

Vice Admiral Sir Samuel Philip Townsend [6C01]

**Report from The London Gazette 21762 of 14 August 1855 concerning the raid on
'Crooked Spit' in the Sea of Azov**

*Her Majesty's ship Swallow, off Crooked Spit,
Sea of Azov,
July 15, 1855.*

SIR

IN compliance with your orders, I preceded in Her Majesty's steam, gun-boat Grinder, with Cracker and Boxer, and boats of the squadron to reconnoitre the Crooked Spit. Having cleared the spit of some mounted troops who occupied it, I ordered a detachment of boats, with their respective officers, to land and destroy the immense fishing establishments and nets found upon the point of it. The country seemed swarming with cavalry, but, by the able management of the officers in command, of the gun-boats, and by their good fire, they were effectually driven off the spit some distance inland. Having reconnoitred as far into the land as we could see from the mast head of the Grinder, all the boats were ordered to land and set fire to very large and extensive government stores upon the upper part of the spit, including large fishing establishments, an enormous quantity of nets, haystacks, and several large houses used as government stores. I learnt from a Russian fisherman, that the fish caught on this spit and cured here was immediately forwarded to Simpheropol, for the use of the Crimean army; and I conclude that a very severe blow has been inflicted upon the enemy by the amount of property which was destroyed, including spars, timber, fish, nets, and boats; apparently the most extensive fishing establishment in the Sea of Azof; and I am happy to say without a casualty. My thanks are due to Lieutenants Hamilton, of Grinder, and Townsend, of Boxer, as also to Lieutenants Rowley, of Curlew; Grylls, of Fancy; Sullivan, of Vesuvius; Mr. Aldrich, Master of Swallow; Mr. Deare, Gunner of Curlew; and Mr. Windsor, Gunner of Swallow; who all and each by their zeal and activity rendered great service in destroying so large an accumulation of stores and houses in so short a space of time.

I have, &c.

(Signed) FRED. A. B. CRAUFURD, Commander.

**Report from The London Gazette 21826 of 8 December 1855 concerning the raid on
Gheisk and Glorifa in the Sea of Azov**

*Her Majesty's steam-sloop Vesuvius,
off Gheisk,
November 7, 1855.*

SIR,

AFTER dark on the evening of the 3rd instant, the squadron under my command was assembled and anchored in 16 feet water, off Gheisk-Liman, and I made arrangements for the morrow to operate against the extensive collection of corn, forage, and fuel, belonging to the enemy, stacked along its shores, so as to distract the attention of the large force which, from previous observation, I knew to be in the neighbourhood. Under Lieutenant Ross, of the Weser, I placed the Curlew in the temporary charge of Lieutenant Miall and the Ardent in charge of Mr. Tilly, Second Master, each vessel having sufficient men left in her to weigh an

anchor, or fight a gun, and man a few boats, giving orders to Lieutenant Ross to close in on the northern face of Gheisk, and to be prepared to co-operate with me inside the Liman.

The Vesuvius I left in the offing, denuded of every available person ; embarking officers and men as in the annexed list, from the Vesuvius, Curlew, Weser, and Ardent, with their boats, we left at daylight, towed by Her Majesty's gun-boats,

Recruit, Lieutenant G. Day.
Boxer, Lieutenant S. P. Townsend.
Cracker, Lieutenant J. H. Marryat.
Clinker, Lieutenant J. S. Hudson.

By 6-30 A.M. the flotilla was off Vodina, three miles north of Glofira; here long tiers of corn stacks and much fuel was stored along the coast, with a Cossack guard for its protection; I immediately detached Commander Kennedy with the boats, covering him with the gun-vessels, and in a short time all was in flames, and the party cleverly re-embarked at the moment that a large body of Cossacks rode up from Lazalnite. The town of Glofira became the next point of attack; it was greatly changed in appearance since visited by Captain Rowley Lambert in July last. Corn stacks, for some miles in extent, might now be seen along its southern and eastern face placed close to the water's edge ready for transport; and between the rows of houses tier on tier were to be seen.

An entrenchment had been cut along the edge of the cliff commanding the spit; large bodies of dismounted cavalry were seen lining it, and armed men showed in the rear of every house. To endeavour to flank the defences, as well as destroy the corn stacks stored on a high hill east of Glofira, I despatched Commander Kennedy, with the boats of Her Majesty's ship Curlew, a paddle-box boat and cutter of the Vesuvius, the whole towed by the Clinker, Lieutenant Hudson, with orders to turn the spit end, and then attack in that direction, after giving a certain time to allow the enemy's attention to be divided by the other attack. The gun-boats Recruit, Grinder, Boxer, and Cracker, opening fire on the entrenchments with Shrapnel shell, and on the corn ricks with carcasses.

As the enemy could only be dislodged from the extreme west, and the carcasses did not well answer, and moreover endangered the whole town, I despatched Lieutenants Day and Campion with the small force of marines available, a howitzer boat and two rocket boats, to aid more effectually in carrying out my object. Lieutenant Campion, with Mr. Verey, gunner, charging at the head of the marines, supported by Lieutenant Day and the seamen, all being under a sharp fire of musketry, succeeded in driving the enemy, with considerable loss, out of their trench work, and captured a small brass piece, and then steadily forced them back, with loss, from store to store, until the whole of the vast quantity of corn, stacked ready for thrashing and transport, was in flames.

The gallant manner in which Lieutenant Campion led the marines deserves to be brought under your notice. Seeing the enemy collecting a number of men, ready to charge our men if they advanced beyond a ravine on the east face of the town, I recalled my force, and had the satisfaction of seeing all embarked, with only one man wounded.

The vessels off Gheisk were now seen to be engaged, Lieutenant Ross, of the Weser, having placed them in capital positions; and, as the enemy moved down large bodies of troops, especially cavalry, to resist his landing, and opened fire on him, he very unwillingly had to fire on the town, to dislodge them.

The proceedings of Lieutenant Ross were ably executed, and he fully succeeded in keeping in check a heavy body of cavalry which might have much incommoded the small force under Commander Kennedy, who, by the most strenuous exertions, had reached his position, and

finding the cliff too steep to scale in the face of a large number of troops, who were firing on him from its crest, he very judiciously executed the duty I had entrusted to him, with the gun and the carcass rockets of the ship's boats, setting every store in flames, except one large government building considerably in the rear.

Commander Kennedy speaks in the highest terms of his party, for the shallowness of the water obliged the crews of the boats to be rowing and wading through the water from noon until midnight, the season too being now very cold.

Throughout the night the stores were burning fiercely, a sheet of flames extending fully two miles, but the town of Glofira, *except where the troops had used the houses against us*, remained untouched.

At an early hour on the 6th November, we weighed and proceeded into the Liman, steering towards Gheisk; the valuable services of Mr. George Perry, Acting Master of the Vesuvius, and Mr. Parker, Second Master of the Recruit, came here into play; and, at an early period, I had the satisfaction of seeing all the gun-boats anchored just in their own draught of water, within long gun-shot of the east extreme of Gheisk and the neighbouring steppe, along the edge of which, for four miles, corn and hay was stacked in quantities far beyond what I had conceived to be possible, and at the base of the steppe, as well as that part of the spit commanded by the town, timber yards, fish stores, boats, &c, in numbers were accumulated.

To attack upon as many points as possible was, I thought, the only way to foil the troops that had now had 36 hours to prepare for us; the gun-boats Grinder, Boxer, Cracker, and Clinker, were left to cover the landing party. To Lieutenant Ross of the Weser, I signaled to prepare to land, and divided the force in the Limn into three bodies; the left under Lieutenants Day and Townsend, consisted of boats and men of Recruit and Boxer; the centre I entrusted to Commander Kennedy, having under him Lieutenants Hamilton, Champion, Marryat, and Mayne, with all the boats of the Curlew, Ardent, Grinder, and Cracker, and port rocket and gun-boats of the Vesuvius, in charge of the officers named in the margin; the right division under Lieutenant Chatham Strobe, and Lieutenant Hudson, consisted of the starboard gun-boats of Vesuvius, and those of Clinker, together with some marines, Mr. R. Farquharson, Midshipman, in charge of the latter. Lieutenant Ross, on the west side of Gheisk Spit, had the boats and small-arm men of the Weser, with a small force from Curlew and Ardent, under Lieutenant Miall, and Mr. Tilly, Second Master, in readiness to co-operate.

The different parties pulled in and effected a landing at appointed places, fully a mile apart; the Russian troops, within light breastworks, attempted to prevent them, but failed, and in a few moments a screen of flames and smoke rolling from our men towards the enemy, prevented the latter seeing where or how to manoeuvre, in order to cut off any of our small detachments.

On the right and centre the enemy mustered strongest, and at one time observing a column of some 1500 Cossacks moving rapidly off the left, I directed Commander Kennedy (who by that time had connected his fires with those of Lieutenant Day) to re-embark all but the marines, and with them to proceed to his right, and I reinforced him with the marines of the Recruit and Weser, under Lieutenant Champion. This answered perfectly; the enemy arrived too late to save anything on the left, whilst our men steadily worked towards the right division, under Lieutenants Strobe and Ross, who, in spite of a heavy but badly directed fire from the houses on the heights, steadily held their ground, and effectually destroyed a great accumulation of materials for boats and ship building, fish stores, cavalry camp gear and granaries.

When everything but the town of Gheisk was destroyed, I ordered the embarkation to take place, and detached some boats to cover Lieutenant Ross, between whom and his boat the enemy were throwing a body of men, who, by their uniform, I believed to be regular infantry.

By 2 P.M., everything was finished, and all the parties safely re-embarked on board their respective gun-boats, the casualties amounting to only six men wounded in all, one of them dangerously and another severely.

Nothing further being-left within our reach in Gheisk-Liman, except the store of corn which escaped on the previous day at Glofira, I, therefore, ordered Commander Kennedy with the moiety of the boats to return to their respective ships, and remained with the Recruit, Ardent, Boxer, and Cracker's boats to finish what had escaped east of Glofira.

On the 6th the weather, which had favoured us most providentially, changed; fogs and strong breezes came on, but directly I was able, the rocket boats and carcasses were again employed upon Glofira until the fires extinguished yesterday were re-lighted, and another extensive accumulation of corn in flames; I then weighed and returned to the Vesuvius, reaching her the same afternoon.

I despair of being able to convey to you .any idea of the extraordinary quantity of corn, rye, hay, wood and other supplies, so necessary for the existence of Russian armies both in the Caucasus and the Crimea, which it has been our good fortune to destroy.

That these vast stores should have been collected here, so close to the sea, whilst we were still in the neighbourhood, is only to be accounted for, by their supposing that they could not be reached by us, and judging by the position the squadron under the late Captain Edmund Lyons, took up in May last, the Russians had established a camp and fortified their town only to meet a similar attack.

During these proceedings we never had more than 200 men engaged; the enemy had, from the concurrent testimony of Lieutenants Ross and Strode, and my own observation, from 3,000 to 4,000 men in Gheisk alone.

Where every officer exerted himself to the utmost, and did all and more than I expected of them, it would be invidious for me to mention, one more than another; it was their coolness, zeal, and example, that rendered steady many of the younger men; who for the first time were under fire, and but for their general intelligence and zeal, the enemy would have easily frustrated our operations.

The zeal, good, conduct, and gallantry of the men, was deserving of every praise.

Commander Kennedy, my second in command, gave me the most valuable co-operation, and from him. as well as the reports of the other officers, I feel justified in placing before you the names of the following warrant officers and men, who, under fire, behaved remarkably well, viz.: Mr. Richard Verey, Acting Gunner of Her Majesty's ship Ardent; Thomas Kerr, Gunner, Royal Marine Artillery, Her Majesty's ship Vesuvius; Peter Hanlan, A.B., Her Majesty's ship Curlew; David Barry, A.B., Her Majesty's ship Cracker.

The enclosed plan, illustrative of our operations, by Mr. George Ferry, Acting Master of the Vesuvius, will, I trust, be of use, and I beg you will allow me to call your attention to the unvarying zeal of that officer.

I have, &c,
(Signed) SHERARD OSBORN.
Captain and Senior Officer in the Sea of Azof.