

**John Ouvry (IWM SR 9260)**

It was a fine afternoon on 31 May 1916 and there was nothing much going on so the hands were given a 'make and mend' that means that, apart from those employed in keeping the ship steaming we could have a doss down, have a lie up. And that afternoon in the sun, it was nice and warm, I had a nice little sleep on the quarter deck. Now the normal procedure was – we didn't know anything was around, no excitement at all. But at half past three, tea was piped for the hands. That means the bosuns just went around and shouted out, 'Hands to tea!' I woke up and sloped off towards the gun room where I hoped to get a cup of tea and almost immediately – I'd hardly got up – when the bugles went: 'immediate action'. That meant, instead of having tea, I had to run off as fast as I could to my action station! Which was the starboard side and I was second in control of the starboard six inch guns, which was our secondary armaments, ready for beating off destroyers and things like that. Fire was opened almost immediately on the port side. In fact, Lion, our flagship opened fire at 3.45pm on a visible target which was the German battlecruisers. They opened fire on us and, almost immediately, they got the correct range.

Bonham Faunce (IWM SR 12598)

I was frightened, yes, I make no bones about it. The worst part was before we opened fire, there were all these guns going off, shells were landing all round. I don't think any of the shells were aimed at us but there were ships on either side of us. They were landing in the water with a large crash and an explosion. Great columns of white foam going up and I really didn't know what was going on. Once our own ship's guns were answering back, it seemed to be alright. There's quite a considerable difference not knowing, not being able to see what was going on or who was hitting you.

Arthur Crown (IWM SR 8742)

There's nothing to be scared about because if you get a torpedo hit well, it's there, you know very well you're down below there, there's a risk you might get torpedoed, you might get struck with a shell but you're serving in the Navy to do that to them so don't blame 'em if you get it instead of them. No, you don't think about things like that, you know you've got a job to do. And when you're in the engine room you've got so much to do... You know very well, if you don't keep those engines at the correct revs they want so you don't get your place in the line... You always had, you were told that your squadron had to steam so and so and so and so, and that meant that the engine room had to keep their steam up and get the revs proper.

George Fox (IWM SR 751)

During the action, what time would it be, about 6 o'clock time I should think, there was a terrific explosion and it simply lifted that ship like a ball and just bounced her up and down just like a rubber ball would be in the water. My action station there was first aid and we were down in one of flats and you felt the ship gradually going further over and over and over. I think she fetched up about 10 degrees. Anyhow, we had a surgeon lieutenant commander there who was in charge of the first aid station and of course everybody's faces turned pale. We wondered how far the ship was going over, whether she was going over altogether and we were going to be drowned in this little compartment. Anyhow, he said, 'Look, there'll be no VCs won on this station you've all remained where you are' and I think that calmed everybody down. Everybody had got a very white face because it wasn't a very good position to be in knowing that the ship was probably turning turtle! Because we didn't know what had hit her, whether it was gunfire or what it was.

William Piggot (IWM SR 12235)

I was in there about 47 hours for a start with no food! They never give us any food... In those days, they didn't worry about anything like that. See, I picked up a bit of bread in the stokers' mess going through. Every one of the bulkhead doors, while the battle was on, should have been guarded by a stoker and the doors were shut with clips on. But they wasn't. There was a stoker there in the deck but they got fed up with just sitting there, I suppose, and there was nobody in charge and I didn't see many of them. And when I did go up there, about six in the evening, I went through the stokers' mess and I grabbed a piece of bread off one of the tables and ate it. I hadn't had no food!

John Hazelwood (IWM SR 4125)

The ship's crews had been at action stations for some time and my station in HMS Warspite was in 'B' Turret. Now, in these turrets that hold these guns, you're simply in a steel box. The box completely surrounds you with thick armour plating all round. One feels that, while you are in these turrets, you are naturally cut off from anything going on outside. Except for the fact that you are in telephone communication with the bridge and the control towers. It's a feeling of, one would think, as being really fastened in a big box. The atmosphere is good, the crew are numbering somewhere about 16 and they've all got their individual jobs which they attend to and work as one.

Arthur Gaskin (IWM SR 9344)

Time we opened fire was just after five when we got more or less nearer and then when we got into it we got surrounded by water where the shells had fell. And later on in the evening, we were still firing away there and we got badly hit, terrible thud, and all the starboard battery – the six inch starboard battery – was put out of action. And we had to shore up the deck and everything. I didn't know anything about it, I was up the top. I knew we'd been hit by the shudder. We got peppered like... Oh, one shell burst amongst our flour, all the flour, a proper mix up! There was flour mixing with the salt water coming in: we had a real big dough! What a mess to clear up it was. There were shell holes everywhere.

George Wainford (IWM SR 9953)

So we fired our torpedoes and there was a terrific explosion and the German ship blew up like that. 'Cor,' they said, 'we got them!' And the moment somebody said that, either one shell or a salvo hit our bridge. There was a terrific bang, a fire started the port side of the fo'castle, well that was extinguished. And hear a lot of shouting on the fo'castle head so I went to go up there. And a sub lieutenant was there, he said, 'Where are you going, Wainford?' I said, 'On the fo'castle, sir, to help.' 'Keep down below out of it, find something else to do.' So I thought, 'I wonder why he said that?' I found out later that the foremost forward gun had a direct hit, they were all killed and injured. Commander was killed, first lieutenant was killed, warrant officer was killed – that was the three officers. The coxswain at the wheel was killed and there were several more wounded. You know, it was a bit of a shambles really.

Charles Farmer (IWM SR 4096)

I suppose we had been in action about an hour-and-a-half or so when a shell or something hit the magazines. There was a terrific explosion, the guns went up in the air just like matchsticks, 12 –inch guns they were and she began to settle down and in about half a minute she was gone. I was 180 feet up, and I was thrown well clear of the ship, otherwise I would have been sucked under. When I came up, there was another fellow there named Green, Jimmy Green, I think it was, and we swum over, we got a piece of wood, I was on one end he was on the other end, and a couple of minutes afterwards some shells come over and Jim was minus his head. He went, so I was left on me lonesome and I was there till about, well I couldn't say the exact time, it must have been between two and three in the morning, pitch dark, and I had given up all hope, practically, I let go once, yes, I let go once, but I struggled back again quick, when all of a sudden I could hear something coming towards me a noise and I had to gaze up. It was a German destroyer. Two sailors got down, picked me up and dragged me aboard the boat.

Bert Stevens (IWM SR 9011)

When we come out of that scrap we were terribly bashed about. There was 38 killed on the upper deck amongst the gunners and there were so many of the ammunition party was killed. And we managed to get a lot of the wounded down below, including Jack Cornwell, laying on the mess stools down below, see. Now then, when we got about 100 miles from Grimsby, Captain Lawson says, 'I'm gonna stop the ship.' He said, 'I'll have to take a chance. We can't take these men in, they're too bad.' And he stopped the ship and we buried the worst ones over the side, see. Had them in canvas and we put a dummy shell in, over the side. I forget how many we buried, I couldn't say. I know it was a terrible thing.