

APPENDIX No. 25.

THE AUSTRALIAN DETACHMENT FOR ZEEBRUGGE.

The action of the 23rd of April, 1918, at Zeebrugge has been too often described to require narration here. But the following particulars concerning the Australian volunteers and their training may be of interest. The men chosen were Engineer-Lieutenant Edgar, Leading Seamen Bush¹ and Rudd,² Able Seamen Gillard,³ Newland,⁴ and Staples,⁵ and Stokers Bourke,⁶ Hopkins,⁷ Lockard,⁸ McCrory,⁹ and Strong.¹⁰

The following particulars have been supplied by Mr. McCrory, who, after serving in the R.A.N. Bridging Train at Suvla Bay and in Sinai, and in the artillery in France, was transferred at his own request in 1917 to his original service—the Royal Australian Navy:—

On the 23rd of February, 1918, our part of the Grand Fleet returned to Rosyth after forty-eight hours convoying from Bergen to Aberdeen, etc. We were coaling ship, taking in about 2,000 tons and provisions, etc., when we received a wireless asking for volunteers to the number of eleven men for special service. Seamen and stokers were asked to volunteer. Soon it was seen that all who wished to go would not be accepted, much to their disappointment. Eleven were chosen. They received orders to catch the 9.25 p.m. train from Rosyth Dockyard, *en route* for London; were given two days' leave; and ordered to report to Chatham Dépôt. On arriving we were ordered on board H.M.S. *Hindustan* to start our training. Up to now we knew little or nothing as to what our mission would be. After a

¹ Leading Seaman G. J. Bush, D.S.M. (No. 7018, R.A.N.). Of Manchester, Eng.; b. Islington, London, 19 Oct., 1887.

² Leading Seaman D. J. O. Rudd, D.S.M. (No. 3389, R.A.N.). Of Campsie, N.S.W.; b. Sydney, 14 June, 1896.

³ Able Seaman H. J. Gillard (No. 8517, R.N.). Of Bangor, North Wales; b. New Brighton, Cheshire, Eng., 29 Jan., 1890.

⁴ Able Seaman L. T. Newland (No. 1937, R.A.N.). Of South Northcote, Vic.; b. Ballarat, Vic., 16 Aug., 1889.

⁵ Leading Seaman G. E. Staples, D.S.M. (No. 2858, R.A.N.). Of Semaphore, S. Aust.; b. Parkside, S. Aust., 20 April, 1896. Died 13 Aug., 1920.

⁶ Leading Stoker W. J. Bourke (No. 2237, R.A.N.). Of Perth, W. Aust.; b. Perth, 7 Dec., 1891.

⁷ Leading Stoker R. Hopkins (No. 3135, R.A.N.). Of Windsor, Vic.; b. Wyong, N.S.W., 5 Oct., 1893.

⁸ Leading Stoker G. J. Lockard (No. 3123, R.A.N.). Of West Marrickville, N.S.W.; b. Sydney, 28 Feb., 1893.

⁹ Leading Stoker N. J. McCrory (No. 1183, R.A.N.). Of Surry Hills, N.S.W.; b. Sydney, 24 Jan., 1892.

¹⁰ Leading Stoker J. Strong (No. 2536, R.A.N.). Of Annandale, N.S.W.; b. Gallyment, N.S.W., 10 Nov., 1893.

few days our jobs came along—the seamen to learn all about trench-warfare, bomb-throwing, and special bayonet-drill; hours of drill at intervals from 5.30 a.m. to 7.30 p.m. Our seamen did their share, and came out with most marks to their credit, after the marines had had a good try to beat them. This was to fit them for the landing from H.M.S. *Vindictive* at the Zeebrugge mole. The *Australia's* stokers joined H.M.S. *Thetis*—their work did not allow for much rifle-drill, but they did their share and learnt their ship from stem to stern. . . .

In the action all the Australian seamen from the *Vindictive* landed on the mole; the five stokers went into action in the *Thetis*, and Mr. Edgar in the *Iris*. All the volunteers from the *Australia* returned safe—she was the only ship that posted no casualty list. Mr. Edgar was very fortunate on board the *Iris*, she being under a fair amount of gun-fire.¹¹ The means of retreat of the stokers from the *Thetis* was only one life-boat. We had to pull about half-a-mile before we were picked up by a motor-boat—one of the submarine chasers.

¹¹ Edgar came on deck when the ship was under heavy fire, and, with an engine-room artificer, turned on the smoke apparatus.