0200 hours, went to "Action Stations" and began "snaking" the patrol line at 16 knots.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, the German Destroyers *T-24* and *T-27* had left St. Malo and were attempting to reach Brest to effect repairs from the action of 26 April. They were skirting the coast as *T-27*'s speed was down to 24 knots. The commander of *T-27* had issued instructions to "head for the coast and avoid combat" if the enemy were encountered. They were detected by radar in Plymouth, and Commander-in-Chief Plymouth sent the signal

"unidentified vessel 2050 Start Point 6"<sup>11</sup> at 0136 hours. Nine minutes later C-in-C Plymouth signalled "course estimated west speed 20 knots."

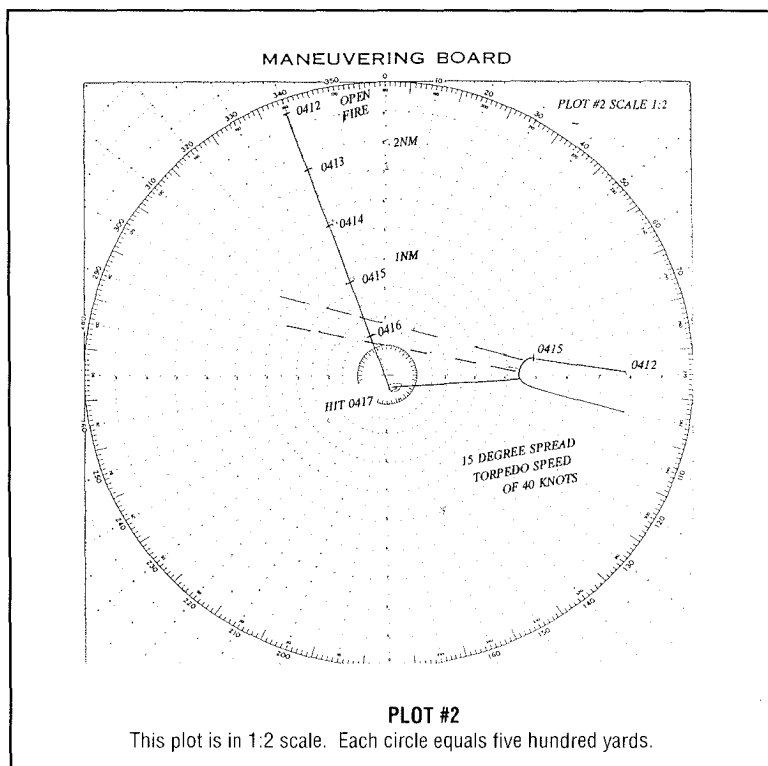
Plymouth plotted the developing situation and at 0307 hours signalled "Support Force to Steer SW at Full Speed for 20 miles."<sup>12</sup> This message was received in *Haida*'s plot at 0322 hours. *Haida* altered course to 225 and went to 28 knots.<sup>13</sup> At 0332 hours course was altered to 205 then at 0343 hours course was altered to 180. Commander DeWolf's intention was to "prevent the enemy from getting past to the westward."<sup>14</sup> By intercepting them off Ile de Vierge, the Tribals had a good chance of engaging the Germans before daylight.

At 0359 hours *Athabaskan* obtained a radar contact bearing 133 degrees at 14 miles. This was confirmed by *Haida* at 0402 hours. Course was altered to the east to close. *Haida*'s "Plot" established that the Germans were steering 280 degrees at 24 knots. At 0411 hours *Athabaskan* reported "3 echoes" which *Haida*'s 271Q radar confirmed with the third echo being smaller.<sup>15</sup>

Commander DeWolf gave the order to engage the enemy at 0412 hours and both *Haida* and *Athabaskan* opened fire with star shell at a range of 7,300 yards. Two minutes later Commander DeWolf signalled Plymouth "2 Enemy Destroyers bearing 115 distance 4 miles course 260 speed unknown bearing 014 Ile de Vierge 6 miles."<sup>16</sup>

When they were illuminated by the star shells, the two German destroyers were completely taken by surprise. They reacted quickly, however, and began to turn away to the South, in keeping with their instructions. The German tactics were to turn and fire torpedoes upon being engaged, which they did. *T-27* fired six torpedoes on the wrong bearing, actually at *T-24*, which had to take evasive action.<sup>17</sup> *T-24*'s after torpedoes were fired on the wrong bearing. The three from the forward mounting were fired on the correct bearing.<sup>18</sup> (See Plot 2).

At 0417 hours Commander DeWolf ordered a 30 degree turn to port to avoid the expected



torpedo tracks. *Haida* did so. *Athabaskan* was 400 yards astern. As they commenced the turn, torpedo number three from the forward mounting of *T-24* struck *Athabaskan* at an oblique angle on the port side in the 4-inch magazine and the Wardroom. *T-24*'s other two torpedoes missed astern.

Lieutenant R.B. Hayward, RCN, was *Athabaskan*'s Navigating Officer during this action. In a report he wrote on 3 May 1945 he recalled that:

There were two definite explosions, one light, one heavy, almost simultaneously. The explosion caused the propeller shafts to snap, the Pom Pom to be thrown into the air and the whole of the after - superstructure to be set on fire. The only survivor from "Y" gun reports the stern broke off between "Y" gun ammunition hoists and the Wardroom hatch.<sup>19</sup>

This blast wrecked "X" gun (the twin 4-inch mounting) and "Y" gun (the after 4.7-inch mounting), killing most of the guns' crews. *Athabaskan* sheered off to port and began to slow. At 0417 hours *Athabaskan* signalled *Haida* "Hit aft." At 0419 hours *Haida* altered course 90 degrees to port and began to lay a protective smokescreen around *Athabaskan*.<sup>20</sup>

Even while *Haida* was maneuvering to lay smoke, her guns kept firing, scoring their first hit on *T-24* at 0418 hours, and another at 0420 hours. At 0422 hours *T-27* was observed broad on *Haida*'s starboard bow and fire was shifted to her. *T-24* disappeared into smoke to the east. *Haida* altered course to keep *T-24* ahead and *T-27* on the starboard bow. *Haida*'s gunnery was superb as hit after hit was observed. *T-27* attempted to head inshore to evade. Hit repeatedly by *Haida*, a large fire broke out behind her forward gun making it difficult for her Captain to conn the ship. Blinded and ablaze, *T-27* ran hard ashore. The crew abandoned ship while still being hit by *Haida*'s salvos.<sup>21</sup>

Stopped and on fire, *Athabaskan* had only minutes to live. The torpedo from *T-24* had crippled her, but the damage was not fatal. She began to settle by the stern and preparations were made to rig for tow by *Haida*. The 70-ton pump was being maneuvered aft to control the flooding. As the flooding increased, *Athabaskan*'s Captain, Lieutenant Commander John Stubbs, DSO, ordered "Stand by to Abandon Ship." *Athabaskan*'s Radar Officer, Lieutenant Commander Dunn Lantier requested permission to clear "B" Gun of star shell. Permission was granted. After *Athabaskan* fired her last round, "B" Gun was raked by small arms fire, killing Able Seaman Hubert J. Peart.<sup>22</sup> Seconds later, at the break of the foc'sle on the port side, a second torpedo struck. As the Canadian Naval Mission Overseas narrative states: "If there had been any doubt among survivors as to the nature of the first hit there could be no difference of opinions in their minds that this was a torpedo."<sup>23</sup> Lieutenant Hayward recalled:

The Captain said that he was going down to his cabin for a moment. On his way back, he looked into the Chart house where Paymaster Lieutenant T.J. Brandson was putting C.B.'s [Confidential Books] and charts into weighted bags. Returning to the bridge on the port side, he asked who was still on the bridge. Lieutenant J.B. Scott replied that Lieutenant H.B. Hayward, himself and Leading Signaller Thrasher, when the torpedo struck the ship between Nos. 1 and

2 Boiler Rooms on the port side. This caused a terrific explosion throwing half of the boiler rooms into the air. A blanket of oil followed the debris of red-hot shrapnel falling everywhere and put out all the fires except for a small one on the midship Oerlikon gun deck. The after half of the ship sank immediately while the forward half rolled slowly over to port and as soon as the mast touched the water, the after end commenced to sink. The bows lifted into the air and she sank in a vertical position ... Almost all those on the port side were instantly killed, while those on the starboard side were badly burnt or blown over the side.<sup>24</sup>

This then is the disputed second explosion. Its effect was fatal. *Athabaskan* assumed a "sprout position" and sank at 0427 hours. This was sadly recorded in *Haida's Ship's Log*.<sup>25</sup>

The source of this second torpedo is the mystery. The official record is not clear as to whether or not it was from an E-boat, or from one of the German destroyers. The War Diary of the 4th Torpedo Boat Flotilla states that *T-27* and *T-24* were the only German units in that area. There were no E-boats operating that night. Therefore, the second torpedo could not have come from an E-boat.

Could the second torpedo have come from one of the German destroyers? Twelve torpedoes were fired at 0415 hours. Of those, nine were fired

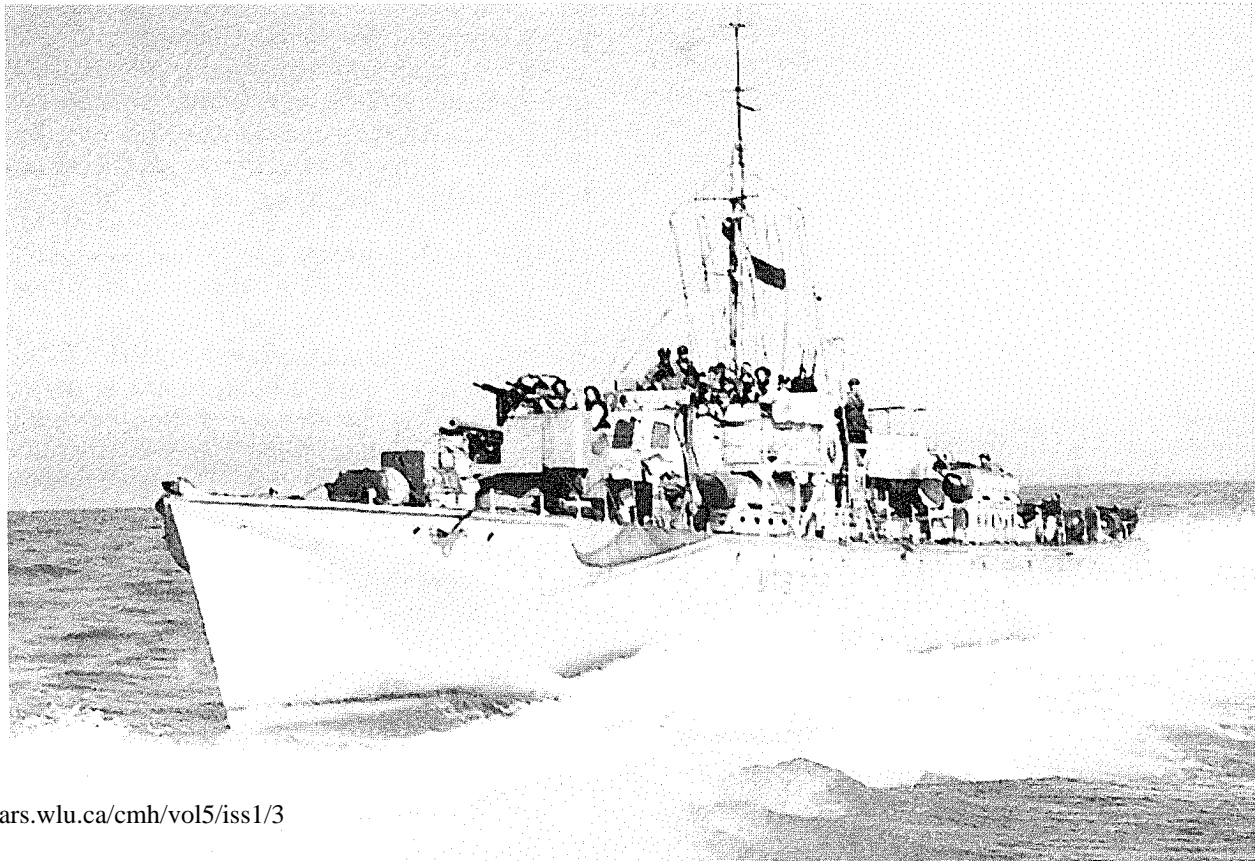
on the wrong bearing, two missed astern, and the last hit. At the time of the second torpedo hit, *T-27* was on fire and aground, and *T-24* was eight and a half miles to the east (and therefore five and a half miles outside torpedo range).

However, the actions of MTB 677 and MTB 717 have not been considered. If they copied the reports from C-in-C Plymouth they would have been preparing for action. Knowing that there were only the two Tribals, it would have been tactically prudent to attempt an interception.<sup>26</sup> The minelayers completed their operation at 0315 hours, which would have put the MTBs at the northwest corner of the minefield.<sup>27</sup> This area is exactly 28 miles from the engagement area, which is a 55 minute run at 30 knots. If MTB 677 closed on the engagement area at 0307 hours, it arrived exactly on time to be picked up as the third radar contact at 0411 hours. (See Plot 3).

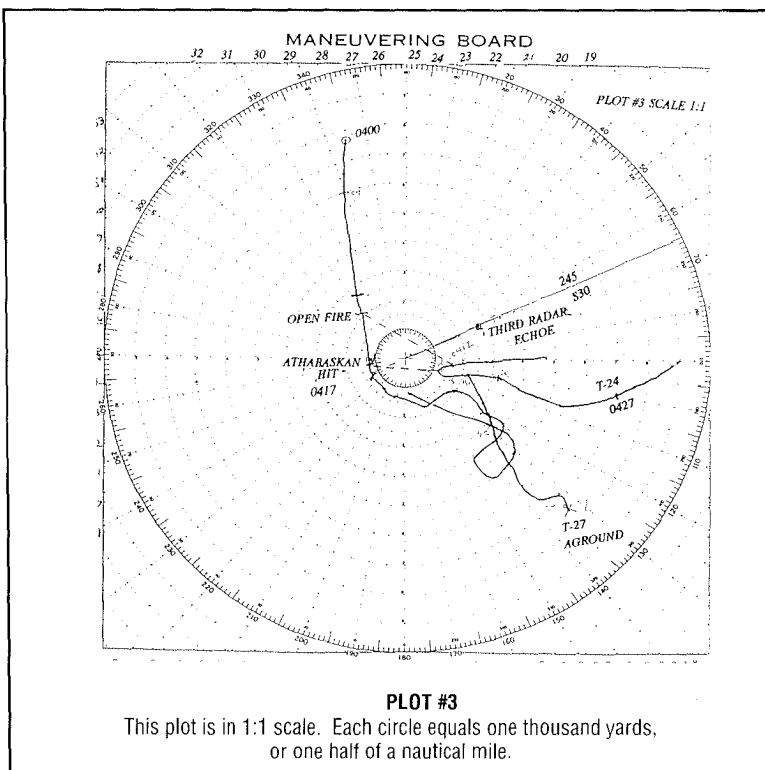
The MTB would be steering between south southwest and southwest anywhere from 260 to 245 degrees, the same relative direction the Germans did. *Athabaskan* had this contact as being off their port quarter, bearing 350 degrees at a range of 3,000 to 4,000 yards.<sup>28</sup> When the gunfire commenced at 0411 hours, the MTB had no way of knowing who was shooting at whom. He either slowed, or swung north to get out of the line of fire. The flash of *T-24's* torpedo hitting

*A British Motor Torpedo Boat at high speed.*

*(Photo courtesy of author)*







*Athabaskan* acted as a beacon and MTB 677 closed cautiously while attempting to identify the target.

Just what the MTB might have seen on its arrival is but another tragic element in the history of *Athabaskan*. The excellence of the Western Approaches "Special Forces" Camouflage pattern probably resulted in a misidentification. It is ironic that this camouflage pattern was designed by a British MTB captain.<sup>29</sup> The blend of duck egg blue, off-white and green was designed to make the entire vessel blend into the horizon at night. The MTB never saw *Athabaskan's* foredeck. As the "split foc'sle" pattern could not be seen and the after end was completely ablaze, identification as a Tribal Class destroyer was impossible. *Athabaskan* would have looked more like a "flush decked" Elbing.

The effect of this camouflage can also be seen by the German account of the action. When they illuminated, "a number of targets" were detected, none of which were positively identified as destroyers.<sup>30</sup> During the action, only *Athabaskan* was targeted as the Germans could see her gun flashes. (*Haida* was using flashless cordite having changed over from flash cordite on the morning

of the 28th).<sup>31</sup> As *Haida* could not be seen that led the Germans into thinking that they had been engaged by much larger cruisers.<sup>32</sup> It also had a tragic effect later when *Haida* returned to the area to pick up survivors. "Some thought at first it was a German ship and were keeping off. They did not know how the battle had fared and feared *Haida* had been sunk."<sup>33</sup>

As MTB 677 approached the sinking *Athabaskan*, permission was given to clear "B" Gun of star shell. The flash of gun fire would have appeared to have come from nowhere, as well as expressing hostile intent. MTB 677 would have replied with machine gun fire down the bearing of the flash. This resulted in the raking of "B" Gun and the death of Able Seaman Peart. *Athabaskan* survivor George Parsons has repeatedly stated that: "I saw the son

of a bitch go across the bow like a banshee. I saw the white track go into the port side."<sup>34</sup> The resultant explosion of the boilers caused a "large mushroom of white smoke" which was reported as having been seen from 30 miles away.<sup>35</sup>

*Haida* signalled Plymouth at 0429 hours, "My 0414 one enemy on fire. "Athabaskan has blown up."<sup>36</sup> If MTB 677 copied this, they would have instantly realized their mistake. Instead of staying and assisting, and not knowing *Haida's* position or intentions, it withdrew to the north at full speed. *Athabaskan* survivor Able Seaman Ted Hewitt has stated, "I will never forget the sound of those engines going away..."<sup>37</sup>

*Haida* observed *T-27* ablaze and aground at 0435 hours. Commander DeWolf decided to retire as contact with *T-24* had been lost at a range of 14,000 yards. Course was made to return to the area of *Athabaskan's* sinking. *Haida* signalled Plymouth that one destroyer had escaped eastwards, and requested fighter cover for daylight. At 0457 hours *Haida* stopped amid a large number of survivors.<sup>38</sup> (If 677 retired at full speed it would be some 12 or 14 miles to the north.) All concentration by the *Haida's* crew was on saving their compatriots.



Tension on *Haida's* bridge was enormous. The gentle breeze was hampering rescue efforts as the ship drifted from right to left. Those survivors on *Haida's* starboard side had difficulty trying to catch up. Commander DeWolf ordered the serviceable motor boat and the whaler to be lowered for the survivors. As well, eight carley floats were dropped. The motor boat and whaler were to be un-manned; at the last minute Leading Seaman William McClure, Able Seaman Jack Hannam, Stoker William Cummings manned the boat. Cummings started the engine and the boat began to pick up survivors.

At 0448 hours C-in-C Plymouth ordered the Senior Officer of the 52nd MTB Flotilla to "proceed immediately with MTB 717 to rescue survivors of 'Athabaskan' in approximate position 020 Ile de Vierge 8." Commander DeWolf decided that *Haida* would remain for 15 minutes. The rate of the drift was bringing the ship dangerously close to a German mine field.<sup>39</sup> This could be what Lieutenant Commander Stubbs was trying to say when he shouted "Get away *Haida*, get Clear." At 0515 hours *Haida's* engines went "Slow Ahead." Reluctantly, course was shaped for Plymouth. At 0516 hours *Haida* went to 31 knots.<sup>40</sup> In all, *Haida* rescued 42 *Athabaskans*. *Haida* signalled C-in-C Plymouth, and to Senior Officer 52 MTB Flotilla "Survivors of 'Athabaskan' in position 020 Ile de Vierge 5.5" C-in-C Plymouth recalled the MTBs to Plymouth at 0537 hours as he believed that the MTBs would not arrive on the scene until an hour after daylight.<sup>41</sup> Thus, rescue by friendly forces was denied.

What was Plymouth basing their assessment on? If Hostile XXVI had gone according to plan, all vessels would have left area BB at 0330 hours at 20 knots. That would have put them near Latitude 49 40 N some 50 miles north of the location of the survivors. Therefore, it would have taken two hours for them to reach the scene, well after sunrise. If the MTBs had left the minelayers and investigated the battle then they would be one hour behind that estimated position and one hour closer to the survivors. They would be somewhere around Latitude 49 20 N. They would also be one hour and a quarter ahead of *Haida*.

In his after action report Commander DeWolf reported that on leaving the scene of the action "IFF [Identification Friend or Foe] was reported showing on the 242 scan of type 291 at 0530 for

about 1 minute, at ranges of 55000 yards 70000 yards and 65000 yards. These echoes only showed on the scan when the starboard aerial was switched in and it was assumed that the transmissions were coming from either friendly ships or aircraft on the starboard bow."<sup>42</sup> Those ranges of 35, 27°, and 32° miles off the starboard bow would be consistent with the lead of the minelayers. The range of 55,000 would be exactly that of the MTB. There is no mention of any aircraft being spotted or heard in *Haida's* Ship's Log.

As *Haida* was racing north, rescue of the *Athabaskan* survivors was continuing. *T-24* had been ordered to return to the area accompanied by two minesweepers. They arrived at 0715 hours and began to pick up survivors. Meanwhile, *Haida's* motor cutter had picked up two of *Haida's* crew who were swept off the scramble nets when the ship went slow ahead at 0515 hours. The boat's crew also picked up six *Athabaskans* and were attempting to take a survivor-laden carley float in tow. One of the German minesweepers left the others and began to give chase to the motor cutter. The boat's cranky engine was coaxed into life and the cutter attempted to flee. Fortunately for the motor cutter, the small boat had entered a German minefield that caused the Minesweeper to abruptly turn away and head back to the men in the water. In a remarkable feat of navigating the motor cutter made the hundred mile voyage across the English Channel to Land's End. In all, 48 *Athabaskans* were rescued, six by the cutter and the rest by *Haida*. A total of 85 sailors were rescued by the Germans and became prisoners of war. One hundred and twenty-eight *Athabaskans* died.

HMS *Offa* and HMS *Orwell* were sent by C-in-C Plymouth to meet *Haida* and give her a safe escort into Plymouth. *Haida* joined with *Offa* at 0635 hours and with *Orwell* at 0650 hours and proceeded to Eddystone. *Haida* secured alongside at No. 1 wharf at 0909 hours and landed survivors at 0930 hours.

On 3 May 1944, four Royal Navy Captains from Plymouth Command assembled to "Inquire into the Loss of HMCS *Athabaskan*." The principal document concerning events was Commander DeWolf's "Report of Action," and a copy of *Haida's* Track Chart. After some discussion and consideration, the Board

**Right:** The lucky ones. Athabaskan survivors in England following their rescue, May 1944. (NAC PA 131796)

**Below:** The not-so-lucky. Sailors are greeted by Canadian Red Cross girls in London, England following their release from German PoW camps, May 1945. (NAC PA 166523)



17. Since the Board of Inquiry sat, a report has been received from the Commanding Officer of MTB 677, who was in command of Force "Hostile XXVI," and was returning to England from the vicinity of Ile de Bas on the early morning of 29th April, that he saw two explosions. As he was at the time a matter of about 30 miles to the northeastward of Haida and Athabaskan, he was not called as a witness at the Board of Inquiry.

18. His description of the explosions is, however, illuminating. He states in his report (forwarded with Plymouth letter No. 1931/Ply.1618 of 25th May, 1944 Report on "Hostile" Operation XXIII, XXIV, XXV and XXVI) that at 0416 "an explosion was sighted followed by a burst of flame on a bearing of s.55o W. This was followed at 0427 by a very large explosion with a large mushroom of white smoke on approximately the same bearing."

This report is the proof that MTB 677 was at the scene of the engagement.

First, it was physically impossible for Lieutenant Clayton to have seen either of the explosions from 30 miles away, as the "Distance to the Horizon" from the bridge of an MTB at a height of 10 to 12 feet off the water is between 3.6 and 4.0 nautical miles.<sup>46</sup>

Therefore in order for the explosion to be seen at that distance, the height of the explosion would have to have been over 525 feet high.<sup>47</sup> Vice Admiral Leatham was of that view: "It seems most improbable that hits by a 4-inch shell could be discerned and described as an "explosion" at 30 miles. It therefore seems most probable that this explosion was caused by a torpedo."<sup>48</sup> The second aspect to this is that he has the exact times of both explosions. Had he been with "Hostile XXVI" (which was exactly 30 miles away) the time of the sighting would be later, and not as precise as he claims.

unanimously agreed that *Athabaskan* had been sunk by enemy action, the specific cause being either a torpedo or the explosion of the 4-inch magazine.<sup>43</sup> This finding seemed to contradict most of the survivors testimony as a message was sent from the Canadian Naval Mission Overseas to Naval Service Headquarters in Ottawa on 30 April that stated: "Following information received from survivors and boats crew *Athabaskan* hit by first torpedo which blew off stern. Ship remained afloat till hit by second torpedo. No evidence of internal explosion."<sup>44</sup>

The Commander-in-Chief Plymouth, Vice Admiral Leatham wrote his report on the action and the Board's findings on 1 June 1944. Unfortunately, the copy in the Canadian records has the first page missing.<sup>45</sup> He stated that he was in general agreement with the Board of Inquiry. Paragraphs 17 and 18 contain astounding information:

The inclusion of Lieutenant Clayton's report and the Board's dismissal of the third radar echo with the statement that they "did not consider that any other ships were present," can be construed as an attempt to "close the book" on the incident. This it has done. Nowhere in any of the literature on this subject is there any mention of the MTBs on April 28-29. From Peter Scott's

*Battle of the Narrow Seas: a History of Light Coastal Forces*, written in 1945, through Stephen Roskill's *War at Sea*, to Correlli Barnett's *Engage the Enemy More Closely: the Royal Navy in the Second World War*, to Jurgen Rohwer and Gerhard Hummelchen's *Chronology of the War at Sea, 1939-1945* all have *Haida* and *Athabaskan* chancing into an engagement whilst on patrol. Canadian writers have made mention of a minelaying operation, but stop there while concentrating on the engagement.

Vice Admiral Leatham's report legitimizing Lieutenant Clayton's is the proof that "Operation Hostile XXVI" took place. What happened during it is the problem.

So ended the life of Canada's second Tribal Class Destroyer. *Athabaskan* was indeed an "Unlucky Lady." Originally laid down as HMCS *Iroquois*, the ship sustained bomb damage while under construction resulting in the change of the name. Once operational the ship was plagued with mishap. It was involved in two minor collisions, then hit by a glider bomb in the Bay of Biscay in August 1943. Finally, *Athabaskan* was sunk by friendly forces as a result of misidentification. Official credit for the sinking has gone to T-24.

This oversight should be corrected.

### Notes

1. Summary of Board of Inquiry into the Loss of HMCS *Athabaskan*. 3 May 1944 Public Record Office (PRO) Admiralty (ADM) 199/263 Directorate of History (DHist).
2. *Ibid.*
3. Michael Whitby, "Fooling Around the French Coast": RCN Tribal Class Destroyers in Action, April 1944" *Canadian Defence Quarterly*, December 1989, p.59.
4. Summary of Board of Inquiry into the Loss of HMCS *Athabaskan*.
5. Canadian Naval Mission Overseas (London) Narrative (CMNO), "Canadian Tribal Channel Actions" Signal Section, p.8, DHist 84/224. Lieutenant Clayton is named in Peter Scott, *The Battle of the Narrow Seas: A History of Light Coastal Forces in the Channel and North Sea 1939-1945* (London: Country Life Limited, 1945).
6. Whitby, p.59.
7. Rowher & Hummelchen, *Chronology of The War at Sea, 1939-1945*, p.270
8. CNMO, p.8.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Ships Log, HMCS *Haida*, 29 April 1944.
11. CNMO, p.8.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Commander H.G. DeWolf, "Report of Action," 29 April 1944. DHist HMCS *Haida* (prior to 1950) 8000.
14. Whitby, p.59.
15. DeWolf, "Report of Action"
16. CNMO, p.8.
17. War Diary, 4th Torpedo Boat Flotilla, "Evaluation of Actions Fought by 4th Torpedo Boat Flotilla" DHist HMCS *Athabaskan* (1) (1944) 8000.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Whitby, p.60.
20. DeWolf, "Report of Action."
21. War Diary, 4th Torpedo Boat Flotilla.
22. *Athabaskan* Survivor Bud Edwards recollection contained in a letter to Edward Stewart, *Athabaskan* Association, 13 October 1986.
23. CNMO, p.12.
24. Lieutenant R.B. Hayward, RCN "Account of the Loss of *Athabaskan*" 3 May 1945. NSS 8870-355/3, National Archives of Canada (NAC) RG 42 V 6890.
25. Ships Log, HMCS *Haida* 29 April 1944.
26. The MTBs and *Haida* and *Athabaskan* received the same message ordering "Hostile XXVI."
27. CNMO, Signal section, p.8.
28. Hayward, "Account of the Loss *Athabaskan*."
29. Bryan Cooper, *The E-boat Threat* (London: MacDonald & Jones, 1976) p.97.
30. War Diary, 4th Torpedo Boat Flotilla.
31. Recollection of *Haida* crew member Fred Ware, to the author, 30 August 1994.
32. War Diary, 4th Torpedo Boat Flotilla.
33. William Sclater, *Haida* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1947) p.97.
34. *Athabaskan* Survivor George Parsons as told to *Athabaskan* association member Edward Stewart, Plymouth, June 1985.
35. Admiral R. Leatham, "Report of Action on the Night of April 28/29th," 1 June 1944. PRO ADM 199/263, DHist.
36. CNMO Signal Section p.10.
37. Leatham, "Report of Action."
38. DeWolf, "Report of Action."
39. Recollection of *Haida* crew member Phillip Frewer, to the author, 30 August, 1993.
40. Ship's Log, HMCS *Haida*, 29 April 1944.
41. Leatham, "Report of Action."
42. DeWolf, "Report of Action."
43. Summary of Board of Inquiry into the Loss of HMCS *Athabaskan* 3 May 1944. PRO ADM 199/263. DHist.
44. DHist HMCS *Athabaskan* (1) (1944) 8000.
45. Leatham, "Report of Action."
46. "Distance to the Horizon," (Table 8) contained in Nathaniel Bowditch, *The American Practical Navigator*, Volume 2, (Defence Mapping Agency Hydrographic/Topographic Center, 1975), p.132.
47. "Extreme Range Table," contained in F.N. Hopkins, *Nories Nautical Tables* (London: Imray, Laurie, Norie & Wilson Ltd., 1965), p.116.
48. Leatham, "Report of Action."

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