

A RARE WW2 “OPERATION AGREEMENT” D.S.M. TO A TORPEDOMAN, ROYAL NAVY, WHO WAS DECORATED FOR HIS GALLANTRY ABOARD H.M.S. ZULU, ONE OF THE TWO ASSAULTING DESTROYERS THAT LANDED 11 RM COMMANDO DURING THE DISASTROUS RAID ON TOBRUK ON THE NIGHT OF 13-14 SEPTEMBER 1942. DURING THE ASSAULT ZULU TOOK SEVERE PUNISHMENT FROM THE ENEMY’S SHORE BATTERIES, ESPECIALLY DURING HER UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT TO SAVE HER CONSORT, H.M.S. SIKH BUT WAS HERSELF ULTIMATELY SUNK AS A RESULT OF SUSTAINED AND ACCURATE AIR ATTACK DURING ITS RETREAT TO ALEXANDRIA



DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL, G.V.I.R. 'JX. 214991 S. REID A.B, R.N,' IN ITS CASE OF ISSUE AND INVITATION CARD FOR THE PRESENTATION OF THE DSM AT BUCKINGHAM PALACE ON 16TH FEBRUARY 1945.

D.S.M. *London Gazette* 22 December 1942:

'For great gallantry, leadership and devotion to duty in H.M. Ships Sikh and Zulu, and other ships, in the raid on Tobruk in September 1942.'

The original recommendation for an 'immediate' award states:

"When Zulu was hit by gunfire this torpedo-man put out an electrical fire shutting off power and restarting the steering motors and by his prompt action the ship was kept under control during the most crucial period"

One of just 8 awards of the D.S.M.'s and 1 Bar to the crews of H.M. Ships Sikh and Zulu, and other ships for gallantry during 'Operation Agreement'; the raid on Tobruk

Sidney Reid was born in London circa 1914, later moving to Shrewsbury where he was employed by Motor Union Insurance Company and played Rugby for Shrewsbury Rugby Club. Joining the Royal Navy in August 1940, he served in the Torpedo branch and having been appointed to the Tribal-class destroyer H.M.S. Zulu.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Zulu_\(F18\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Zulu_(F18))



On 14 September 1942, Reid was present aboard Zulu, which along with its consort; H.M.S. Sikh, formed Force A during the Commando and Special Forces raid on Tobruk, codename 'Operation Agreement'. These two Destroyers, the only large ships directly involved in the landings were carrying 11 Royal Marine Commando, who they were to land, give covering support to and then retrieve after the raid's objectives were completed. A smaller force was to be landed east of Tobruk harbour by Motor Launches, covered by Motor Torpedo Boats and 150 SAS were to attack by land.

The assault was a disaster; The Marines were landed on the wrong beach and fire from the shore decimated both landing craft and the Motor Launch force. Both Destroyers were under heavy fire from the off and when Sikh pushed to close to shore, it was itself hit multiple times and disabled. Zulu made several gallant attempts to tow Sikh out but was itself hit multiple times and was at length ordered to retreat under heavy fire.

Eventually joining up with the Cruiser HMS Coventry and covering destroyers out to sea, the force made its way back to Alexandria but was subjected to relentless attacks from German aircraft. Coventry was severely damaged and then scuttled by Zulu's torpedo's, then attention was drawn to

Zulu which was itself severely damaged by dive bombers. Taken in tow by one of the other destroyers, shortly after, Zulu itself sank.

Losses from the assault were horrendous, both assaulting destroyers were sunk as was the covering Cruiser. Numerous ML's. MTB's and landing craft were additionally lost, and 300 Royal Marines and 160 soldiers were killed and captured; approximately two thirds of the assaulting force. The Royal Navy lost an additional 280 men.

From his recommendation, it is almost certain that his gallant actions were performed during the main assault or when Zulu attempted to save Sikh. This was the only time Zulu was under gunfire, on retreating it was under attack by aircraft.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Agreement

Whether Reid was aboard Zulu during its action with Bismarck in May 1941 and what his service consisted of post Zulu, is as yet unknown, though service during the former is very likely.



DISASTER AT TOBRUK

Zulu under Commander R. T. White, D.S.O. - was ordered to join the flotilla assembling for a daring strike against Tobruk - "Operation Agreement".

The objective of the raid was to gain control of the harbour and to demolish the installations of a port which saved the Germans 260 miles of road transport. Prepared in the greatest secrecy - and timed to coincide with land operations undertaken by the L.R.D.G. - the main thrust of the assault fell to the men of the 11th Battalion, R.M., all of whom were embarked in Zulu and her fellow Tribal-class

consort Sikh at Haifa, the former carrying 'A' and 'C' Companies, with a brace of machine-gun sections, in addition to attached elements from the R.A. and R.E. - both ships had Italian red and white diagonal identification stripes painted on their fo'c'sles, in addition to other minor modifications to try and confuse the enemy, but in the event such alterations proved utterly ineffective. Having then received a good luck signal from Winston Churchill, the Tribals, escorted by the cruiser Coventry - also sunk in the raid - and two Hunt-class destroyers (Croome and Hursley), made their way towards Tobruk for "zero hour" on the night of the 13-14 September 1942 and, on nearing their destination, broke away from their escort and steamed due west at top speed until, at midnight, they altered course and turned south for the final run-in. At this moment 60 R.A.F. Wellingtons began a three hours' bombardment of the town and at 2 a.m. the code word "Nigger" was received, indicating that the L.R.D.G. had taken a coastal battery at the mouth of the harbour, thereby setting in motion the lowering of the first wave of assault craft from Zulu and Sikh. As it transpired, these were the only Marines disembarked, for the ferocity of the enemy's response by shore battery and smaller arms was immense - in fact fewer than 100 Marines survived the terrible passage from ship to shore where, after numerous acts of gallantry, the survivors were taken prisoner.



H.M.S. ZULU

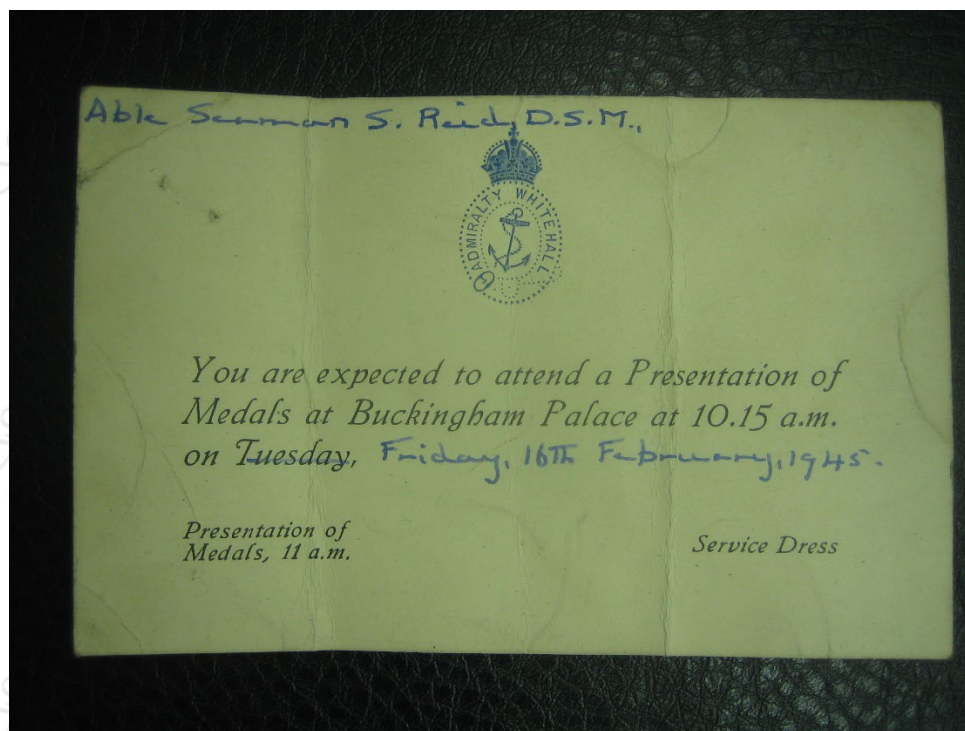
Meanwhile, in their attempt to close the shore and try and rescue assorted men in heavily damaged assault craft, the Zulu and Sikh were caught in enemy searchlights and swept by a heavy fire, so much so that the latter was eventually stopped dead in the water, her guns and engines out of action. Zulu fared little better, taking three or four hits, but nonetheless made a bold attempt to get the seriously damaged Sikh in tow - owing to the scale of the enemy's fire, however, Commander White was compelled to abandon the task and sheer off for Alexandria, but not before closing the shore to lay a smokescreen: not long afterwards the Sikh went down with a loss of two officers and 20 ratings.

It was about this time that one of the Tribals' escorts, the Coventry, came under sustained attack from 14 enemy dive-bombers, and as a result of four direct hits and the resultant carnage, she had to be abandoned, Commander White in the Zulu being ordered by a signal from Alexandria to make a rendezvous and finish-off the stricken cruiser by torpedo, which duty he subsequently performed, though his own ship was also under attack. In fact, what followed was 'a calculated and determined attempt to destroy the Zulu', and it worked, three formations of Ju. 87s and 88s coming in from separate directions. White later recalled (for the full story, see Massacre at Tobruk, by Peter C.

Smith):

'At about 1600, a concentrated attack by about six Ju. 88s and 12 Ju. 87s was delivered on Zulu and the ship was surrounded by a hail of falling bombs. The last bomb to fall hit the ship's side, entered the engine room and burst. The engine room, No. 3 boiler room and gear room were flooded and the ship settled down about two feet. I went aft and shut off the emergency steam valves to the engine room and when it had cooled down a little later, looked down in the engine room. There was no sign of any bodies and the place was a mass of wrecked machinery ... '

With her only surviving escorts on the scene, the Croome and the Hursley, attempts were made to take the Zulu in tow, but further attacks delivered by Me. 109s, Ju. 87s and 88s throughout the afternoon made the process an extremely slow one. And when, at length, a tow was finally in place, and most of Zulu's crew had transferred to the Croome, the former very suddenly turned over and went down. Luckily no-one was lost on this occasion, her skeleton crew taking to the water and being picked-up, but as a result of numerous hits received during the raid and afterwards, White reported 'Three officers and 24 men missing in the boats off Tobruk, and the Engineer Officer and 10 men killed in the ship'.



Three other D.S.M.'s for Operation Agreement have been located in past sales, all via Noonans but not for some years; These on 26 March 2009, 27 June 2007 and 16 December 2003



Condition NEF. Sold with copy original D.S.M. Recommendation and newspaper articles on Reid (digital). Also a copy of 'Massacre at Tobruk', which gives far more information on Zulu's part in Operation Agreement. Medal new to the market, being from direct the family.

A very fine and rare D.S.M. for this disastrous Amphibious assault.

**SHREWSBURY MAN WINS
D.S.M. — Mrs. Evelyn Reid, of
Knockaloe, Alma Street, has just**



received information that her husband, Able-Seaman (Torpedoman) Sidney Reid, R.N., has been awarded the Distinguished Service Medal. A.B. Reid, who is 29, is a native of London, and came to Shrewsbury six years ago. Before joining the Navy, he was employed by the Motor Union Insurance Company, and he played for the Shrewsbury Rugby team. Four years ago he married Miss Evelyn Lawrence, of London, and he joined the Navy in August, 1940.

