

The immediate actions after the fatal impact

Signalman of the Watch Arthur Lansbury was on the bridge. He said: "When the first one hit, it threw me to the deck, and when I got on my feet again, I raced to the voicepipe down to the radio room to try to send out a distress message, but couldn't raise them."

Lansbury found out later that a piece of shrapnel had gone straight through the radio set. This unfortunate damage meant that *Armidale's* situation would remain unknown: not that any aircraft could have reached her in time to help, but the rescue situation was going to be dangerously compromised.⁴⁸

Able Seaman Jack Duckworth was on the quarterdeck of the corvette, and recalled being:

...swept away by the water rushing through. I grabbed a depth charge thrower, and managed to get back on my feet. I got to work cutting everything that would float loose. While we were letting go the motor boat, Jap fighters machine gunned us...several boys were hit with cannon fire. We eventually got the boat away, and jumped into the water. We'd just dropped astern when another torpedo hit her amidships...smoke and oil went everywhere.⁴⁹

The explosions had been massive. Many of the Dutch soldiers were killed in the area of impact. There has always been confusion over who died, until now. The next chapter details how this has been resolved with this book's publication.

Armidale began sinking fast, and it was now that Teddy Sheean determined to stay on and fight.

Ordinary Seaman RM Caro wrote later:

Teddy died, but none of us who survived, I am sure, will ever forget his gallant deed which won him a Mention in Despatches. He was a loader number on the after Oerlikon gun. When the order "Abandon Ship" was given, he made for the side, only to be hit twice by the bullets of an attacking Zero. None of us will ever know what made him do it, but he went back to his gun, strapped himself in, and brought down a Jap plane, still firing as he disappeared beneath the waves.⁵⁰

The Gunnery Officer, Lieutenant Palmer, gave a brief but clear account, and as the senior man on board in charge of the ship's weapons, his is one of the most significant.

Ord. Seaman Ted Sheean was responsible for one plane in the last attack. He was a loading number at the after Oerlikon, and when the order was given to abandon ship, he made for the side, but was wounded by a machine gun bullet. He returned to his gun,