

# *Memiors of Port Melbourne*



**Port Melbourne Historical  
and Preservation Society**

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## *Introduction*

*Memoirs of Port Melbourne* has been produced in order to make available to researchers and general readers a number of documents that have been lodged with the Port Melbourne Historical and Preservation Society over a number of years. Most of them were given to us by the authors.

One criterion for selection was that the document described the author's own experiences. This eliminated any of the family histories that are also in our collection and might be used in a later publication. There is one exception to this: *A Maritime Life*. This is a brief life story of James Conder written by one of his descendants. We have included this because it will enhance the readers understanding of the two documents written and illustrated by James Conder. It seems to us that, considering the limited public access to our collection, the publication of them as an eBook would be a useful service.

The memoirs included in this book were selected from the PMHPS collection as they detail the ways in which many people have experienced Port Melbourne; as a resident, as a seaman or as a worker in one of the numerous industries that have been located in our area.

Memory can be unreliable and the recollections of our eight contributors are just as likely to contain inaccuracies as those of anyone else, however even an inaccurate recollection can contribute to our understating of the past because it reveals how whatever was the physical reality appeared to the writer. For this reason, we have generally made no attempt to correct any inaccuracies that we detected.

In working on the texts, we made every effort to contact

the author or their family to explain what we were planning and to seek their permission. However, since we have been given the texts at various times over the last 30 years the details recorded on the donor forms at the time they were lodged did not always lead us to the donor. Only one of them has ever been published elsewhere and that is acknowledged.

*There have only been the lightest of editorial changes made in any of the texts. In the interests of authenticity, the authors use of capital letters, their values and their grammar are part of the fabric of their story. Likewise, we have made no attempt to change names in order to protect the identity of people mentioned in the texts.*

The culturally acceptable values and language of their time is reflected in various ways in the documents. We have made no attempt to alter these although we acknowledge that some of them are unacceptable by today's standards.

Several of the documents included images however most of these are of a very poor quality and could not be reproduced. The exception is those in *Under Canvas* and *Under Steam*.

Other illustrations have been selected from various sources, acknowledged in the image caption, to illustrate points made in the texts. We hope that the readers enjoy these accounts of past lives and the opportunity to meet some interesting people and to observe their lives and connections to Port Melbourne.

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## *The Sea*

### *Foreword Under Canvas and Under Steam*

**Betty Cromb**

My Great Grandfather, Pryor Conder, migrated to Tasmania with his three brothers in the early 1800s, and subsequently married Elizabeth Blair, the daughter of an Irish migrant family.

They moved to Victoria, leased a market garden, at what is now Jordanville. All went well until Pryor died prematurely, leaving Elizabeth with four sons. The family then moved to Hawthorn to be near cousins, Elizabeth becoming a midwife and the boys taking various jobs.

One son, James Brycane Conder, my Grandfather, had always wanted to go to sea and joined the Naval Brigade, also applying for a position with the British Colonial Squadron. There were no vacancies at that stage, so in the meantime, in 1889, aged 17, he joined the Merchant Marine Service.

His first voyage under sail instilled a lasting passion for these ships and the hard, but fulfilling way of life. Back in Melbourne, while waiting for a Navy posting, he worked ashore and on small ships, including Bay Excursion Steamers until signing on the *Cerberus* in June 1891.

For the next twenty-three years he travelled around Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands in numerous Navy vessels, but by 1913, with a family of five, decided to come ashore. However, his career with the Navy was not over, accepting a position as Study Corporal with the Naval

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College where he stayed for 24 years until retirement.

His two hand-written volumes of memoirs, totalling 391 pages, are a fascinating adventure story of hardship, humour, danger and tragedy. The illustrations are his own water colour paintings.

The many hazards of working under canvas on magnificent sailing vessels are detailed in Part I while Part II details the changes made to a sailor's life with the introduction of steam driven vessels.

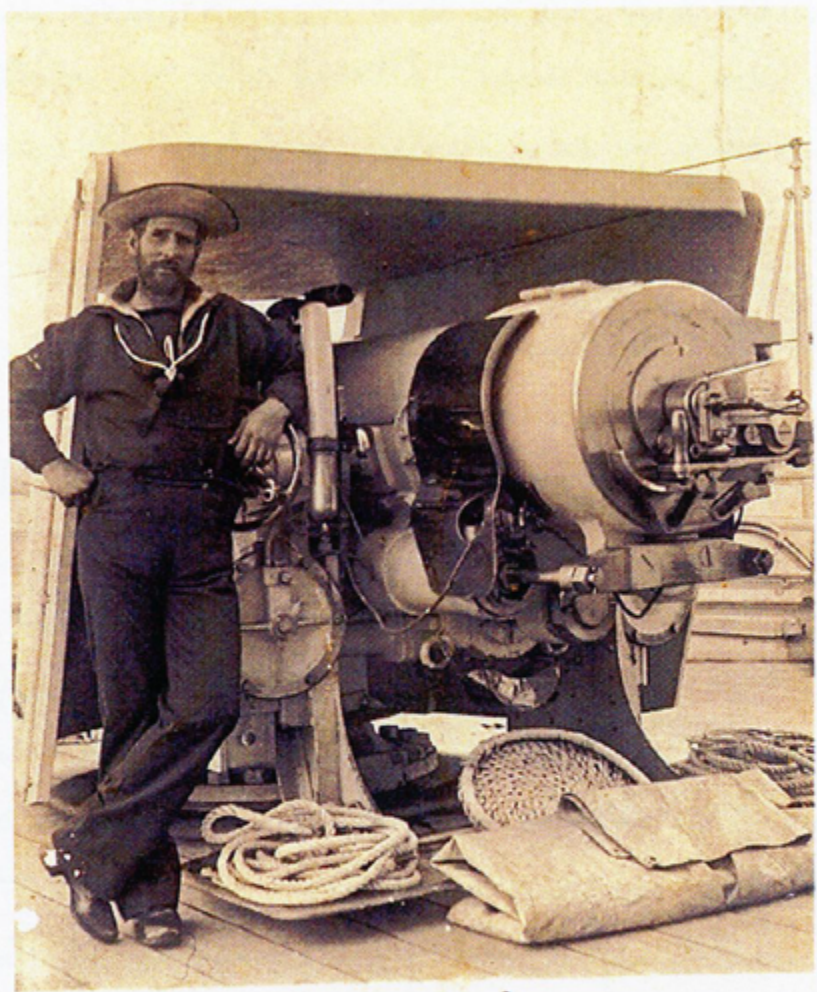
My Grandfather was a caring, thoughtful and talented man, having a deep affinity with, not only ships and the sea, but also the men he sailed with, and particularly his vast extended family.

His memoirs are a lasting legacy, not only to family and friends, but anyone who enjoys a good sea story.

Betty Cromb  
October 2009

*To Doris with love  
from Dad  
New Year 1954*

*To my daughter Elizabeth  
with love  
from her mother Doris Cooper  
in remembrance of her  
Grandfather, whose log this is.*



Yours Always  
Jim

*An Address to the Sea*

*Brave men have found in thee, their graves.  
England's Glory and Pride,  
have fought fierce battles on thy waves,  
as tossed by thee, they died.  
And many a Gallant ship has passed  
on thy waters, when calm and still.  
Only to be engulfed by thee at last  
And thou, that doomed ship did fill.*

*On thy sandy bottom, lie wealth untold,  
Side by side, lie thousands of thy dead,  
which wealth no mortal can ever hold.  
Whose histories can never be read.  
And there lie many a Poor Widows Son  
who were her only Joy and Pride,  
were buried there by thee, when they were going,  
And for their Country, Fought and Died.*

*How calm thou art as thou lie asleep,  
How angry when with storm thou awake,  
And scattered o'er thy mighty deep.  
A thousand wrecks thou make,  
And thy Bosom gently rose and fell,  
When thy waves lay in repose.  
Ah! many a Gallant ship, knew thee well,  
As when in Anger thou arose.*

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*Roll on; Roll on; Thy Billows roll,  
thou has't given many a Joy, and many a Pain,  
And many aching Hearts, Thou Can's't Console  
Has ventured on thy Treacherous Bosom again.  
Sweep on; Sweep on; thy waves so strong,  
shining so Bright, so Pure and Free,  
As Proudly so Gallant ship sails on,  
Beautiful Sea, O Treacherous Sea.*

*JBC 1889*



Self portrait by James Condor

## *Introduction to James Conder's Logs*

*These two documents were donated to the PMH&PS by Betty Cromb, a member of the Society from 1994 to her death in 2019. Betty was a granddaughter of James Conder. They are high quality photocopies of the diary originals that are now the property of Betty's son Richard Cromb who has agreed to their publication. Betty's father died when she and her siblings were very young and James Conder and his wife adopted them, taking them to Jarvis Bay where he was stationed in the RAN at the time.*

*James Conder was born in 1872. Several family members had immigrated and settled there, eventually owning several properties. There is a Conder Street in Hawthorn named after his aunt and uncle.*

*James was 17 when he signed up as a crew member on the Ellora at Town Pier Port Melbourne in October 1889, for the voyage to England taking a cargo largely consisting of baled wool plus thirteen passengers. The non-stop voyage via Cape Horn took five months. He made the return journey on the Avenger.*

*The diaries cover his subsequent life as a member of the Victoria Navy, the Australian contingent of the Royal Navy and finally in the Royal Australian Navy. After his death in 1954 a relative, Robert Murphy, donated a number of artifacts and documents to the Australian National Maritime Museum.*

*James Conder was a remarkably gifted man as a writer and an artist. Some of his water colours are reproduced from the diaries. On board he earned some extra money tattooing fellow crew members. When he was at Jarvis Bay he designed and produced stage sets for a number of dramatic productions.*



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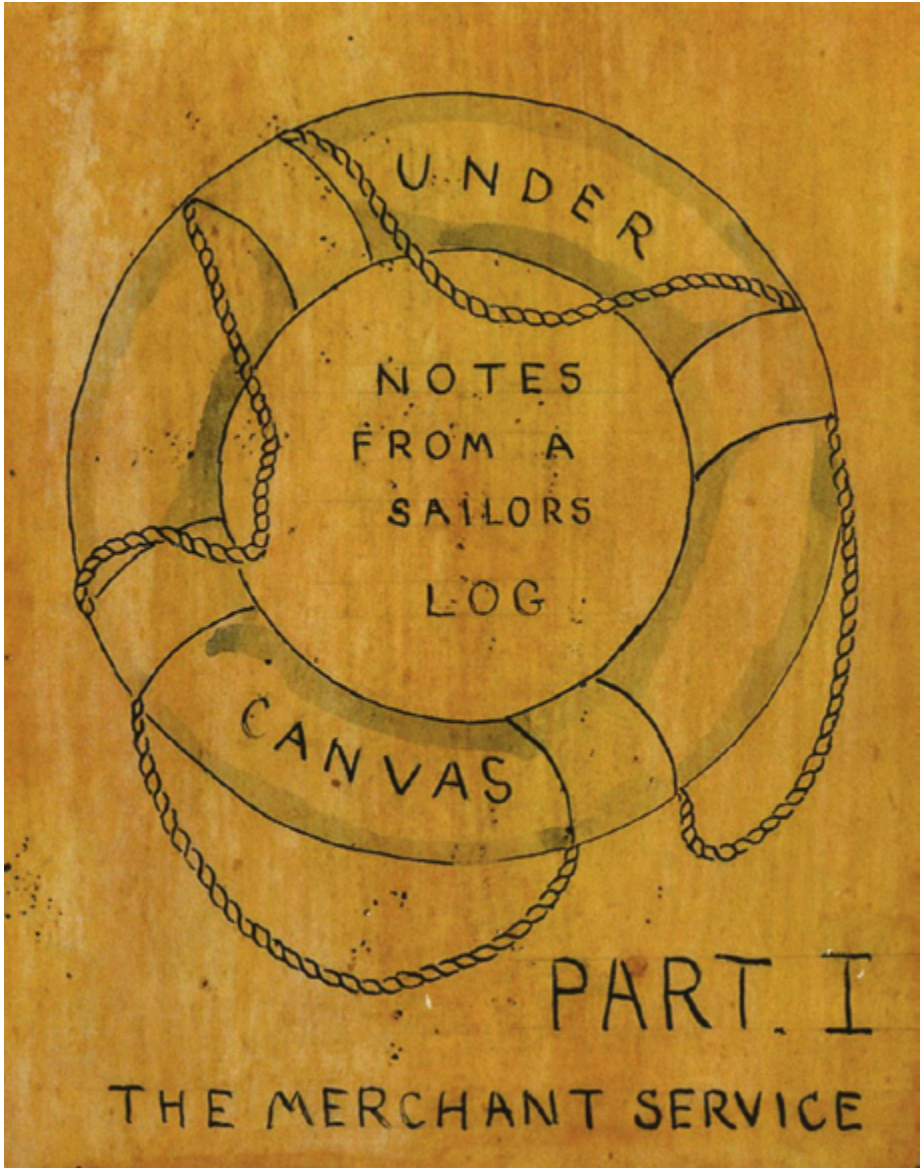
*James' amazing story has been reproduced below using his wording and grammar.*

*Paragraph and sentence breaks have been added to enhance readability. Footnotes have also been added to explain nautical terms used.*



*Notes from a Sailor's Log: Under Canvas*

James Conder





The *Ellora* was a large barque of 1727 tons, she had been a full rigged ship formerly and had been, so I was told, a P & O steamer first of all, but I'm not certain if that was true or not. At the time I joined her, the yards had been removed from her mizzen mast thus making her into a barque. Maybe this was done because as a full rigged ship she didn't sail too well,



or, as most likely the real reason was that as a barque she would not need such a large crew as a full rigged ship, and that is something that ship owners consider. She had a very large poop<sup>1</sup> and room for a good many passengers. Years before, she had made many voyages to Australia with a full list of passengers. She was a fast sailer and a very comfortable ship at sea.

It was in October 1889 that I joined her as one of her crew.

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<sup>1</sup>The highest deck at the stern of a large ship, usually above the captain's quarters.

The ship was then lying alongside the Port Melbourne Town Pier. She had not long arrived with a cargo of laths, from Vancouver Island. At the time I came on board, all the bundles of laths had been unloaded, but scattered in her hold were still thousands of loose laths which we, the crew, had to gather up and tie into bundles and placed on the pier.

It was a hurry up job as the ship had to go into dry dock to be cleaned and painted before taking in a cargo of wool, so as soon as we had cleaned out the hold, a tug came alongside and away we went over dry dock. It was after she was in dry dock and the water pumped out that I saw what a fine model she was. She had the lines of a yacht, the only thing that spoilt her was, she had an ugly stern, not rounded like most ships but squared off short. Even with her ugly stern, which I didn't like, she was a good fine model of a ship and I didn't wonder she was a good sailer with the lines she had.

After the ship had been cleaned and painted, she was taken alongside the Breakwater Pier to load her cargo of wool, truck load after truck load came alongside and the bales screwed into the hold, and as fast as it came, the ship was ready to swallow more. You would think it impossible to put more wool into the ship. Its remarkable how they can screw a bale of wool into a small space which seemed impossible to place anything half its size, but they do it until there don't seem enough space to put a lb of tea. They screw and screw until you would think the ships sides would bulge outwards, and when they have finished loading a wool ship a rat couldn't find room between the bales to crawl a foot. By Nov 20<sup>th</sup> we had left the pier a full ship, loaded down to the plimsoll mark and anchored in the Bay ready to proceed to sea. While the

ship had been loading, we the crew, had been busy getting her ready for sea, sails bent, running rigging rove, and everything overhauled, bending sails means they are made fast to the jack stay along the yards, that is all square sails are, stay sails are bent to the fore & aft stays, the spanker, the aft sail of all is bent to the mizzen mast.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> our passengers came on board, there were thirteen of them, men, women and a few children. That night one of the male passengers died suddenly in his cabin. The body was taken ashore early the next morning. This death delayed the departure of the ship and we did not leave until eight o'clock in the evening of the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Then the tow boat came along, the tow rope was made fast and we started our journey of 45 miles under tow. As we slowly towed down the Bay to the open sea, I often looked towards the fast dimming lights of the city and wondered when I would see those lights again. I didn't have much time to stand and dream, there was plenty of work yet to be done before we got to sea, there were cases of stores still piled on deck also passengers luggage all of which had to be stowed away aft.

The Fok'sl (sic) was like a pigsty as black silt which the cable had brought in when we hove up the anchor, was everywhere, straw which had been dropped from bales we had carried into the fore-peak was scattered around so that with the mud made our home look just like a pigsty.

There were sheep (the straw was food for them) to be penned up safe also crates of fowls to be seen to, so we had plenty to do while the ship was under tow. It was a bright moonlight night which made it better for us clearing up and

washing down the deck.

After we had stowed all the stores etc away we had time to wash out the Fok'sl and make it clean and comfortable. We just washed the mud away it was no use drying the deck as the cables were still bent to the anchors and would remain so until we were well off the land at sea which meant that every time the ship dipped her bows into the sea water would flow through the hawse pipes into the Fok'sl. So there was little use drying up until the hawse pipes were plugged and all ship shape.

The *Ellora* had a topgallant Fok'sl, that is right forward in the bows, level with the upper deck. Some ships have deck houses for their crew and deck houses are called the Fok'sl just the same. Wherever the crew live and have their meals is in the Fok'sl.

While we were being towed to sea all hands were mustered aft and the watches picked. The first mate looks the crew over and picks a man who steps over to the port side of the deck. The second mate then picks a man he fancies who walks over to the starboard side, and so it goes on each officer picking a man until all are finished with. The mate has the port watch and the second mate takes the starboard watch. I was in the mates watch which is considered the best one, so I was well satisfied.

Dawn was breaking when we reached the open sea, we were towed a few miles off the land then the tow boat cast off the rope and we were free to make sail. The tow boat turned back for the harbour giving us a cheer as they did so, we returned it and then got busy. Some hauled in the tow rope and coiled it down on the Fok'sl while others of the crew went

aloft and made sail. It wasn't very long before we were under full sail a good breeze was blowing and the ship making good headway off the land. By this time the tow boat was almost out of sight against the land, she was the last link between us and the shore, last minute letters were taken back by her to be posted. I once heard a shipmate say, if you want to land after the tow boat has cast off, you have to get out and walk, and if you can't swim, all you have to do is to crawl along the bottom, you are bound to strike dry land if you can only crawl long enough.

There were still some sheep running about the deck which had not been put in their pens, this was now done, and the decks washed down and dried up, all running rigging coiled clear and before long we were as clean and as smart looking as any ship on the seven seas.

Long before dark we were out of sight of land under all sail with a good steady breeze blowing. In the last dog watch 6 to 8<sup>pm</sup> the watches were set. The starboard watch having the first watch from 8 until 12 midnight, as I was in the port watch I would have the middle watch that is from 12 to 4<sup>am</sup>. So it wasn't very long before I turned in for my four hours below. The Fok'sl deck was still very wet as water came through the pipes every time the ship dipped her bows under, but that didn't trouble me I was soon in my bunk and fast asleep.

When I came on deck at twelve to keep the middle watch, the same steady breeze was blowing so we had a pretty fair time during our watch nothing much to do, until relieved by the other watch at 4<sup>am</sup> and again I turned in until 8 when it was our turn again on deck to keep the forenoon watch. During the forenoon the sky altered, black masses of cloud

were coming up, the breeze which had held steady for so long, was more stiff now, and everything looked like a gale working up fast. Soon it was blowing harder so we had to take in the Royals. Before noon it was blowing so hard that we took in the topgallant sails, by the time we had finished stowing sails it was eight bells, the starboard watch came on deck and we went below to dinner, pea soup and salt pork. Before we had finished dinner it started to blow harder than ever and both watches were up aloft stowing the upper top sails. The ship was now under two lower topsails and fore top stay sail. All the sail she could carry with safety. Its blowing pretty hard when a ship can only carry her lower topsails. We ran like this for two hours keeping as near our true course as we could but as the wind showed no signs of decreasing the Captain eased the ship off, that is the helm was put up allowing the ships head to fall off with the wind, and the ship run before it.

By this time it was blowing a stiff gale and although we were only under lower topsails the ship was running before the gale at a fast rate, with just enough sail on her to keep her ahead of the seas and her being pooped, that means shipping a sea over the stern.

Every little while she would shove her nose into it and the deck would be full of raging water it would come over the Fok'sl like the falls of Niagara, filling the ship fore and aft half way up the bulwarks.

We had rather a bad night of it as all through the night the gale raged on and the ship raced before it. The sea was running very high and the gale howled. You could hardly hear what was said even when standing close to anyone

shouting as loud as they could. The watch on deck had a busy and wet time of it. The watch below were not disturbed by being wanted so had their rest. When day broke it was a wild scene that met the view, masses of black clouds were racing overhead and the sea mountains high chasing the ship. A huge mountain of water would suddenly appear astern and when you felt sure it would crash down and poop the ship, she would lift her stern and in a second the huge wall of water was gone.



Work was out of the question only just what was necessary for the safety of the ship being done by the watch on deck. We expected to see the topsails blown to ribbons any minute, but they held, it was only because they were good sails for nothing else could have stood the terrible strain.

Our cables were still made fast to the anchors as during the

gale there was no chance of unbending them and stowing them away in the chain locker. So you can guess what the Fok'sl was like with sea after sea rushing through the hawse pipes flooding the deck, chests were well lashed to the deck and as they are watertight (or should be) we didn't mind much. We knew we would have to put up with it while the cables were still bent.

All the passengers were very sea sick and I couldn't help pitying them they must have had a bad time of it shut up aft all the while.

During the night the gale lulled a little bit but it was only for awhile. When day broke it was blowing as hard as before. The sea being so rough that it needed some skill to walk about the deck and dodge the seas that every little while flooded the deck.

The steward is always considered to be an expert at walking the deck in rough weather, as he has to carry food for the cabins from the galley and dodge seas at the same time. It is a sight worth looking at to see one of these gents going aft with half a dozen dishes and he is seldom known to make a miss and fall or even spill any of his dishes. But this day our steward had a fall. He was on his way from the galley with two or three dishes and one large dish of bacon and eggs. He had got as far as the after hatch when the ship took a big sea over the weather main rigging and before the steward could reach the break of the poop and safety he was caught and washed into the lee scuppers, eggs and bacon were swimming about everywhere while the steward was like a drowned rat and not at all pleased at losing the breakfast of those that were not too sick to eat. The language that steward used almost stopped



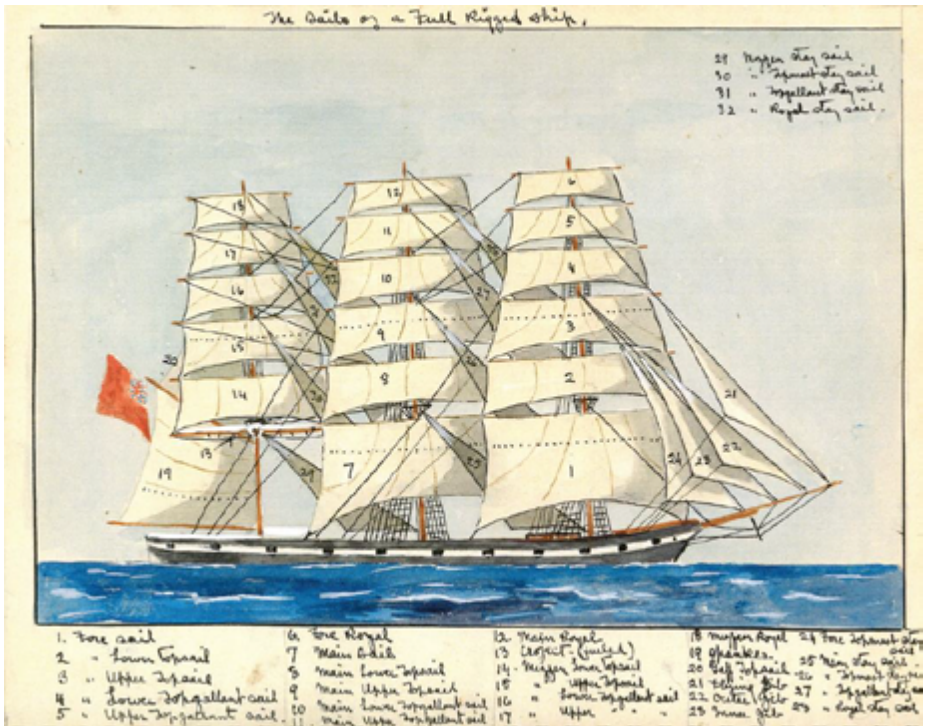
the ship. I'm sure it turned the eggs bad, so maybe the fish suffered.

All that day the gale still raged on, with the sea as high as ever. The ship still being under the same sail, by this time we were a few hundred miles out of our course running before the gale had taken us right away from where we should have been had the weather been different. The next night well on towards the middle watch the wind seemed to lull a little and by eight o'clock next morning the gale had abated considerably so much so that the watch set the main topgallant sail and shortly afterwards the spanker was also set.

Although the wind had gone down to a stiff breeze, the sea was still running very high, and we were still shipping plenty of water, all through the gale we had been running before it with our yards squared, now we had a chance of bracing them up a bit and try to run back to our proper course. The ship steering E.N.E. During the day the weather got much finer so we were able to do a few odd jobs such as putting new chafing gear in the rigging and making new gaskets. The night passed off with the weather still improving. When my watch came on deck next morning the sea had gone down very much to what it had been the night before. The ship was under more sail which the other watch had set while we were below, so we missed that job.

Early in the forenoon a ship was sighted to windward of us, this was the first ship we had seen since we left port. We watched her as she came down on us under her three topsails and main topgallant sail. She was going through the water at a great rate even under her reduced sail, but she had a fair wind, while we were braced sharp up on the starboard tack.

One minute all we could see of her was down to her lower topsails as she sank into trough of the sea, then she would rise on the next sea her painted ports shining in the sun with a mass of spray flying around her. She looked a fine sight as we watched her. In a few minutes she passed astern of us and was soon away too leeward of us. Neither ship showed any flags so we know nothing about her or where she was bound to.



I suppose we looked a fine sight to them too, as we were a much larger ship and also were under far more canvas. There is nothing so grand as a full rigged ship under full sail. Man has never made anything more beautiful or more complicated than a full rigged ship. She is like a thing of life, every rope and spar has its meaning and use and in a gale of wind with a touch of the hand she does what is wanted of her.

It is man's masterpiece. The Poet who said a ship was a thing of beauty and a joy for ever knew what he was talking about.

We were now carrying more sail although the sea was still running high the wind had dropped quite a lot since we sighted the other ship. Our skipper was what sailors call a packer on, that is putting the ship under all the sail she can carry and often enough far more than she should be carrying in some weathers. This packing on to make up for lost time in gales or calms has caused many a ship to be dismasted and sometimes lost altogether. Still our skipper seemed to know just when to pack on and when to take it off her. I would never consider him one of the rash ones.

The ship we had just passed was hardly out of sight when something was sighted on the crest of a wave right ahead. It could only be seen every little while and of course we all wanted to see just what it was. We soon came up with it and found it was only a large cask no doubt washed overboard from some ship during the gale. It was too deep in the water to be empty, but what it contained we of course had no idea. We had no chance of picking it up without heaving the ship to and putting out a boat which was out of the question, had it been a boat with someone in it, that would have been different. There are not many skippers that would stop to pick up a cask.

During the afternoon the sky again became overcast with every appearance of some more bad weather, but during the night it cleared off for which we were not sorry, we had had a fair share of bad weather and wanted a spell of fine by the way of change. The next morning the sky was clear and the sea was not so high having gone down considerably during

the night. A nice even swell was now running with a nice steady breeze blowing, as the weather was so fine, we unbent the cables<sup>2</sup> from the anchors and stowed the cables in the chain locker. The anchors were lashed to the deck and the hawse pipes plugged, so now we could have some comfort in the Fok'sl which could be kept dry. Sailing ships are compelled to keep their cables bent to the anchors for the first few days at sea in case the ship is driven back towards the land and may have to anchor. And when they are nearing port they have to bend on the cables again.

There is a good story about a skipper who forgot to bend his cables when nearing his port. He picked up the Pilot and the ship made sail for port. When entering the port the tide caught the ship and was taking her onto the rocks the wind was very light at the time, so the Pilot yelled to let go the anchor. Wait a minute cried the skipper the cables not bent. Damn the cable yelled the Pilot, let go the anchor, it was let go and of course lost, the ship went ashore and was lost also. The Pilot was not to blame, as he let go the anchor the fact that the cable was not attached was not his fault. The skipper was to blame.

Up to now the watch on deck during the daytime had not been put to work much except of course what was needed for the working of the ship but now that we had struck fine weather, plenty of work was found for us to do. You may never be idle on board ship as there is always plenty to be done, there is always something that has to be attended to.

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<sup>2</sup> A knot or clinch for attaching a cable to an anchor or mooring post. A short line for forming a loop in a cable to secure it to an anchor.

You might ask what can they find to do day after day at sea. The rigging has to be looked after, new chafing gear<sup>3</sup> has to be put on every little while, stays to be blackened down, sails to be attended to and repaired, new gaskets to make, there is always something wanting to be done that can't be left undone. There are jobs too numerous to mention, that the safety of the ship may depend on being done in a proper shipshape manner. So now we started to overhaul everything and each watch as they came on deck were put to some sort of job.

The next few days were splendid with a nice steady breeze blowing, the ship making good headway. Weather like this made me feel happy and contented. The watch on deck being employed as usual at all kinds of ship work. Our fine weather didn't last very long, one morning it came over squally but not bad enough for us to take in any sail, but just before noon one heavy squall came along which made us take in the Royals quick and lively. I went up to stow the fore Royal, its a one man job to furl a Royal in fair weather, but if its blowing hard its then a two man job. While I was up on the Royal yard I saw a large square rigged ship to windward of us, before I could finish my job of stowing the sail it came on to blow harder and I had a hard job to stow the sail but I managed to get it done just as another hand reached the crosstrees coming to help me with the sail. Now that my work was done I had time to look around for the ship I had seen when I first came aloft. She was under close reefed topsails, we were still under topgallant sails the only sails we had taken in were the

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<sup>3</sup> Chafing gear is any cloth or material that is used to protect lines, sails, or other parts of the ship from wear and tear caused by friction.

Royals, but our lee scuppers were well underwater, another instance of cracking on. We were still a long way out of our course. The skipper was in a hurry to make up loss time, but we had a man standing by topgallant and topsail halyards ready to let them go by the run at the order.

At sea in bad weather hands are always kept standing by the halyards ready to let them go by the run if necessary, if this was not done masts may be lost or sails, which is more likely blown to ribbons. My thoughts were often wandering to those at home, it is when you are at sea that you get thinking about home more than when you are away anywhere else. It seems such a lonely place, day after day you see the same circle of water around you, your ship is the centre of that ring, and although there is always plenty of work to keep you busy and you and your shipmates have your fun at times, still there are times when you do feel very lonely indeed, and when the weather is pretty bad and you are tired with the hard work of reefing or taking in sails and are always wet through, as in very bad weather, it don't take long before all your spare clothes are wet through with no chance of drying them, its then you think of home and wish you were back there instead of being at sea, but this sort of blue feeling passes off again and at times it feels grand to be at sea. How many times have seamen said, I'll stay ashore after this trip no more sea for me. Some of them do stay ashore for awhile but the sea seems to get into ones blood and back to sea they go. When you have the blues, the sea seems full of sorrow too the waves seem to sing a sad song as they heave around you. And when you feel bright and gay then the sea seems gay too and cheers you on. Thats the way I've

found it at sea, miserable one day and happy the next.

During the afternoon watch they set the main Royal again, the fore Royal was left furled until our watch came on deck for the first dog watch 4 to six. It was my job to go aloft to loose it. There were no ships in sight all around as far as I could see was just the usual world of heaving water. We were now under all sail again, the ship going through the water at a good pace, we were far from being a slow ship and as the wind freshened during the night we made very good headway. Still the skipper was not satisfied as we still had a lot of lost ground to make up, during the last dog watch we were doing 13 knots running braced sharp up which was very good sailing.

The next morning we started to strip the fore rigging ready to rattle down. The pieces of rope that are placed across the rigging and form what landsmen would call a ladder are called ratlines. These are stripped off and new ones put on from time to time, and this was what we started to do this morning. The main and mizzen rigging would also be done the next few days, each watch on deck carrying on the work until it was finished. Its quite an easy job and don't take very long to do but its a job that has to be done well as your life may depend on the strength of those ratlines as you go aloft to tend the sails. Although the weather became squally again during the night, no sail was taken in, men were standing by the halyards but they were not let go. The old ship rushing along like a race horse.

The oldest sailor never knew a ship that did not have a growler amongst her crew. No ship would be complete without one, sometimes he is called the moaner. He growls

every day and all day long, finds fault with everything. He growls when the weather is fine, and growls when its bad. Our ship was no exception to the rule for we had our growler who growled at everything, everybody and nothing. Its almost impossible to keep out of a row with such a man in a ships Fok'sl and many a row I had with Ned Hart our growler.

There was no love lost between us, as a rule when shipmates fall out, they are friends again in an hour or two, but Ned and I were never on very good terms. One day Ned came into the Fok'sl and as usual started to growl about everything and everybody.

We, the watch below were sitting down on our sea chests having our dinner, we took no notice of Ned for awhile, then one or two led off at him, he gave them back word for word and then picked on me. He reckons I had carried yarns aft to the mate of what was said in the Fok'sl. Of course this wasn't true, for its a serious thing for anyone to carry yarns aft and such persons that do so are known as white rats, and their life is made a hell for them if found out. So when Ned said such a thing about me, I saw red and called him a liar. He threw his plate of pea soup at me. I caught it and returned the plate with all my might. He was lucky enough to dodge it, then I rushed him and the battle was on, before we could get well started the rest of the watch stopped the fight, maybe it was just as well for Ned the growler. I was under twenty then pretty smart and not afraid to look after myself, Ned was many years older and not as big as I was. We found out afterwards that Ned himself was a white rat and told the mate yarns of what was done and said in the Fok'sl. After that Ned didn't get along very well with the rest of the crew. So you see



at times we were not a very happy family.

Ned used to say that he had served in the Navy, somehow I don't think he ever was there, but if he was they must have been very glad to get rid of him. In spite of all his faults Ned was a good seaman, no one could tell him his work. He knew A to Z of all that a seaman needed to know and that was good enough for the mate, he didn't care what his faults were so long as he knew his job and did it.

The passengers had got over their sickness and spent most of their time on the poop deck when the weather was fine. The men were always out on deck early in the mornings when we were washing down. They would come along in their birthday suits and let us hose them then after a run around the deck would go and dress ready for breakfast.

Our water was getting low, so it was decided to get ready to condense water while the fine weather lasted so I was told off one day to overhaul the donkey engine<sup>4</sup> and get it ready for working. While I was working at this job and was behind the boiler I noticed the cook come inside the door and hide something amongst some straw, several bags of which were stowed in a corner. I saw the cook take something from under his apron and hide it behind the bags. After he had gone out, I had a look see and found that he had hidden two tins of ox tail soup. Now we the crew were not too well fed, we had our bare wack of salt horse one day and salt pork and pea soup the next, never anything else, for bread we had the usual hard tack same as most ships. So when I saw what the cook had

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<sup>4</sup> Steam donkeys acquired their name from their origin in sailing ships, where the "donkey" engine was typically a small secondary engine used to load and unload cargo and raise the larger sails with small crews, or to power pumps.

planted my mouth fairly watered, hunger and maybe the devil said, take it and I did, that is to say I took the largest tin and left the smaller one. In half a minute I had hid it in the Fok'sl and was out again about doing my work with the innocent smile of a babe on my face.

When our watch went below, and as soon as I could get a few watch mates I knew I could trust, we sat down to enjoy the extra food I had provided. We opened the tin and turned out its contents into a dish and found it half full of rich fat. You see it was not meant to be eaten like that, but had to be made hot when the fat of course would have melted and I've no doubt the soup then would have been very tasty, but I could hardly go to the cook and ask him to cook what I had pinched from him, so we made the best of it and eat it as it was. I can't say I enjoyed it as it was very rich and mostly fat, but all the same we got rid of it, hungry sailors will eat anything, I think. The empty tin went out through a port and left the tail behind it. It wasn't very long before the cook went for his tins of oxtail and found one missing. After he found I had been working there he blamed me for taking it. He went aft and complained about it, but as he couldn't prove I had taken it that was the end of the affair.

The mate told him he himself was to blame for putting the tins where he had, instead of keeping them in the galley. Anyway the passengers lost their ox tail soup for dinner that evening, the cook didn't get two more from the steward to replace them, so what they had instead I never found out.

The cook still blamed me and for a long while I couldn't go to the galley and cadge a mug of coffee like I had sometimes been able to do before, so I got punished in a way

for pinching his tin.

That night we had heavy rain, but the breeze kept steady and we had no need to reduce any sail all through the night. We were still under full sail. This good breeze lasted for the next few days and we made the most of it by carrying on under all the sail she could carry.

We were now twenty two days out from port, and still very far south, a good 200 miles further than we should have been, but we had the gale to blame for that. The weather although still fine was getting colder. In my watch on deck I was making sennet<sup>5</sup> for gaskets and my fingers were so cold I found it a very hard job to do as I had hardly any feeling in my fingers. I was very glad when the other watch came on deck and I had the chance of turning in for a while.

The next day was bitter cold the only place I could get a warm would be the galley, but I was barred from that as already explained. I couldn't help thinking of home and the fireside, but all the thoughts of home life wouldn't help me much just then. Day after day seemed to be colder and colder. The sea too got up during one night and was running very high, there must have been a big blow somewhere that we had missed.

We were shipping plenty of water and couldn't help getting wet again and again, there was no chance of drying clothes the only place being the cooks galley and he couldn't have clothing hanging around in there, even if he was willing to let us, so we just had to put up with it as usual.

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<sup>5</sup> Cord formed by plaiting rope-yarn by hand. There are many types of plait, which may be flat, round, or square in section, and many uses.

We now discovered that our largest tank had sprung a leak all the water going into the hold, so we rigged the pumps and got the water out of the ship, losing all this fresh water was a great loss to us, and it meant we would be on a shorter allowance now. The tank was found to be beyond repair having rusted through in many places and quite useless now, so it meant that we had no chance of repairing it and refilling it when heavy rains came along.

The rolling of the ship had caused the water to break through the old rusty tank. If the tanks were examined before going to sea it would be better for many ships, but that is very seldom done. We saw the day when all that water we pumped over the side would be very welcome but we didn't know or think about it while the pump was heaving it overboard, but we saw the day when it would have been very welcome to us even to wash with.

After we had cleared the ship of all this good fresh water I was sent to the donkey house to get the engine ready for condensing water to make up for what we had lost. I made that job last as long as I could during the rest of my watch as it was much warmer in there than out on deck. At 12.30 the other watch came on deck and we went below and to dinner. The forenoon watch always stays on deck until 12.30 so that the other watch can have their dinner, otherwise the watch below would have to turn out earlier if they came on deck at noon, so the forenoon watch does 4 and  $\frac{1}{2}$  hours every second day. So each watch gets it in turn, the watch below being called at 11.45 so they really have  $\frac{3}{4}$  hour to have their dinner.

Salt pork and pea soup one day and salt beef, horse its called, the next day and so it goes on all the voyage, thats what

we have for dinner, the pork is three parts fat with a thin, very thin, streak of lean. The beef always has three pieces of rib bone in it, and when its cooked its a very hard job to cut a wack for each man of the watch off it. The bones are all weighed in with the meat of course. The pea soup is the best food a sailor gets, for that is good, not the sort of pea soup one gets sometimes on shore, too weak to run off a spoon, but good old thick soup with plenty of peas. I often wondered why the soup wasn't thinned down on ships, there would be a saving there, but its a fact that the soup on most ships was always good stuff and without its sailors would be in a pretty bad way as far as food is concerned. When I say this, I am speaking of sailing ships, not steam ships for on board steamers the food is much better and more of it.

Every Wednesday we got what the cook called soft bread, each man got a small roll of something that had been baked, but nothing like what it was supposed to be, bread, the rolls were always doughy. Maybe our cook was a poor hand at making bread, anyway what he did make wasn't much good and I much preferred the hard bread, armour plate we called it, but it did us more good than the cooks once a week doughy stuff.

Of course we got our wack of lime juice each day when we got into the hot weather. This is supposed to keep scurvy away, as we never saw any vegetables, each man had to go aft and drink his little drink of lime juice under the eye of the mate so there was no chance of dodging it anyway it wasn't bad stuff at all even if it done no good, it was pretty weak anyway.

In the last dog watch we were going along at nine knots

when the log was hove<sup>6</sup>, a light steady breeze was blowing we were still under full sail, we continued under the same sail all that night.

The next morning a thick fog came along so a look out man was sent to the Fok'sl head with fog bellows which he had to sound every little while to warn any ships that may be near. The fog bellows is shaped just like the bellows you find in any home, only very much larger of course. It has a brass tube at the end of it something like a trumpet so when the wind is driven out of the bellows a loud noise like the roar of a bull or such animal is made, so many blasts are made according to what tack your ship may be on.

It was my first watch that night and at 4 bells, 10 o'clock, the mate called me over to him, he handed me a hook pot full of coffee and asked me to try and make it hot somehow. The night was bitter cold. They had a small stove in the saloon for the comfort of the passengers and it didn't take me long to get the coals going again and the coffee hot. All the passengers had turned in, I guess they reckoned it would be warmer in bed. Before taking the hook pot back to the mate I had a little drink just to warm myself inside. I couldn't drink much as the mate would have seen I had drunk some. He did look hard at it but never said anything. Maybe he noticed that the tide had gone down a bit. He then asked me if I knew where the steward kept his cheese, I knew alright but thought it best not to let the mate know that, so said I didn't. Well said the mate you go down to the pantry and look under the

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<sup>6</sup> A weighted rope with knots tied at regular intervals, each designating one nautical mile per hour expressed in knots. The number of knots showing above the surface of the water indicated the speed of the ship in knots.

second locker on the portside and you will find it, just cut me off a piece and don't make a row, (the steward slept in the next cabin). I cut off a piece for myself at the same time which I hid under my jumper, and took another to the mate. He broke off a piece and gave it to me, which I had the cheek to take, as I couldn't refuse, at the same time he must have known I wouldn't have left the pantry without thinking about myself. Don't tell anyone about it said the mate, but he seemed to have forgotten he was putting me on to a good thing if I had not already known just where the cheese was.

The next morning was a dead calm and very cold. The fog had cleared off just as quick as it had come on, before dinner it rained very heavy but didn't last very long and we were glad to get our oilskins off again. The next few days we had light winds, and then calms, and plenty of rain off and on day and night. Our oil skins were seldom off, and as it rained very heavy at times we got wet as the oil skins won't keep all the wet out all the while. We of course had no place where we could dry anything so just had to put wet things on again whenever we turned out to go on watch.

One day a school of whales hove in sight several of them came quite close to the ship which greatly excited the passengers. I suppose had we been a whaler on the lookout for whales we wouldn't have had them close alongside us, before long the whales cleared off and we saw no more of them. The afternoon passed without the ship making much headway it was almost a dead calm, now and then a puff of wind would fill the sails for a few minutes then drop again. So the night dragged on, two things put sailors in a bad humour, one is a gale in the wrong direction, and the other a

dead calm.

The next day we had better luck, as a good steady breeze came along and the ship went sailing along at a good pace which lasted all day, at 4 bells in the first watch that night the lookout reported ice right ahead. The ship head was brought up into the wind a little bringing the ice berg on to our port bow. It was a very large berg and before long we were close enough to have a good view of it. The night was very bright and clear although there was no moon. They say that if bergs are close they reflect a kind of light like very faint moonlight.



I cannot say if that is correct or not, but I do know that this night was very clear which couldn't be on account of starlight.

The berg was a very fine sight had a high point like a church steeple, half way down there was a large opening so



we could see right through it. It was a wonderful sight to see this huge mass of ice floating there in the water, I made a sketch of it. I had plenty of time to do so. So you can judge what a fine sight it was.

In about an hour more bergs were sighted on our port beam and soon after this the skipper had the Royals clewed up<sup>7</sup> and stowed. The bergs were in sight all through the night the ship moving long at about 6 knots the wind remaining light. In the morning we found ice bergs all around us as far as we could see there were bergs large and small, we seemed to have run right into the midst of a large company of bergs.

The weather was very cold I suppose the bergs being so near accounted for that, during the forenoon watch the mate set us to work making sennet, but as it was so very cold and we hardly had any feeling in our fingers, the skipper came forward and knocked us off, and we were not sorry to leave that job undone for a while, so for the rest of the forenoon we stayed in the Fok'sl mending our clothes, no one was needed on deck only the look out and the man at the wheel.

The sea calm and just a light wind blowing, we still had our Royals furled. During the afternoon the wind dropped altogether so we were in a calm again and all around us were the bergs, we wanted wind to enable us to work out of our dangerous position, that night a few puffs of wind came along now and then, but the skipper was worried and hove the ship to. (This is done by bracing around the head yards so that they are aback with the wind thus the ships progress is stopped). During the night large blocks of ice bumped

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<sup>7</sup> Clew refers to either the lower corner of a square sail or the after lower corner of a fore and aft sail.

alongside the ship and as some larger ones were floating near a bearing off party was told off with large spars, so when ice came alongside they could be shoved away from the ships side. Had there been a heavy sea running our position would have been pretty bad with all those large blocks of ice floating around, they were quite heavy enough to have stove in the ships side. After being amongst all these bergs and lesser ice for three days a nice breeze came up, we trimmed our yards, set the Royals and were able to work away from our pretty but dangerous neighbours.

It was now Dec 19<sup>th</sup> Xmas would soon be with us. It was very cold indeed. There was some talk going around that the skipper was going to put a bogey stove in the Fok'sl, but so far nothing like that had happened. We still had to put up with the cold and make the best of it. We all wondered what kind of dinner we would have for Xmas. We didn't expect much different from what we were getting that is our bare wack and no more, and often enough we didn't even get that. No we didn't live very high, our breakfast was always the same coffee made out of burnt bread (with a very little real coffee added) for sugar we were served with molasses which we put in our coffee or tea, after you have used this for sugar for awhile you get to like it. Molasses is much cheaper than sugar, thats why its issued to sailors for sugar with our coffee, for breakfast we had hard tack which we used to soak in the coffee and make into a kind of sop. On pork and pea soup days we used to make peas pudding for tea otherwise there was nothing but hard tack, not much of a fare for men who may be up aloft stowing or reefing sails half the night in a gale of wind, but men did live like that and were healthy enough

to look at. So we didn't expect Xmas day would be any different, but when it did arrive, we didn't do so bad after all as you will find later on.

In thinking about Xmas, my thoughts wandered towards home and I could picture the dinner they would be having. I knew that they would be thinking about myself and no doubt wondering what kind of fare I would be having for dinner. It was little use thinking of home and wishing I was there for Xmas so I made up my mind to expect nothing but the ordinary fare and to make the best of that.

Although we had sheep on board, the crew of course never got a taste of mutton, that was for the officers and passengers. We had not tasted fresh meat since leaving port, even in a port most ships still serve out salt horse one day and pork and pea soup the next, if the crew want fresh meat, they would have to buy it themselves and when a ship is lying up in port all the pay a seaman gets is perhaps 2/-<sup>8</sup> each weekend. Its seldom the skipper will let a man have more, any cash you get is of course booked down and stopped from your pay when the voyage is ended and then the men paid off. So even if the men bought fresh meat, they couldn't get much with the little cash they could get out of the skipper.

There were plenty of fowls on board too, but we had no chance of having any of them, we could have pinched one or two now and then, but we had no chance of cooking them without being found out, so the fowls escaped and were left for the passengers.

Most of the fowls were kept penned up on the poop and

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<sup>8</sup> 2/- is two shillings. A shilling is equivalent to 10 cents.

sometimes one or two would get out, then the fun began, we were told off to catch them which is a very a hard thing to do as when we tried to corner them, they flew up to escape and overboard they went, so most of the hens that got out of the pens were lost overboard. They say hens won't swim because they can't but whenever a hen went over the side it would sit on the water like a duck until an Albatross would dive down and move it on, that move would be the hens last one.

The next day was colder than ever it being six degrees colder than it was the day before. The sea was as smooth as glass and we were just like a painted ship upon a painted ocean, so calm was it. The skipper at last woke up to the fact that we were having a very cold and miserable time of it in the Fok'sl, so early in the forenoon watch he got the carpenter to place a bogey stove in the Fok'sl much to our delight and satisfaction. Now it happened that where the stove was placed, the front of it would have to face either the port or starboard side of the Fok'sl and not forward on account of a closed in hatch which led from the deck above into the sail locker under the Fok'sl deck. So the stove was placed with the front of it facing the portside and my bunk being right opposite it you can guess I was very pleased as I could lay in my bunk and all the benefit of the stove.

But the starboard watch didn't like the idea of the stove being fronting our side, they said it was no advantage to them at all. They forgot that the stove no matter which side it faced would warm the whole Fok'sl which would benefit all of us. The discontent of the other watch soon led to a row, so before long there were one or two stand up fights over it and plenty of talk. It ended with our watch coming off best and the stove

remained where it had been placed and before long both watches could be seen sitting around it smoking and yarning in spite of the fact they had been fighting over it a few hours before. We were now able to dry our wet clothes which was a great boon to us, we had not felt so comfortable for many a day and its a fact there was never a growl from anyone for some days. Even Ned the Growler had no fault to find.

Though the stove was a God send to us, it was not such a good thing for the cook, poor cook; he was always in trouble and worry of some kind, and it was mostly us that were the cause of his worry. His new trouble was his spuds disappeared very fast and we had roasted spuds pretty often, they were very nice on a cold night. It got so bad at last, the cook having so many spuds pinched, that a stop was put to it and the only way to do that was not to issue any to him until just when he wanted to cook them. So we had no more chances of pinching any as the steward kept them aft. Like every good thing someone spoils it, so we overdid the spud racket and lost by it.

The next morning was still calm but towards 10 o'clock a breeze sprung up which lasted all day and the night, so we made good progress, during the afternoon we sighted two more bergs but they were quite a good distance off so we didn't have a good view of them, but they were large ones. The days now were much the same as another, calms and light breezes off and on.

Sunday was supposed to be an easy day that is we did much what we liked, reading, mending our clothes or anything that suited us, that is if we were not required to trim sails or pull on a brace we were as a rule left alone.

Some officers in ships seem to take a delight in keeping the watch on the move, they don't like to see men having a quiet time loafing about on Sundays so one minute its a pull on this brace, and a pull on that, not that the sails needed trimming, but just to keep the men on the move, this is very often the case when an officer is not on the best of terms with his watch.

One Sunday as I was sitting on the main hatch reading a book, the mate called me aft and taking me over to the weather side of the poop, pointed up to the main upper topsail yard, where a roving was hanging down, told me to go up and fix it. This loose roving didn't matter at all, it was nothing and could have waited until someone was up on the yard and fixed it then, but I suppose something bit the mate and he thought of giving me a job. He could see I didn't like it, as I slowly went up to the yard, fixed it and slowly came down again. I walked forward and had just reached the hatch and my book, when the mate called me aft again and sent me up to the fore gallant yard to make up a gasket that was adrift, too many Irish pennants hanging about for Sunday he said, with a grin, but he knew, that I knew why he called me back the second time, you can't get too windward of a ships mate.

One morning shortly after this we sighted another berg this was the largest we had as yet seen, and was what is known as an Ice Island. The skipper said it was just about a mile long on the side nearest us and about 200 feet high it seemed to be quite flat on the top, so high and square was it you would think some giant had cut it into shape. The skipper said he had never seen so large a berg before, fancy a ship running on to a monster like that some foggy day or night.

The weather being splendid most of the passengers were on deck and soon the rest were hurried up to see the berg. Such an island of ice was too good a sight to be missed, just



the same, they would have rushed up on deck just to see some wreckage floating past. I made a sketch of the ice island, a copy you will see on the next page.

Amongst the passengers was a lady and her daughter a girl about 19 and every Sunday during the dog watches they would come forward to the Fok'sl and read the Bible to us and sing a few hymns. We liked it alright it was a change and I suppose they thought they were doing something to make our lot a little happier. Anyway I thought it was very nice of them to take some interest in us. It was far more than any of the others did. I don't think there was anyone of the crew that didn't feel thankful to them for coming forward and sitting for awhile in the Fok'sl, to read or talk to us, most of the crew were a rough and ready lot, but they knew how to respect a

good woman.

Most of us younger members of the crew always tried to sit as near the daughter as we could, there was some funny moves to try and beat each other and the one that contrived to get the seat next to her felt like he owned all the world.

Now if it happened to be a bit rough on any Sunday evening, two of us would go aft to escort the ladies to the Fok'sl so they would get there safe without slipping on the wet deck. The elder lady was much afraid of walking along the deck if the weather was rough so the skipper had told us to see that she was escorted there safe. One evening as it was rather rough and the ship knocking about a bit and also some water being shipped over the side every little while, so I and one of the starboard watch went aft to the break of the poop to bring them safely to the Fok'sl.

Of course we both wanted to escort the daughter, she would hang on to our arm with all her might and it seemed much nicer to have her clinging to you, than her mother, so needless to say the job of going aft was very much liked by us younger ones of the crew and we were always trying to beat each other to it when the weather was bad. It was very bad and dangerous weather if the ladies couldn't venture along, it took a lot to prevent them every Sunday evening from having their usual little service with us.

Well this Sunday it was Jack Wills that went with me, we both had had this escort job pretty often. As a rule it was the daughter who came out of the saloon first followed by her mother. Jack wanted to go in first so he could get the daughter, leaving the mother for me to escort, so when we reached the alley way leading into the saloon, we had a bit of



a scramble as to who got in first and Jack beat me to it and marched in leaving me to follow behind. Some how that evening the order of things were changed for the mother came out first and offered Jack her arm which he had to take. Jack didn't look very happy as he passed me and saw the grin on my face as I waited for the daughter. She soon came and took my arm which maybe I couldn't help squeezing more than was needed as I took her forward to the Fok'sl.

Time has marched on and many things have happened since those days of over 50 years ago but still in my ditty box I've still got stored away a little booklet containing a Xmas story and greetings that mother and her daughter gave me that Xmas. Why I've hung on to it all these years, I can't say, but I've never forgotten those two people and the Sunday evenings they spent trying to make our lot a little happier. Even now I can fancy I can hear us singing at the top of our voices that well known hymn which was a favourite with us Pull for the shore sailor, pull for the shore.

When we at last we reached port, the mother and daughter came along and shook hands with all of us and wished us God speed on our next voyage, and that was the last we ever saw of them. Its a pity there are not many more in this world, just like they were, it would be a much happier place. Not one of the other passengers thought it worthwhile to shake hands with us, or even say good bye. I often wondered what became of these two fine women, but if they remained as happy as all of us wished them to be, they were all right.

Xmas Eve came along; it was a very cold day. The stove in the Fok'sl was well supplied with coal and we were quite cosy when it was our watch below. We heard from the cook that

we were to get something different for our dinner the next day, so we were wondering just what kind of Xmas dinner we really would have. The Captain had his wife on board with him, she was a very nice lady and I think what extras we would be having for our dinner, would be what she suggested to the Captain.

However this was Xmas eve so we decided to have some fun, we had a little Irish chap whom we called Dublin, and as he was always merry and bright, he consented to be Father Xmas, it didn't take us long to make a wig and beard out of some jute and as I had some water colours, we rigged him up and I painted his face with two lovely pink cheeks etc and when the job was finished he looked as good a Father Xmas as you could find anywhere ashore.

We had no red coat for him to rig out in, but an old top coat with a belt around his waist and sea boots on he didn't look bad. I got a large sheet of white paper and printed the following words thereon *FROM THE SHIPS CREW A MERRY XMAS TO ALL*. This was pinned to Dublin's belt in front. He carried a small hand bag in case anyone wished to give him anything for Xmas. We reckoned it was quite O.K. for Father Xmas to get something for once, as this time he had nothing to giveaway himself.

So Dublin walked aft and went up to the skipper who was standing on the poop, and wished him a Merry Xmas. The skipper was a bit surprised to see him, for I don't think he expected any one of the crew to do the daddy Xmas stunt, but he shook hands with Dublin, thanked him and seeing Dublin's bag, took the hint that he expected something, so the skipper went below and returned with a bottle of rum which

he put into the bag.

We were all forward watching and were delighted to see something go into Dublin's little bag. Dublin then went below into the saloon and wished all the passengers a Merry Xmas and Happy New Year. He was in there quite a while but if he got anything from them beside a few drinks, he kept it to himself, maybe he got a few bob, but we never found out and if he did and said nothing about it, I don't blame him as I think he deserved what he got for making up and going aft.

That evening we held a sing-song and as Dublin was not a bad singer, he was much in demand, which he being quite willing to oblige. I take it he didn't do too bad as daddy Xmas or he wouldn't have been as glad to sing. So the Xmas eve passed with us making merry and thinking of our dinner on the morrow.

The next morning Xmas day, gave every promise of a very fine day, and a splendid day it turned out to be, a good breeze was blowing and we were not troubled much trimming the yards only occasionally this had to be done so we were left much alone and not bothered with any jobs that could wait, so we just loafed around the galley getting a smell of what the cook was cooking. Right up to this time we had no idea of what we were to get for dinner, all we knew was that it would be different from our usual fare. So we waited and wondered, and got more hungry as time went on, and eight bells (12 o'clock) seemed a long time coming.

Everything comes to those who wait and at last 8 bells went and dinner time arrived. I fancy I can see that dinner now. Although I've had many a good Xmas dinner since that day, I don't think I ever enjoyed a better one than this one at sea.

When we had been on our bare wack of salt horse and pork so long, it seemed a banquet indeed to us all. You who have never been living in a ships Fok'sl and had to live on the poor food, would not think our Xmas dinner much of an affair to cheer ship about, but we knew different it was a great dinner to us. When half our time all we had for our supper was the remembrance of what we had the day before.

What we had for Xmas dinner was this, both watches receiving the same, two legs of mutton, two legs of pork, two tins of pickles, two tins of sause, two good and very large duffs<sup>9</sup>, and two bottles of gin to be a chaser afterwards. Oh, what a banquet we had what a wonderful feed it was. The first taste of fresh meat we had since leaving port. It was too good to last long, for by dinner time next day not a scrap of it was left. The taste and memory of that dinner remained with us for the rest of the voyage.

The next day it was very foggy and remained so all day, early in the day ice bergs were discovered quite close to us, you can guess how close we were to them, when we sighted them through the fog.

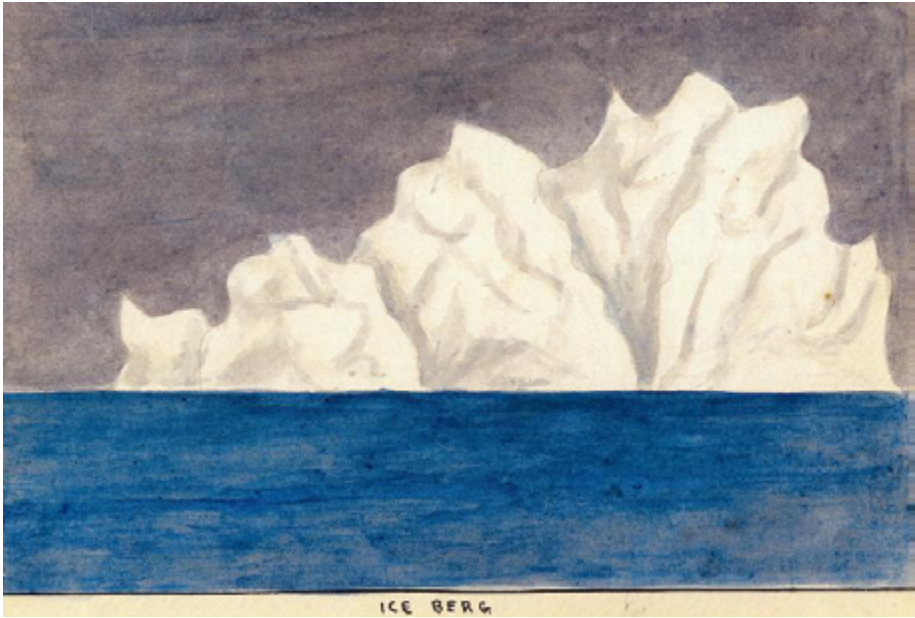
The ship was hove to until the fog should lift a bit, shortly after we had hove to, the wind dropped and once again we were in a dead calm. During the night the fog continued so did the calm, two or three times through the night we heard crashes as some berg fell or struck against another one. The skipper never left the poop, it was a very uneasy night time, we not knowing when a berg would drift upon the ship.

In the morning a light breeze sprang up and headway was

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<sup>9</sup> Duffs are desserts.

got the ship again (sic). The breeze soon shifted the fog then a grand sight met our view, for miles around us were ice bergs, most of them were not very large ones, but quite large enough to make an end of the ship if we bumped into them.



We squared our yards and ran before the wind to get away from such dangerous company. It was a very beautiful sight to see the sun shining on the bergs making all the colours of the rainbow.

The breeze freshened and we made good progress away from the danger and were very glad to get out of the calm when so many bergs were about. Late that afternoon we passed a very large berg. I also made a sketch of this one, it being the largest of our late neighbours and lucky too it was the last, for after this we sighted no more bergs.

So good a pace were we making that by sunset this berg was out of sight. During the dog watches the wind got

stronger and at times squally but no sail was taken in and we continued to make good headway. I think the skipper was anxious to get right away from the ice bergs and was making all he could out of the good breeze. He had a lot of loss time to make up and we having a fair wind now he was making the best use of it to get further north.

We were back again on our usual fare of salt horse which tasted very nasty after our Xmas banquet of fresh meat.

The next few days passed much the same as usual, the fair wind still held and the ship under all the sail she could carry making the spray fly under her bows.

I had another barny with Ned the growler, a few others did too, hardly a week went by that I didn't have a row with Ned, he got on my nerves somehow, I wasn't alone with my dislike of Ned I think most of the crew were fed up with him. A favourite move of his was to go sick when any extra work had to be done such as unbending sails and sending up bad weather ones, or if any reefing had to be done. It was then that his leg used to get bad so he couldn't go aloft. We knew it was only bluff on his part, but could do nothing about it, only make him as miserable as we could. He said he had been wounded in the leg once and it got bad now and then, how he got wounded we never knew, in fact none of us ever believed his yarn. All the same while we would be pulling our arms out up aloft, Ned would be lying in his bunk smoking his pipe in comfort. Of course he couldn't keep this game up all the time, but now and then he got away with it.

All this time we had not started to condense water, the donkey engine had been ready, and we should have started days ago, now the water was getting very low, we had lost

1000 gallons when our main tank leaked out. We had been on short allowance of water for some days, so we started to distil water. What little water we got was pretty bad and had a nasty oily taste, there was something wrong with our system of distilling salt water into fresh, it was red and most horrible to drink, the engine was kept going all day but we distilled very little water.

I was told off during my watch on deck to attend the donkey engine, it was a job I didn't mind as while I was doing that I wasn't needed for any sail work unless a gale came along. I was free from any deck work. The condensing went on all through the night when the other watch came on deck one of them relieved me looking after the engine and condensing.

The next morning we were still under full sail with a gentle breeze blowing, the usual work about the ship being done, but the day couldn't pass without a row. Two of the starboard watch had a few words which led into a stand up fight it was no use trying to stop this sort of thing it was best to let them fight it out and finish it. Then as a rule they were soon good friends again but this time the skipper saw the fight from the poop and rushed forward to stop it. As he rushed between the men he got a whack on the side of his face meant for the other bloke, this made the skipper wild and he started lashing out at the two of them and finished up by chasing them both into the Fok'sl so the fight ended.

They promised to have it out next morning before the skipper came on deck, and we expected to see a good mill but were disappointed as next morning they were good friends as ever and the fight was off. I rather think the skipper

enjoyed his little go with them. That day you would never have thought those two were after each others blood the day before.

The morning watch was ours, so after we had been relieved at 8 o'clock, as I was going into the Fok'sl I noticed some writing on the door. I thought it very good and made a copy of it. I afterwards found it had been written by a sailor who had served as second mate in several ships and being unable to get the same position had shipped before the mast in our ship.

This is what was written

*"To the interests of every seaman. Are seamen alive to their own interests, I don't think so, for we see so many when they go ashore after a voyage throw themselves away, debauching and dissipation of every description. I am forced to the conclusion that they are not alive to their own best interests. What interest can a drunken sailor have in himself or anyone else, none but the Publican that manufacturer of everything and everybody that is bad, he takes an interest in him, the sailor, as long as his money lasts, is that the best way to live.*

*Signed A Sailor."*

Of course, this is true in some cases, but all sailors are not a drunken lot, and all Hotel keepers are not bad, there are good and bad in all walks of life and its foolish to condemn the many for a few. Yet there are people who think any man that follows the sea is just a drunken low sort of chap but I have found that most I've been with are different, give a dog a bad name and it sticks. Maybe more than 100 years ago when sailors were treated more like dogs than men they were



big drinkers trying to drown their sorrows and thinking they were having a good time, but that kind of sailor has passed long ago. There are plenty that may get drunk today and plenty that won't touch drink just the same as you will find amongst men ashore. There is evil in anything if you make it so.

This being New Years Day, we all thought that the skipper might give us something different from salt horse, like we had for Xmas, maybe a bit of fresh meat but we reckoned without our host as we got nothing but our usual fare, our bare wack at that. Anyway we didn't lose much, as one of the crew said; for the few sheep we had left were half starved the dry grass we had on board for them didn't seem to be much good for them as food and as Dublin said when a sheep was killed, the cook cut its throat to save its life, they were too weak to die that's why they still lived, Dublin was a wag.

The good breeze still held on and when the log was hove, the ship was doing 13 knots with the yards braced sharp up, so that wasn't bad sailing at all, during the night the wind blew very strong, so much so, that we had to take in the Royals and smaller stay sails. In the morning it eased down but a very high sea was running and the ship was kept under her reduced canvas. So it went on until the afternoon watch when the skipper put the ship under full sail again and as a high sea was still running our decks were pretty wet with the seas we took over the weather rail.

In the last dog watch, it being our watch below we were sitting in the Fok'sl yawning when one of watch told the following yarn about a mean skipper who had a hungry ship and how he got a crew one time when his crew had run from

the ship. The ship in question was named the *McDuff* and she came into New York from Liverpool. She was known as a hungry ship, that is her crew got their bare wack and not so good as sailors food goes. The skipper had shares in the ship and it was to his interest to run the ship as cheap as he could as far as food for his crew was concerned. So the crew got very short wack.

The ship wasn't in port very long before the crew had passed their chests etc over the side and cleared ashore leaving the ship without a crew. They as usual were hidden by the boarding house keepers, but they didn't forget to spread the news as to what kind of ship the *McDuff* was. The ship being ready for sea the skipper couldn't get a crew as no one would sign on in her, his proper crew couldn't be found so he was in a bit of a fix.

Now it happened that while the *McDuff* was waiting for a crew there came into New York a Nova-Scotia man from Rio and as her crew were getting low pay and the pay from New York being much higher they all to a man deserted their ship just as the crew of the *McDuff* did. That night the skipper of the *McDuff* was ashore and came across one of the Nova-Scotia's ships crew and told him he was in want of a crew and was then ashore on the lookout for good men, so after a yarn with the man he said he would bring his shipmates along to the shipping office in the morning to see the skipper and perhaps sign on. They wanted to get to sea again before being rounded up by the police for deserting from their ship. The high pay was also a big bait so in the morning they were all at the shipping office to meet the skipper.

They didn't know anything about the *McDuff* so before

signing on, they wanted to know what they were signing for such as food etc. Well said the skipper, you will get your wack of rum, and watch and watch, I can promise your wack of rum will be a good one as I'm anxious to get away to sea, and as for food, it will be as usual with plenty of duff. My last crew reckoned they had too much duff so I hope you will be satisfied.

Now these men had never had rum or duff on the ship they had deserted, so they signed on at once, went aboard the *McDuff* and took her to sea thinking they were onto a good thing. After being at sea for a few days they found the food pretty bad and so far no duff and worse than all no wack of rum each day. So after a bit of talk in the Fok'sl they all went aft to see the skipper about it. He saw them coming and guessed what was up and walked to the break of the poop to hear what they had to complain about. The crew soon made it clear what was wrong, they found the food was bad, they hadn't had their wack of rum and there was no watch and watch what they had signed for, in fact conditions were worse than their last ship. We are kept working all day instead of being in watches with a watch below, we haven't had our duff or wack of rum said the spokesman. Well, said the skipper, you got all you signed for. No we haven't cried the crew like one man.

Well continued the skipper I'll try and explain. I'm afraid you don't quite understand the position. You remember first that you all signed for your wack of rum. You got that as soon as you came aboard, and thats all the wack of rum you will get on this ship. The articles didn't say you were to receive a wack of rum every day, but just a wack of rum and you got it.

And as for the watch and watch, well you are watching me most of the time and I've got to keep watching you and that ought to be watch and watch enough for any ships crew. Thats what you really signed for and if you have made a mistake and misunderstood it you can't blame me can you.

Now for the Duff. I told you there was plenty of Duff on board. Well, I'm Capt. Duff. The ship is the *McDuff*, she was built in Duffern and if you lot wasn't such a lot of duffers you understand that was duff enough for anyone. The moral of this yarn is, be sure what you sign and what you are signing for. When the yarn was finished someone threw a sea boot at the yarn teller, telling him it was a very sea-sick yap for a Fok'sl. You might get away with a tale like that ashore but not in a ships Fok'sl he said as he threw the other boot.

When our watch was called at eight, we were ordered aloft to stow topgallant sails and Royals, it was very squally all our watch the ship still being snugged down. I was glad to turn in when the other watch came on deck. We all expected a call anytime to furl topsails if the weather got worse so we turned in all standing, that is with our clothes on, ready for a call of both watches, but we were not called out of watch, the ship remained under the same sail all night.

Next morning the weather was a little finer, but that didn't last long as by dinner time in the afternoon watch it was blowing a gale and for awhile we were kept busy reefing down and stowing sail, before the gale came on our main topgallant sail had been set and when the gale struck us of course it was clewed up at the same time orders were given to reef the topsails, so three others and myself went up to stow the topgallant sail while the others of both watches went

to reef the two topsails.

It was while furling this sail that I did perhaps as foolish a thing anyone could do aloft. It always seemed to be my bad luck to be close to Ned the growler if we had work up aloft to do, so he happened to be one of us four up on the main topgallant yard. Ned and myself were on the starboard yardarm, the other two being on the port one. As it was blowing very hard, we had very hard work stowing the sail. As usual we two could not agree and Ned started jawing about passing a gasket. I told him to shut his mouth and get on with the job. He made a hit at me which I returned, both of us had one hand on to the stowed sail otherwise one or both of us would have gone off the footrope and over the side, or maybe crashed down on the deck 80 feet below.

After we had both got a few hits in, Ned made a grab at me, saying he would throw me off the yard, and I knew he would do it if I let him have a chance, so getting a good grip with my left hand on the jack stay, I got him by the throat and so we pulled and tugged at each other. I've no doubt it was my hold on the jack stay that saved both of us from going overboard a grip that Ned couldn't release or even I didn't seem to have the power to let go, had I let go, nothing could have saved either of us. While this was going on the sail we had gathered up and partly stowed with a gasket, got adrift again and was flapping about threatening every second to knock both of us from the yard, and the ship rolling pretty heavy at the time made it worse for us.

Although this was only a few minutes, it seemed a very long time to me. Ned was like a madman, as he hit and tugged at me, but I still held my grip on the jack stay. I have often

wondered since how I managed to keep that grip, maybe it was the knowledge that if I didn't both of us were lost, for if we went overboard, missing the deck below, long before the ship could be brought up, we would be miles astern, and even then I doubt if they could have got a boat out, or risked it, as a very heavy sea was running. As all our boats were stowed on skids, all that would have taken some time.

The mate on the poop looked up aloft and saw what was taking place on the yard and yelled out to the other two on the port side, they could not understand what the mate yelled as the wind was too high, they looked down and the mate pointed to the yardarm, then they saw what was taking place, came along to the starboard yard and stopped the fight. We all finished making up the sail and went down on deck. The mate called Ned and I aft and asked what was the matter on the yard. I blamed Ned and he blamed me, called us damn fools and said he would log us both, but I'm very glad to say he did not do that although I reckon we deserved it. Guessing that Ned as usual had started the trouble he told him to watch his step or he would be striking big trouble so the matter ended.

Now when I look back and think of it all, I wonder how I could have been such a fool as to lose my temper like that, when a false step or slip would mean a very fearful death to both of us, but youth don't see the risks they run through their own foolishness.

After that little affair Ned and I kept as much away from each other as we could we didn't love each other that much that we wanted to be together.

Next day the sea was still very high, and the gale still going

strong. During our watch we had several jobs to do about the rigging one good thing was that although such a big sea was running our decks were pretty free from water, we didn't ship much water at all. Dublin was at the wheel and it took him all he could do to keep the ship steady. I have seen the time in the same ship when for safety sake two men should have been at the wheel but our skipper would not have it, one man was enough to steer a ship he said, if he knew his work, but he had to change that opinion before the voyage was over. Ships differ, some steer easy others don't, as a rule when a ship is running in a big sea its a terrible strain on a mans arms when at the wheel. A wheel has been known to take charge often enough and throw the man steering clean over it, sometimes they get badly hurt, so it was utter nonsense for the skipper to say one man was enough at the wheel in heavy weather.

So Dublin was at the wheel on this occasion when there should have been someone with him to lend a hand. The passengers had just sat down to dinner when the ship luffed<sup>10</sup> up into the wind, with the result that we shipped on a very heavy sea at the break of the poop. The skylight being open the saloon was flooded fore and aft. The sea came through that skylight like the falls of Niagara washing all the food and dishes in all directions, and scattering the passengers like nine pins. As the alley way doors were also open at the break of the poop what water didn't go over the poop went rushing

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<sup>10</sup> In sailing, luffing refers to when a sailing vessel is steered far enough toward the direction of the wind ("windward"), or the sheet controlling a sail is eased so far past optimal trim, that airflow over the surfaces of the sail is disrupted and the sail begins to "flap" or "luff".

along the alley ways and into the saloon so things were not too good.

The skipper who was wet, in two ways ran on deck and chased poor Dublin forward. He was wild, and said Dublin had done it on purpose. A man at the wheel can bring water over the side easy enough by luffing the ship up a bit. Dublin got wet through himself and was almost washed overboard, but that didn't make the skipper think any different. He took the wheel himself until another man came along to take it.

It was some time before the skipper forgave Dublin and seemed to forget all about it. Most of the watch was busy bailing out the saloon and cabins, broken crockery and food was everywhere, every little while we would laugh when we thought of Dublin rushing forward as he thought for his life and the skipper at the wheel. After we had bailed out the saloon and dried up the deck, the passengers sat down again, but this time they had to have some tinned stuff there being no time to cook another dinner, although they had got wet and lost their dinner, they seemed to take it all in good part and plenty of jokes were passed around.

Early the next morning we sighted a large ship on our port bow and two hours afterwards we spoke her. She was a large full rigged ship from Auckland N.Z. bound for Liverpool, 36 days out. I forgot to enter down her name. We dipped colours and by eleven o'clock we were almost out of sight.

Just after dinner in the afternoon watch it started to blow hard again so we took in the Royals and topgallant sails. We were having a full issue of heavy weather the last few days and were getting about tired of it. It meant hard work for the watches, during the night it blew harder than ever and we



took in the upper topsails, so for the rest of the night the ship was snugged down to her lower topsails only.

Next morning the wind went down quite a lot so much so that the skipper set the upper topsails again, but they were reefed before we set them so we knew that the wind wasn't to remain long like it was then, another blow was coming. However all that day and the night we still remained under reefed topsails with the wind getting stronger now and then and easing off again. The sea running very high we were shipping plenty of water.

In the morning the wind went down and we were soon up aloft shaking out the reefs from the topsails which were set and also the topgallant sails. The sea too, had gone down very much to what it was the day before. We were now about 500 miles from Cape Horn. The rest of the day the sun was shining brightly and the sky pretty clear of the black clouds that had been hanging over us. You can't depend on bright skies sometimes for in the last dog watch a sudden squall howled down on us and before halyards could be let go, away went our main topgallant sail blown clean out of the sheets, and before we could get up to stow it, the sail was blown to ribbons. We then clewed up the fore topgallant sail that had come down by the run and was saved, someone let the halyards go in time or we would have lost that sail too.

We made all snug for the night expecting both watches to be called anytime. Next morning the wind had gone down to a good 10 knot breeze so we put the ship under full sail again. A new main topgallant sail was sent up and set, but by noon the wind had dropped altogether and we were becalmed. We remained like that until about 4 o'clock when a breeze came

down and we got on the move again. Just before dark a ship was in sight to leeward of us but was too far off for us to speak her. The night passed with the breeze holding steady all through and the ship made good pace through water, early in the morning we sighted another iceberg. I had thought we were clear of them and had seen the last one, but there it was on our port beam shining brightly in the sun.

The ship we had seen to leeward the night before was now out of sight, but another one was coming up astern of us. The breeze now was very light and we were only doing four or five knots.

We did the same for the rest of the day and night the wind being very light and the ship moving slowly through the water. The sea was just a long even swell. Next morning the wind was the same we were not making much progress at all. Bad for the owners but not too bad for us, as the longer the voyage the more pay we would get. The ship we saw astern of us was not in sight I expect she had gone around on another tack during the night.

In the forenoon watch we passed another full rigged ship but did not speak her as she was a good way off. After dinner a large barque about our size passed us to windward, she was also too far off to flag. We were getting into the track of ships now we were getting near the Horn, we were wondering what sort of weather we would find around Cape Stiff, as sailors call the Horn, anyway we were expecting rather a cold miserable time of it if the weather was bad and as a rule it is around there. In the last dog watch our main middle stay carried away which we repaired for the time being by bending a length of chain on and bringing it down to the

main stay and making it fast there. This was about the easiest way we could have done it, it would last until we reached port when a new stay would have to replace it.

Next day was very wet, rain squalls in plenty, late in the afternoon it got fine again. After the rain had cleared off and we had a clear view we saw a large ship right ahead going the same way as we were. This was about 4 o'clock, at seven o'clock we were abreast of her and spoke her. She was a German of Hamberg, was out from Frisco bound for Bremen. We were sailing better than her with a nice breeze so we soon left her far astern of us. The weather was good far better than we expected being so close to the Horn.

That night about ten o'clock the mate reckoned we passed Cape Horn. Very few ships sight the cape as they generally keep a good way off, no ship wants a blow with the Cape as a lee shore so we like most ships had given it a very wide berth.

Next morning it was very foggy and raining very heavy, the heavy rain didn't make any difference to the fog, one would think the rain would soon clear that away but this was Cape Horn and we wouldn't have been surprised to get some sleet or even snow.

It was bitter cold too so we were not having a very pleasant time I can assure you. For the next few days, we had fog and rain until we were sick of it, then the weather got finer during which we started to bend our fine weather sails. We sent down the heavy weather main sail and stowed it in the sail locker, then sent up the lighter one, bent and set it, every sail had to be sent down and others put in their place. After we passed the line, the light sails would be taken down again and heavy weather sails put back this all meant plenty of work

stretching heavy sails along a yard and making it fast to the jack stay. Keeps you busy and its a job that has to be done as soon as possible, when the sail is bent all the running rigging has to be rove so its not a very light job that is with the bigger sails. Some of the crew reckoned the skipper was sending the heavy weather sails down too soon, but the skipper knew what he was doing so there was no need for any of us to worry about it. During the afternoon the sky became overcast again and didn't look too good but the evening and night passed off without a change in the weather.

Next morning a good breeze was blowing the sky clear and the ship doing nine knots, a ship was in sight to leeward of us but we didn't show colours, nor did she. Our skipper wouldn't trouble about flagging every ship he met, so maybe the other ships skipper had the same ideas.

Next day it started to blow again so we took in the Royals and outer gib, the stiff breeze kept up all day so we remained under the same reduced sail, at seven o'clock it blew harder and before long it was blowing a howling gale and we stowed the topgallant and upper topsails. We had unbent our heavy weather sails, so couldn't take too much risk with the fine weather sails that had replaced them so it wasn't long when the wind increased before were well snugged down. Care killed the cat they say, but care at sea saves quite a lot of trouble. The gale continued and soon we had put a reef in the main sail, we also brailed<sup>11</sup> in the spanker. It don't take long for the sea to get up when a gale begins to pipe and soon a

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<sup>11</sup> Brails, in a sailing ship, are small lines used to haul in or up the edges (leeches) or corners of sails, before furling. On a ship rig, these brails are most often found on the mizzen sail. Brailed means to furl a sail by hauling on brails.

very heavy sea was running, the ship taking plenty of water over the rail, our deck was full of water most of the time, before one sea could get out the wash ports another would be on board, we were waist high in it many times while we were attending to some of the gear, so we were pretty wet.

The day passed with the gale still howling around us and we had a very bad night of it, both watches were kept on deck all through the night as to be handy should any heavy work be needed, as this is usual during heavy weather no one growled much just took it as a matter of course. Two or three times we thought we would have to take more sail off her, but the night passed without us going on the yards.

Next day the wind eased down so did the sea and soon we were up aloft again busy making sail. It was nothing but taking in and setting sail now and we were getting sick of it, sail after sail was set and by four bells, 10 o'clock, in the forenoon watch the ship was under all sail again, but we didn't expect that to last very long. The forenoon passed alright but just after dinner the main Royal halyards carried away and down came the yard and sail. No one was on the yard at the time although a man had been up there a few minutes before, so no damage was done and no one hurt. The halyards were soon repaired and the yard hoisted and sail set towards the dog watches as the wind was getting stronger, once more we took in the Royals and stowed them. We were getting plenty of going aloft, ever since we bent our fair weather sails an hour after taking in the Royals, they were set again. This made some of the crew say very nasty things, about the weather, mates and things in general. We kept under full sail all that night, but in the morning our luck

changed again for it started to blow and rain again. It rained very heavy and in spite of our oilskins we were soon pretty wet. A few growled of course maybe I did as well, it was weather that would make anyone growl I reckon. By next morning it was blowing a howling gale again, both watches being on deck and we had plenty of work furling sail, the ship was put under her lower topsails, foresail, and fore topmast staysail, as it was blowing very hard. Soon a very heavy sea was running, so we shipped sea after sea so there was plenty of water flooding our deck. At eight bells we the port watch went below and had our dinner, after which we turned in, hoping we would be left in peace until our next turn on deck, the first dog at 4 o'clock but we hadn't turned in very long before we were turned out again to help the other watch furl the fore sail, the port sheet had parted and before we could get aloft the starboard one went too.

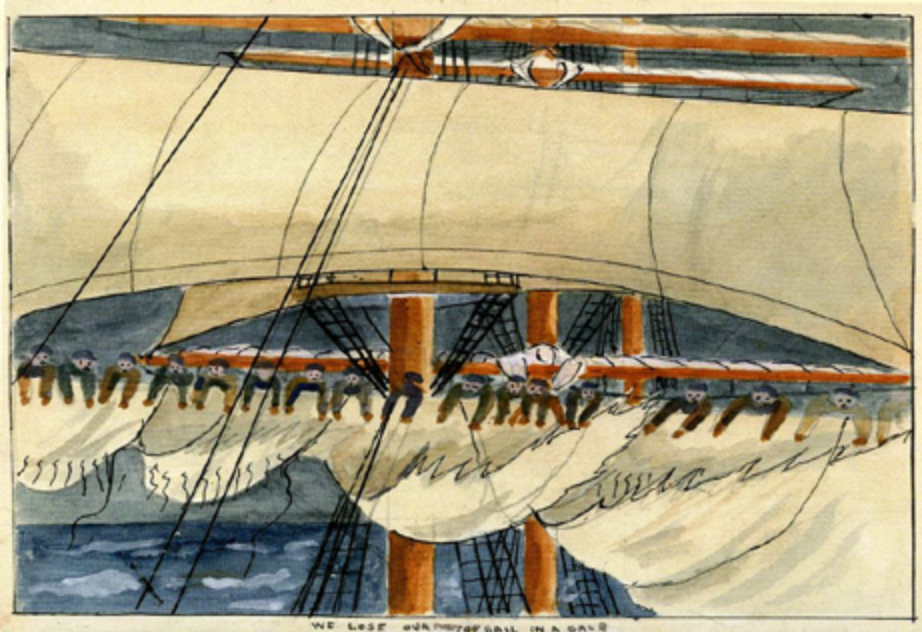
The sail was hastily clewed up, but the sail was flapping about with reports like guns goings off. Then to make matters worse the buntlines and leach lines also carried away which left the sail free to flap its best or worse, and that huge sail did flap, one little bit of it and off would go your head.

So we had to look out for ourselves when up on that yard. Twenty of us were up on the yard trying to get the sail in, all the while it was flapping about in the gale with a noise that was awful.

Time after time we had some of that mad sail in then with a roar the wind would tear it away again, every flap of the sail would shake the yard and we had to hang on like grim death, or else be shaken off the yard. If that happened then you could say good bye to the folks at home for nothing in this

world could save you. Twenty men up there and couldn't stow that sail, it just tore itself into ribbons, we had no chance at all of getting it in.

The skipper seeing we couldn't get the sail in and it being very risky on the yard called us down from aloft, in a few minutes there was only about 12 inches of sail left along the yard, the rest had been just flicked away.



Soon as we got down on the deck, we turned in again and mighty glad of the chance. We had been up on that fore yard one hour fighting the sail and then it beat us, just 20 men, so you can guess what a blow, and loose sail means at sea handling such a sail is not child's play.

We would not get any extra time below to make up for what we had lost, that's all in a sailor's job. So in very bad weather you don't get all the rest you need, never knowing when you will be called to help the other watch or how long

that help will last maybe you would spend all your watch below, on deck with the other watch that is the case at times.

The gale lasted all that afternoon and night, but next morning it grew calmer so some hands went aloft to cut adrift the remains of the foresail we bent a new sail in its place and by twelve o'clock we had fine weather again. The gale had blown itself out, the foresail was set and the ship soon under full sail again. You would never have thought a howling gale had been blowing the night before, during the afternoon the sun was pretty warm, we were getting into fine weather again.

The rest of the fine weather sails that had not yet been bent were got ready. Next morning we bent the fine weather spanker and spread the poop awning for the passengers comfort, as the sun was getting hot, but we poor devils of sailors had to stand anything fair weather or foul, bitter cold or red hot.

Three ships were in sight but they were a long way off, at 4 bells (two o'clock) a barque passed us bound for Melbourne and later on a ship was sighted right ahead, we passed each other just as darkness set in. The night passed off without anything out of the usual happening.

Next day the sun came out very hot and before long the pitch was boiling up between the deck planks. The watch on deck were set about painting ship getting her looking ship shape by the time we reached port. It was my trick at the wheel from ten to twelve thirty. Although the sun was very hot, I had the awning over my head I ran no risk of having my beautiful complexion spoilt, and as the day passed with the watch on deck painting, each watch carrying on as they came on deck, no ships were in sight we had the sea to



ourselves.

Next day was a Sunday and a dead calm and as hot as Keens<sup>12</sup>. It being Sunday and calm we had nothing to do only the man at the wheel had to be relieved every two hours, a ship was in sight astern of us and becalmed like we were. The weather being so hot we held our little church service on deck instead of in the Fok'sl. The lady and her daughter (I forgot to mention before that their name was Barker) leading on as usual we all enjoyed the singing, none of the other passengers came forward, they never did, maybe they thought it was only for the crew. The rest of the time we spent anywhere we could find it cooler and it was hard to find a cool place anywhere the Fok'sl was just like an oven. The calm lasted until the middle watch that night (or morning I should say) that is 12 to 4<sup>am</sup>, then a light breeze reached us and we were able to get on the move again, very slow its true but far better than lying becalmed in the heat. The breeze made it a bit cooler as well.

In the morning we started to bend some more fair weather sails, but rain came along so we knocked off until the afternoon when the rain cleared off. Another barque passed to windward of us during the afternoon. It was this day also that we started getting up dunnage wood, from below to burn in the galley for firewood, coal was almost used up just a little being left which would only last a day or two, we were getting into a pretty fix. We were on an allowance of one pint of water a day, none at all for washing with, the pint was for drinking only and the weather being so hot, the pint per day wasn't very much. When we wanted a wash we had to use salt

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<sup>12</sup> A brand of mustard.

water. We were also short of provisions and goodness only knew what else was wrong with us. So to keep the pots boiling we started to get up dunnage wood, which are small pieces of wood which are used to pack up cargo with, and there were always a lot of such wood in the bilges. We had a small boy on board and he was sent below to get up the wood, a big chap had no chance in the bilges.

He had to crawl under the cargo of wool to get to the wood a very dangerous job, with poor air, once or twice the boy got stuck and had a hard job to get free again, at last the skipper knocked him off as it was too risky, so that was the end of getting up the dunnage wood, but the boy had gathered a fair heap before the job was stopped. If the boy had got stuck down there the only way he could be released would be by taking all the cargo out of the hole to get to him and that would be some job and most likely he would have died of bad air long before the cargo could be shifted so I think the skipper was wise to stop it and run no risk. During the dog watch a ship hove in sight we passed her early next morning, she was in ballast<sup>13</sup> most likely bound for the East Indies. All the morning watch I was blackening down the main Royal back stays its not such a bad job although plenty don't care about it, while up there I noticed a steamer and a brigantine to leeward of us.

The day passed most of the watch on deck having painting jobs about the ship in the evening the ship was put about on the other tack and as it was my trick at the wheel I got out of

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<sup>13</sup> Ballast condition on a sailing ship means the state of the weight that is used to balance the boat and keep it stable in the water. Ballast can be either inside the hull or in the keel, and it is usually made of heavy materials like lead, iron or stones.

all the pulling and hauling. We were now on the port tack heading E.½N. The night was fine with a good steady breeze blowing us along at a nice pace. The dunnage wood we had got from below was soon used up in the galley fire, so as fuel was wanted and must be got the spare spars which were lashed alongside the ships side, one on the port side and one on the starboard, these were cut up for firewood. So we would be in a bad way if we struck a gale and had our masts go over the side, for these spare spars were carried to rig as jury masts in case we were dismasted, however we must have firewood so they had to go. The cook was in a very bad temper as he had been put on his allowance of so many pieces of wood per day, which he had to make last the best he could to cook the meals for passengers and crew. The officers of course dined with the passengers. So as the watch on deck were kept busy sawing up the spars Dublin said its say nothing now but just saw wood. The spars were of pine and the wood soon burnt poor cook couldn't manage on his wack he said still he couldn't get one piece more the skipper saw to that, for the last two days we had been on the shortest possible wack of food, even our salt horse and pork was running out. There was something wrong somewhere.

The ship had gone to sea with a very poor lot of stores even although we had lost a lot of time while we ran before that gale and got down amongst the bergs, that wouldn't account for the big shortage of food. One morning the skipper sent a hand up to the fore Royal yard to keep a look out for a sail, so we knew by that, he intended to ask the next ship for some food but it wouldn't get much provisions unless he struck a well found ship, as most ships only carried just about what

they needed for a voyage with a little extra over, in case they had a longer passage than they expected.

In the afternoon watch a ship was reported from the lookout she was steering across our bows. The skipper called me aft to hoist the flags that we wished to speak her. The stranger answered our signal and bore up so when we were close up to each other, both ships hove to. We lowered a boat the mate and four hands went in her, after being away about an hour the boat returned having got from the stranger five bags of mouldy biscuits (hard tack), two bags of sugar and three hams and a piece of very queer looking bacon, that was all the ship could spare them. The ship was the *Monster*, a Nova-Scotia-man from Rio bound to Cardiff 36 days out. As soon as our boat was hoisted inboard we dipped our flag to the *Monster* and went on our way. The *Monster* hauled around her yards as soon as our boat left her side so she was about two miles away before we got our boat in, and by six o'clock we were out of sight of each other. So we didn't gain much by stopping her, all we got out of it was the mouldy hard tack the rest of the goods were for the after crowd.

The next day was very hot and as soon as we had washed down the decks we put the boat back on the skids, so if we happened to need it in a hurry it would take about  $\frac{1}{2}$  an hour to get over the side. We never carried a boat in davits, like plenty of ships our two biggest boats were in skids at the break of the poop on the aft deck abaft<sup>14</sup> the main mast. Our only other boat was stowed on top of the deck house, so if a boat was wanted, we had to sling it and hoist it out with the

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<sup>14</sup> Abaft is a nautical term that means "toward the rear of the ship", or further back from a reference point on the ship.

aid of the crojact<sup>15</sup> yard and mizzen mast. This all took time and wouldn't be much help to any who fell overboard, yet this was the way most ships carried and stowed their boats.

During the forenoon watch we had some excitement trying to hook a shovel nosed shark. The shark appeared to be about 8 or 9 feet long and after an hours trying we succeeded at last in hooking it with the usual bait a bit of pork. Pork was scarce and we had a hard job to get it for bait, but as the pork was our food, and the skipper was just as excited as we were to see the shark caught, we got the bait, we hauled the shark on board and cut him up. This is always done. What we expected to find inside it I can't say, but Dublin who was helping to cut it up must have his joke so he stood up and said I knew we would find that inside him. One of the passengers asked him what he found, and Dublin replied just its inside thats all, of course everyone laughed but the passenger who asked the question. The remains of the shark was thrown overboard and no doubt some of his mates dined off him down below. Some of the hard tack we had got from the *Monster* was issued to us this day, they were worse than we thought they were being not only mouldy but full of grubs. However we had to eat it or go without so we just broke them up and put them in our coffee when the grubs would come floating out to the top then we would pick them out and get rid of them that way. A hungry sailor will eat almost anything but most of us drew the line at grubs, still I dare say we did eat a good many grubs that failed to float to the top.

Some of the crew caught Albatrosses and they were made into a kind of stew, which tasted horrible. You would never

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<sup>15</sup> Is crossjack, lower yard on mizzen sometimes used to spread sheet of mizzen topsail.

understand what a horrible stew that was unless you taste it and if you take my advice you never will. Another great dish of ours was Jonny Cake. This is made by putting some hard tack into a canvas bag and pounding it with an iron belaying pin on a bollard, until its all powder, grubs and all, then this was mixed with molasses and fat if there was any to be got, then it was baked, it wasn't too bad, anyway it was a great cake to us. When we had the chance we would also make cracker hash, but it wasn't often we had the chance, that is made with hard tack broken up and mixed with bits of fat pork and any other fat or meat you can get and hacked. This is supposed to be not too good for sailors and is not encouraged by the after guard, its supposed to help on scurvy but I've never seen any ill effects from eating it.

Every thing seemed to be going wrong with us and to give us a change I suppose, a new trouble came on us one of the crew went mad. He was a man named Sam, thats the only name any of us knew him by, what his surname was we never knew, he had shipped as an able seaman, must have had someone elses paper, for we wasn't many hours at sea before we found he was no more a sailor than a farmer was. He told us he had stowed away in a steamer in New York which dumped him somewhere in an Australian port that was his first and only trip to sea. The skipper was very wild when he found Sam wasn't a seaman as it meant he was one seaman short, and to make matters worse Sam took a fit when we were only a few days at sea. We soon found that he used to take fits pretty often, this made the skipper more angry than before as he dare not send Sam aloft so we had no chance of much help from him or chance to make him into some sort

of sailorman. So all Sam did was to roam about the deck and help the cook and sometimes when we were hoisting topsails or trimming yards he would try and lend a hand but as a rule he was in the way most of the time and not much use to us at all.

The skipper dare not send him aloft he would be under a heavy penalty if he did, knowing Sam took fits so Sam was left alone to please himself as he liked. His fits seldom lasted long but when he got one there was no doubt they were the goods there was no sham about them at all. So you can guess Sam wasn't in favour on board and wasn't treated too well by the crew. He never seemed to be a very sensible sort of chap, always appeared very dopey and dull. So this day Sam went raving mad there was no doubt about it at all and it took us some time to get him, fighting mad like he was, into a spare cabin in the deck house and locked him up where he spent the night howling and raving all the night which wasn't very pleasant for the watch on deck.

The next morning Sam had cooled down a bit. The weather was very hot and Sam must have had a bad time shut up like he was in a close cabin, but he was far too mad to be let out, although he had stopped his raving for the time. The day passed off with only an occasional yell from Sam. The night passed with no trouble from Sam he seemed to have settled down maybe he slept most of the time anyway we didn't hear much from him during our watch on deck.

At eight bells the next morning a heavy squall struck the ship. The Royal and topgallant halyards were let go, so no damage was done and our canvas safe, the squall only lasted a few minutes and as soon as it passed we made all sail again.

There were three ships in sight during the forenoon, they were a long way off. After dinner Sam got worse in fact he was so mad that we had to put him into a strait jacket so he couldn't harm himself. The sailmaker had been told to make a strait jacket in case it would be needed and he had just finished it. It was just a kind of canvas coat, with long sleeves that could be tied around the waist, the back had eyelets for lacing, and when on a man he couldn't do any damage to himself or others.

It took some time to get this jacket on Sam and laced up, in less than an hour Sam had it off and torn up with his teeth, as the canvas was new he must have had very strong teeth to rip it to pieces like he did. As we had no other strait jacket, Sam's hands were ironed behind his back "handcuffed". In the first dog watch Sam kicked the door to pieces and walked out, we soon had him back in the cabin heavy planks 2 inches thick were placed across the doorway, then jammed with a hand spike against the bulwarks. During the night Sam tried to eat his way out for in the morning we found quite a big piece of one of the planks had been torn away with his teeth, he had worked at it like a rat all night.

Next morning Sam was calmer so while the carpenter was busy making a new door Sam was let out and allowed to walk about the deck, up and down he walked for while then made a rush up to Fok'sl deck, where one of the watch was working, catching hold of the man Sam tried to throw him overboard, this happened so quickly that Sam got up there before any of the watch could prevent him. The man he tackled had the good luck to trip him up and the rest of the watch coming up secured him, he was taken below and put in irons again. We



knew now that he couldn't be trusted so Sam was very closely watched whenever he was allowed on deck for exercise.

So he remained for the rest of the voyage closely guarded and allowed out once a day for fresh air and exercise. The last we saw of him was when we reached the London docks, he was taken ashore by the police. I never heard afterwards what became of him anyway I hope he became all right again perhaps he would with proper treatment he no doubt would get.

We were now getting very hot weather, most of the time we were painting the ship here and there, so she would look smart when we entered port. There was always plenty of other work with the rigging so we were kept busy working in the hot sun most of the time. During my watch on deck in the afternoon I had the job of painting the head gear and figurehead. The sea was calm only a light wind helping us along. In the middle watch that night I was at the wheel when a meteor shot across the sky with a loud report it was just like a ball of fire with a tail of fire streaming behind it. It only lasted a few seconds but it lit up the ship and sea with a pale blue light. After it disappeared everything was pitch dark I couldn't see a yard ahead, I suppose it was on account of the sudden brightness a few seconds before, some of the watch said they were half blind for some minutes.

I saw something like the same thing happen years afterwards I was standing on the shore of an Australian bay when a meteor struck the water about two miles away, there was a terrific report and every thing around seem to shake, I was almost thrown off my feet. Fancy such a thing striking a ship at sea, maybe many a missing ship that has never been

heard of since was lost by being struck with a falling meteor, who knows. Next day the painting etc was continued our watch blackened down the fore rigging and upper topsail sheets. The fore top mast was also scraped and regreased.

It was a beautiful day a nice breeze blowing and the ship going eight knots. Next day out watch was put to painting as usual but we were soon knocked off and told off to saw more wood the cook had run short once more. He was savage, greasy, and lazy thats how Dublin described him. He didn't like the idea of being put on his wack of firewood, he missed the coal and really we couldn't blame him for being a bit out of sorts over it, he had his worries sure enough. If dinner was a bit late or not cooked right, he would say how the devil can I cook when I haven't enough wood to cook with. All the same he didn't have much to cook just then, but cooks can't help having a good growl now and then. After we had sawn and split a good heap of wood from the spar, we were put back at painting around the ship which took us all the forenoon. In the afternoon the watch on deck started to holystone the deck the starboard side being finished before the first dog watch. Its a lovely job, is holystoning, its called holy because you have to go on your knees to do it, but I do know it causes more bad language than any other job of ships work. Before dark a large steamer passed to windward of us, there was also a full rigged ship and a brigantine in sight to leeward. The night passed off with the weather fine and the ship still under all the sail she could pile on.

Next morning, we holystoned the port side of the deck and was very glad when that job was finished. I think we felt more holy then than while we were doing it, these jobs are hated

by sailors, sand and canvassing a deck is another job that makes men growl they are just zig-zag tiresome jobs, although they do clean a deck.

Although we were so short of provisions the usual Sunday duff had not been knocked off our list. The duffs were boiled in tins each watch getting two of them so when the duffs were turned out they were the shape of the tins. They were then cut in quarters, each man getting a quarter as his wack, so the two duffs made 8 quarters each watch having eight men. Now this being Sunday and duff day, one of the crew, Jack Wills, made a bet he would eat a whole duff, that is four mens wack. He bet a lb of tobacco he could do it so two took up the bet and the other two being willing to lose their share of duff also, the bet was on. Jack started and was doing well. He had started on the third wack they were real good wacks too for we did get plenty of duff if we had to go short of other fare. The duff being hot and something new bread with raisins in it, of course he soon got filled out and was not doing so well when the third wack was getting low, at first I thought Jack would win his bet, but the fourth wack beat him. He was doing his best to get outside of it, but couldn't manage it and at last had to give in, so Jack lost his bet and had to part up 2lbs of tobacco which he had to get from the slop chest aft. The cost would be stopped out of his pay later on when we paid off.

After dinner Jack was so uncomfortable with overeating duff that he hardly knew what to do with himself, so much for being a glutton. It would have taken a lot to have made me give up my wack of duff I thought too much of it for that, I always enjoyed Sunday dinner on account of the duff. It would be a terrible thing if it had to be discontinued on our

shortage of stores, an awful thing to think about. We had some fun out of Jack's bet and it was quite alright for those that didn't lose their duff.

After dinner the weather changed some squalls came up and we had to take in the Royals, there was also some thunder about. Shortly afterwards we had to take in the topgallant sails we had rather a rough night of it very squally all the time. After daybreak as the weather was finer we set the topgallants and Royals again. When we came down from aloft, we were (that is some of us) sent into the fore peak to clear all the gear out, we heard that the skipper was going to have the deck planks pulled up for firewood as the two spars were almost used up. So after we had cleared it out the carpenter came down and pulled up one of the deck planks, but it proved to be very bad burning wood for the stove. No more were taken up, so back went the gear we had shifted and the fore deck was as per usual and the boat stowed on top of the deck house was broken up for fire wood, so we started to burn our boats behind us, fancy breaking up ships boats for firewood, but we did it. I wondered why the skipper didn't stop some of the steamers we passed, for coal, but for some reason best known to himself he didn't.

Next day was very hot, several ships were in sight we were kept busy as usual doing work about the ship. After dinner the afternoon watch oiled the poop deck a far better job than holystoning and much easier. The night was very squally but no sail was taken in. Next morning was very wet the rain came down just about as hard as it could washing the oil from the poop deck and making a mess of it. The sea was like a piece of glass not a breath of wind stirring. This rain was a

god send to us as we were very short of water. We rigged a sail over the main hatch and in a few minutes the sail was full. So heavy was the rain we kept bailing the water out of the sail and putting it into the tanks and in three quarters of an hour we had filled three 400 gallon tanks, besides filling tubs and anything we could get hold of. I had never seen it rain so heavy before. If our big tank had been in good order I reckon we would have filled that too. The barrels and tubs we had filled would enable us to have a good fresh water to wash, something we couldn't have before. We were all wet through but we were happy. After dinner the rain ceased and a light breeze sprung up and once again we were making headway. We were very near the Equator, we expected we would cross the line next day so there was some excitement amongst the passengers, we sailed on with the same light wind, hardly a ripple on the sea, and so the day and night passed.

Next day was hot and still we had only a light wind the ship under full sail, we crossed the line, about six bells in the afternoon watch. There was no fuss, none of the usual fun crossing the line. Our skipper didn't believe in that kind of foolery so we passed over without Father Neptune coming on board, much to the satisfaction of the passengers and others who were crossing for the first time.

Early next morning a sudden squall struck us but no damage was done as the halyards were let go in time. It was not yet daylight and the squall brought heavy rain with it we didn't have a very pleasant time of it up aloft furling the sails. The rain cleared off at 8 bells and it now being our watch below we got all our dirty clothes out to wash as we now had plenty of water for that. It was not before it was wanted as it

had been a good while since we had a chance to wash our duds, being so short of fresh water so long. We were in high glee not only did we wash all our duds but we had a real good bath as well and felt all the better for it. Of course during this hot weather near the line we had plenty of baths but that was always with salt water and although such a bath is not too bad it can't compare with fresh water and soap.

Soon there was plenty of washing hanging in the rigging to dry, blankets and clothing of every description on the Fok'sl rails too there was washing tied, anyone seeing it would think we had a crew like a man-of-war judging by the washing hanging out. The night being fine and hot the washing was left hanging, but early in the morning a rain squall was noticed bearing down on us, and there was a great rush to get our clothes in before it reached us. We just managed to get all our duds in, when the squall was on us and didn't it rain, almost as heavy as it did when we filled our tanks. It rained like that for about half an hour.

The next day was Sunday all the morning it was very wet, it cleared up after dinner, we dried up the decks and spent the rest of the afternoon, some reading whatever they could find, while others cleared their sea chests out and made things tidy. Chests had to be tidied about once a week, for as a rule what you wanted out of your chest, was sure to be at the bottom and of course up it came turning all the other things upside down. There was never time, when you wanted anything, to take the gear out carefully. You just shoved your arm in, grabbed what you wanted and pulled it out, so the chests needed putting in order quite often.

That night passed off with the weather fair and a nice

breeze sending the ship along. Next morning the ship was put about on the starboard tack. The breeze now was only light and we were only doing about five knots, the light breeze didn't last long. However for early in the afternoon it dropped altogether so we were becalmed, it also rained very heavy until sundown. It remained calm all night, we didn't get a breeze until the next afternoon, which lasted until the following morning.

I think I had better explain what is meant by a ship going about on the other tack, and how that manoeuvre is carried out. Suppose the ship is sailing close hauled on the port tack, that is to say she is sailing as close to the wind as she can, her yards being braced up sharp, with the wind on the left, or port side of the ship. The Captain wants to turn the ship so as to bring the wind on the right hand, or starboard side of the ship, and the ships head going in the opposite direction. When all is ready the Captain gives the order to the man at the wheel to keep her away a little, maybe a point, the helmsman puts the wheel to the starboard a little so that the ship turns her head a little away from the wind, and so travels a little faster than when close hauled. As soon as the Captain judges that the ship has good way on her, he sings out, Ready about! This is to let everyone know that the moment has arrived to tack ship. Then he says to the helmsman, Ease your helm down! The helmsman repeats the order, so that the Captain will know he has heard the order, then he slowly turns the wheel to the left, or port side of the ship. The direction in which the ships head is desired to turn. The next order is Haul over the boom (spanker). This is done to drive the ships head up into the wind by keeping the spanker full

of wind. By this time the man at the wheel reports, Helms down sir!

Then the Captain cries Helms-a-lee! At this order the head sail sheets are let fly, and the foresail sheet checked, so as to take the wind out of these sails as soon as possible, and the ship can come more quickly into the wind. The ship is now coming up into the wind with all the head sails flapping, at that moment then it is nearly the time to swing the main yard around to the other side of the mast. The Captain cries Raise tacks and sheets! Then comes the order, Main sail haul! The lee braces are let go, and all the sails on the main mast swing around with the yards on to the other tack, by this time all the sails on the fore mast have become flat aback, that is the wind is blowing them flat against the mast.

The wind is now on the starboard, or right hand side of the ship, and forcing the ships head more and more to port, in the direction she is wanted. Fore braces is the next order, and the men working them, swing the yards around, the same as the main ones, so now the ship is on the starboard tack with the wind on the right hand side of the ship, and the ship sailing in the opposite direction from which she was before.

While the ship is being put about on the other tack the sails on the mizzen mast are kept shivering by using the braces, for if they got full of wind, it might cause the ship to miss stays, that is, fail to go about. A ship is put about on the other tack far quicker than I've taken to explain how it is done.

All day long we lay becalmed, the water like a sheet of glass the ship just moving by the slight swell, so the day closed. Then we saw the most beautiful sunset I had ever seen, it was wonderful.



I had seen some fine sunsets when we were nearing the line, but this one beat them all. You would have to see it to realize its beauty.

Right across the sky were stretches of bright red with pink and light green above them, while streaks of blue and gold shot upwards having such an effect on the clouds that you



seemed to be looking at distant land, with plains of golden sands with here and there trees stretching away as far as the eye could see.

Such a fine sight was this sunset that passengers and crew stood and gazed at it in admiration while its main beauty lasted. Even after the sun had a gone down below the horizon, the sky was still wonderful with flashing colour which

gradually faded away. I have never forgotten that wonderful sunset.

We had not yet finished painting ship, so as the next morning was fine we started on that job again, a nice breeze was blowing and the ship going along at a good pace. The cook informed us that he had been told that our Sunday duff was to be discontinued, as flour was getting short and what was it would be wanted for the passengers. This bit of news caused some growls, it would be very hard luck if we didn't get our duff next Sunday. Anyway, said Dublin, its not stopped yet, so we may as well save our wind to cool it when we get it next Sunday. May be this was very good advice, what was the use of growling over it. It would be time enough for that if we found on Sunday it was discontinued.

It wasn't such wonderful duff the cook made, but we all did like to have it as it was a great change from the usual hard tack, and we would miss it greatly. All we could do was hope for the best. The next morning we picked up the south east trades, so we expected to have some good steady breezes for some time. Meanwhile the painting still went on. The rain had spoilt the poop deck, before the oil we had put on had dried in, so it being such a fine day we washed the poop and dried it ready for reoiling. We also got the main deck ready for oiling, and in the afternoon we gave the decks their coat of oil, and being Saturday, we were clear of any more such jobs until Monday, when they would get the second coat, that is if the weather was still fine.

Before we oiled the poop deck, we had to sand and canvas it, wet sand is rubbed over the deck with a piece of canvas. I don't know which is the worse job, that or holystoning they

are both bad enough. I had expected we would sand and canvas the main deck as well, but somehow we were let off that.

Sunday was spent much as usual we did nothing, only what was necessary. The breeze still held good and steady so we were not troubled much, and what was better, we got our duff and everyone was satisfied, but we fully expected it would be stopped before long for there could be no doubt if flour was getting short they wouldn't waste it on making duff for us, we couldn't expect it with passengers on board.

Monday morning while we were giving the deck a second coat of oil, we had something by way of a change, for there was a row between the first mate and one of the crew. The mate had called him a something Dutchman, which the man didn't like, there were words and nearly a stand-up fight, but it came to nothing which was just as well, all the same the mate told him he would give him the father of a hiding before the ship reached port, but he never did, and maybe it was just as well for the mate, as the A.B.<sup>16</sup> was a big chap 6 feet high, while the mate was very short and very stout.

The fair wind which we had held for some days now left us, it shifted around to the opposite quarter which meant a head wind for us. Now we would soon be getting into bad weather again so we started to unbend our fair weather sails and replace them with bad weather ones. We got all the strong heavy weather sails bent during the next two days, and just in time too.

The next morning it started to blow, hands were kept

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<sup>16</sup> A.B. abbreviation for Able Seaman.

standing by the halyards to let them go if necessary. We passed a brigantine under her lower topsail she was playing safe, but so far we had not taken in any sail, we had our heavy sails bent, so I suppose the skipper considered they would stand up against the blow we were then getting. He believed in running under all the sail he could, as long as he could.

It was blowing very hard all that night. The Royals and topgallant sails were furled. Towards morning the wind eased a little but the skipper didn't set the Royals and topgallant sails, it was still blowing the same after breakfast.

In the forenoon watch we got the cables up from the chain locker, put the anchors out ready and bent the cables, this was a sure sign that were nearing port. After we had finished with the anchors we went on with the painting and during the forenoon watch we finished the Fok'sl head and the poop.

In the afternoon I scraped and oiled the main and mizzen top masts which took me all my watch to do. While I was busy oiling the mizzen top mast, I had the bad luck to drop my wad, so not feeling like going down to get another I tore off the sleeve of my shirt and used that for a wad. It wouldn't have paid to keep on dropping my wad as I would soon have no shirt left. In the dog watches when of course we were left to ourselves if there was no sail work or such like needing attention, so the day passed.

During the night a large steamer which we noticed coming up astern, during the last dog watch, passed us about two miles away. She was soon far ahead and out of sight before the middle watch came on deck. The next morning we sighted a large ship on our port bow, her topsails could just be seen from the deck. A little later I went up to loose the fore

Royal which had been stowed during the night. While up on the Royal yard I had a good view of the ship ahead, she was steering the same way as ourselves.

Sometime after I had been aloft the mate sent me up again to see what had become of the ship ahead as she couldn't be seen from the deck. I found that she had gone around on the other tack and was almost out of sight. The mate seemed a little disappointed at this, I suppose he wanted to speak her for some reason or the other.

The first mate was a queer chap, always full of fun and often in the dog watches he would get some of us together and put us through some kind of drill. He had served in the R.N.R so I suppose that was why he liked to drill us. Of course it was only make believe, and I'm afraid we were all duds at the game. He used to march us up and down the deck and tie us into all kinds of knots some turning one way and some turning another, at which he would laugh heartily and enjoy our confusion. We were a very poor lot at drilling I'm afraid, we would fall in, each man having a handspike for a rifle. The mate would have two large spoons on his shoulders for epaulets and small teaspoons shoved through the button holes of his coat with just the business part of the spoon showing, so he looked like an Admiral in a comic opera and all being ready the play would start. The passengers would be laughing loud and long at the way we obeyed his orders and tied ourselves up.

We had some great fun in the dog watches. Of course it wasn't every dog watch that this foolery went on but now and then, whenever we saw the mate fish some spoons out of his pocket we knew we were about to get some drill.

The second mate was also a card in his way, he was well liked by the crew, but was always getting into trouble with the skipper. Sometimes when it was his watch on deck and instead of remaining there he would slip below for a cup of coffee or something to eat. The skipper would come on deck just when he wasn't wanted, or expected, he would shout for the second mate and when he came rushing on deck there would be a fine flow of talk from the skipper. Once or twice the skipper found him leaning against the rail at the break of the poop having a doze and would give him another tongue lashing, saying he would log him but I don't think he ever did.

I never mentioned before that we had on board a large white cockatoo which belonged to the skipper. This bird could say almost anything, it picked up the second mates name from hearing the skipper shout it out. We often heard the bird calling the second mate like the skipper, strange to say I never heard it use bad language, and it must have heard that often enough.

The bird would sometimes give the order lee main brace, just like the skipper would say it. The watch would go to carry out the order, only to find it was only the bird. I never heard a bird before or since that could imitate the human voice like that one could. Sentence of death had been passed more than once on that cockatoo by some of the crew, but none them dared to carry it out.

Next day a good breeze was blowing, the ship under full sail, we hove the log at 11.30, 7 bells, and found we were doing eleven knots. We had that breeze all day and evening the ship still doing about the same as when we hove the log 7 bells. In the first watch that night just after 6 bells it started to blow

hard, so we took in the Royals and brailed the spanker in, before twelve o'clock we had to stow the topgallant sails. The mate hove the log again just to see what we were doing and found it was twelve knots which wasn't bad under our reduced sail, but it was blowing pretty stiff which made the ship slip along. By daylight the wind had gone down considerably but a nasty sea was running, our decks were pretty wet with water we took over the rail every little while, at 6 o'clock we were only doing seven knots.

After breakfast we set the mizzen top mast staysail and spanker which increased our speed to eight and a half knots. After dinner we sighted land which were two small islands, we passed them in the last dog watch, all through the night the weather was fair.

The next day was Sunday but we were not to have a day of rest, a gale came along which kept us busy. We took in the topgallant sails and shortly afterwards took a reef in the top sails and stowed the flying jib. All day and night it was blowing hard so a hand was kept standing by each halyard. Once or twice during the middle watch we expected any minute to receive orders to stow the fore topsail and perhaps the main as well, but we were not troubled so we still carried on with the reefs in.

At daylight next morning the wind had gone down so much that we set all sail again, except the Royals but we may as well have saved ourselves the trouble, for by dinner time it was blowing as hard as ever again so up we went once more to take in sail. The topgallant sails and main and spanker being stowed, and shortly after we had done that, the gaff topsail was taken in. It blew very hard the rest of the day and

continued all night a very high sea was running. During this gale I had an accident and was very near going overboard. I was coming out of the alley way at the break of the poop in order to strike eight bells (midnight). I had just reached the quarter deck when we shipped a very heavy sea, it came over the weather main chains. I was washed away to leeward and my foot jammed in a scupper hole and as the ship rolled the rush of water turned me around badly twisting my foot. If my foot hadn't caught in the scupper hole I've no doubt that I would have been washed over the side.

The watch thought I had really gone, they soon saw what had saved me and I was soon pulled out of my painful position, as I couldn't walk two of the watch carried me into the Fok'sl. We had a doctor on board mainly for the passengers, he came forward and attended to me. I had a very bad sprain so the remainder of the voyage I spent in my bunk not being able to walk, that is to say most of the time I was kept in bed.

The next day the wind dropped altogether and we were becalmed our sails were up and down the mast, as the saying goes, not a flap in any of them. We remained like that until three o'clock in the afternoon when a breeze sprang up and we got on the move again. The breeze got stronger and we were doing eight and half knots. A full rigged ship passed to windward of us. I got a view of her through the port hole opposite my bunk, she made a fine picture under full sail. I suppose we looked just as well to them as we had all sail set too.

The breeze held on the same all day I could hear every order given to the watch on deck while lying in my bunk. In



a way it was nice to know I didn't have to worry about the working of the ship, but just the same my watch was one hand short that part of it wasn't so good, but I heard of no growling about it. The weather wasn't so bad and so long as no very bad weather came along, they would manage all right, but towards morning the weather became squally and remained so all that day but no sail had to be taken in, so I don't suppose I was missed.

In the afternoon during one of these squalls which came along pretty sudden, the main Royal and topgallant sails were blown out of the sheets, and the main upper topsail was split, so both watches were called to furl sail, which had to be done pretty smart or the sails would be blown to pieces, as it was they were badly damaged before they could be got in. The policy of carrying on and risking it as the skipper often did, sometimes didn't pay.

While all hands were pulling and hauling on deck and up aloft, I was in my bunk quite cosy, but just the same I think I would far sooner have been up with them as every little while when I moved my foot, I had a rather a painful time. So I can't say that I really enjoyed my little bit of loafing, at the expense of my watch mates.

It was blowing a gale all night, both watches being kept on deck, the next day was the same, the ship under reefed topsails making very good weather of it we were shipping very little water.

We were now about 370 miles from the Lizards so we were getting on well towards the English Channel. That night the gale still held on, but next morning it showed signs of abating it eased down a lot and by the first dog watch, it had blown

itself almost out so all sail but the Royals were set. Just before dark a sail was reported on the port bow, we would soon be amongst plenty of shipping nearing the Channel.

I still had to remain in my bunk, my foot being too painful to place on the deck. I wanted to get out on deck so I could see what was going on, but the Dr. wouldn't hear of it so it looked like I would be in my bunk for the rest of the voyage, my foot didn't seem to get much better at all.

Next morning was very wet, a large ship was ahead of us on the starboard bow, most likely it was the same one that had been sighted the night before, we were gaining on her slowly as the day went on. In the afternoon a brig passed across our bows we were getting nearer the Channel and would find plenty of ships about us before very long. In the evening the rain cleared off, we had a good breeze all night which took up well into the chops<sup>17</sup> of the Channel.

Next morning with a good breeze and under all sail we were going up Channel at a fair rate of knots. As my foot was a good deal better, I was allowed to try it out on deck so with the aid of a stick I slowly and painfully hopped along and sat down on the main hatch. This was much better than being in my bunk in the Fok'sl as I could see what was passing around me, there were plenty of ships in sight, what with steamers, sailing ships and fishing boats you would wonder where they all came from, the fishing boats were about in dozens. These boats are splendid sea boats and keep out in very bad weather at times they have to stick some very stiff blows. The fishermen have rather a hard miserable time of it, but like

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<sup>17</sup> The short broken motion of the waves, experienced in crossing the English Channel.

most things I suppose they get used to it and are fishermen all their lives.

Before dinner time Beachy Head<sup>18</sup> was well in sight on our port bow, shining white in the sun, so it wasn't long before we were abreast of it and passed, about an hour after passing Beachy Head a tow boat hove in sight coming down Channel. We soon neared each other and the tow boat came alongside wanting the job of towing us up to Gravesend. But our skipper couldn't come to terms about the cost of the same, so they argued and argued while the ship still sailed on and the tow boat keeping pace a few yards off. For over an hour this went on, the skipper of the tow boat still hanging on and trying to make a bargain, at last our skipper gave in, I forget now what the price was. The tow boat nearly always wins out in this kind of deal.

The tow rope was soon passed and away we went behind the tow boat, we were under easy sail which helped the tow boat. She was a paddle tug and as she rolled to port or starboard the opposite paddle would be racing out of the water so I guess the ship being under easy sail helped the tug quite a lot. It would have been different had we had a dead head wind then our sails would have been stowed and the tug would have all the work on her own. So I suppose the cost of our tow was not so high as it would have been if we could not have helped with our sails.

In the evening the pilot came on board it was his job to take us up as far as Gravesend. We expected to arrive there about noon next day, but didn't get there until late in the

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<sup>18</sup> Beachy Head is a chalk headland in East Sussex, England.

afternoon of the day after, when we made fast to one of the buoys, and there we were at last in port, we wouldn't remain here long, as we had to go up the river and into the docks.

The ship was made snug for the night, all the sails being well stowed, they were finished with as far as this voyage was concerned, all that had to be done now was to unbend them and stow them away until the ship was ready for sea again.

As soon as the ship was made snug, the skipper sent ashore for meat and vegetables, and not before it was wanted. Two of the crew also went ashore, they came back about an hour afterwards with 6 loaves of bread some cheese and some bottles of gin.

All that day we were making merry. We had a good dinner of fresh meat and vegetables so were quite happy, having plenty to eat. During the evening more drink was got on board and by 11.30 that night most of the crew were drunk, two of them started a row which soon became a free fight.

The man told off as watchman since our arrival, put out the Fok'sl light thinking it would stop the fight, but it only made matters worse. He then went on deck and hoisted the Police lamp, that was soon hauled down and smashed. The row continued off and on all night. I was well out of it having a bad foot and in my bunk long before the war started and as I was strict T.T.<sup>19</sup> then I had nothing to drink.

Early next morning we left Gravesend for London. Most of the crew had sore heads and were feeling not so good after their spree the night before. At four o'clock that afternoon we arrived in the London docks, the ship was made fast and the

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<sup>19</sup> T.T. - A tea totaller does not drink alcohol.

crew was finished by six o'clock. When a ship arrives in the London Docks all the crew have to go ashore, no one is allowed to remain in the ship except a watchman and he is not allowed to have a fire in the galley. So we all got ready to go to the Sailors Home in Wells Street which is just outside the dock wall. By this time there were plenty of dock loafers wanting to earn a bob by helping to carry our chests and gear ashore, or pinch anything they could. Then there were men who wanted to get our donkey's breakfasts that is our straw beds. Most of the crew didn't bother about their beds so these blokes made quite a haul, I suppose they knew where they could sell them. All these beds etc were placed in the large van which would take us to the home. No one could take anything out the gates without an order so to put the beds with rest of our gear was the easy way of getting them away without any trouble. After we got outside of course the beds were thrown out and those who wanted them could get them. Chests etc are supposed to be searched for tobacco and other goods, but two bob<sup>20</sup> a man saved us the delay and so we passed through the gates and so on to the home.

While we were coming up the river customs officers boarded us and searched the ship for tobacco etc, we were only allowed to have ½ lb of tobacco in our possession. They even went aloft and searched the bunts of the sails, but they never searched the man at the wheel, had they done so they would have found more tobacco on him than he was entitled to have, he was minding all our spare stuff.

As none of the crew are allowed to stay on the ships in London the rule is to pay them off soon after arrival. They

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<sup>20</sup> A bob is a shilling coin, the equivalent of a ten cent piece.

can sign on again when the ship is ready for sea or find another ship.

When we arrived at the Sailors Home we sat down to a good tea, there was no more watch keeping, no more going aloft to furl sail but just a wonderful good nights rest in bed.

The cost of board etc at the home was 15/- per week, it is a large place, has a good library and museum, a savings bank and a sailor can buy anything he needs instead of going outside and pay more. There is a barber shop where you could get your hair cut for 4 pence and a shave for 2 pence. There is a post office where you can get your letters and post them away. There is also a navigation school for officers and seaman to prepare for the exams required by the Board of Trade.

There is also medical attendance daily with medicine free of charge and just outside the back entrance which leads into a church yard in Dock Street you can attend church without going more than two dozen yards. So the Sailors Home is some place, and there is no need to go outside to buy anything. They say this home has no equal anywhere in the world and I can quite believe it.

The next morning, we had to go to the pay office at Tower Hill, called the chain locker, to be paid off. Another advantage sailors have, is that when they are paid off, they need not touch a cent, but can draw it from the bank in the home, so if they do this, they run no risk of being robbed like they often were. Every kind of land shark can be found hanging around the pay office waiting for a chance to take the sailor down for his hard earned pay. My foot was not right yet but I could limp along with a stick to help me.

After I got back to the home I bought a few things that I needed. I bought a yankee shirt, this is a jumper like affair made of soft serge, with a collar and laced up in front, this was worn under the coat, was very warm and looked well. I also brought a peak cap and sailors belt and when I swanked out in my new rig, I looked very smart, or at least I thought I did.

The next few days I spent sight seeing about the city, I went here, there and everywhere. The Tower of London was a great attraction for me and I went there several times looking over that old world fortress. I always found plenty to interest me. As I wandered about from place to place, I could fancy I was living back in the long ago it was all very interesting and I spent many hours of delight there. The crown jewels were something worth seeing too, they were a fine sight in their huge glass case surrounded with iron railings, which keep visitors a yard or so away, but not so far that you cannot see all very clearly.

The Regalia consists of all the crown jewels and other Royal objects of ancient times. The crown of Queen Victoria is formed of a purple cap enclosed by silver hoops supporting a ball and cross, studded with diamonds, a large sapphire adorns the centre of the cross, and a heart shaped ruby said to have been worn by the Black Prince, appears in front of the cross. Then there is St Edwards crown made of gold and studded with diamonds and sapphires, rubies, pearls and emeralds.

The Prince of Wales crown is made of pure gold without jewels. The Ancient Queens crown is not very beautiful, not in any way to compare with the others. I've mentioned just a

few of the Regalia, there is quite a lot to be seen, amongst which are, the Queens Diadem, St Edwards Staff, the Royal Sceptre. There are other sceptres and crowns. The best of which are the crown of King Charles the second, and Ann Boleyns crown, and the crown of Mary of Modena, and there are hundreds of other things to be seen, which make you long to read up your history books, to read again about things you had forgotten and other things you didn't remember ever hearing or reading about.

One morning I found a letter waiting for me from my cousin, Clara in Barrington, Cambridgeshire, telling me what train to take in order to visit them. I had written to my Grandmother a few days before, so next morning I went to Kings Cross Station and got a ticket for Shepreth, which I think was 52 miles from London. So away I went and all the way along in the train I kept going from one side of the carriage to the other, looking at the country. I wanted to see as much of it as I could as the train rushed along.

At Hitchen I had to change trains and having a little while to wait I had some eats as by the time I was feeling rather hungry. So after satisfacting (sic) that way I took my seat in the train and was soon on my way again. I was lucky by again having a compartment to myself so I could go from side to side as before, and see the scenery as we went along, without bothering people or treading on their corns. I think I was like a big kid that day, very much thrilled with the idea of going to see my folks at Barrington.

At last, the train arrived at a pretty little station and I saw the name painted *Shepreth* so out I got, only a few other passengers got out, and I was the only sailor. As I walked



along the platform I saw a young girl coming towards me. She was making no mistake she could see I was from the sea. She stopped in front of me, smiling Are you Clara, I asked; Yes, she replied, and you must be my cousin Jim, we kissed and shook hands and set off for Barrington, which was the next village a little more than a mile away. It was a nice pleasant walk along the road and as we walked along I had to tell her all about my ship and voyage, my bad foot, for I was still walking lame, and dozens of other things, and very soon I felt as if I had known her quite a while instead of only a few minutes. She was a jolly girl about 19 years of age, not bad looking and very nice to talk to and walk with, had she not been my cousin, I may have fancied myself very much in love with her.

As we walked along she pointed out places of interest to me, for around these parts my Father had roamed as a boy, so I was interested in all around. At the bend of the road we came to a large building looking very much neglected and forlorn, with the windows all broken and all in a very bad state of neglect, that, she told me used to be where they made crockery and gave employment to many men and girls from the surrounding villages. Then it suddenly closed down, bought out by other interests, it was a great loss to the villages, that was the only industry there besides farming until later when Fossil Pits were opened out. Soon we reached Barrington and the first cottage we came to was my Aunts, where Clara lived. I met my Uncle Jack and Aunt also a big family of cousins. As soon as the greetings were over we sat down to a cup of tea and cakes just to keep my strength up as it were until I reached my Grandmothers at the other end of

the village. And of course once again I had to tell them all about myself and voyage. After a while Clara took me in tow again and we set off for my Grandmothers cottage where I was to stay.

As we walked along, we met another uncle, this was Uncle Jim, as he shook hands, he said so you are the sailor from Australia, how do you hold? I looked at him and at Clara, not knowing what he meant. Oh he means how are you said my cousin. Now I understood so replied I'm fine, thanks Uncle Jim, how are you yourself? For some minutes we stood there yarning like two fish wives, until at last said Well, you had better be on your way, they are waiting for you, so we left him and went on our way. Uncle Jim I might mention was the village beagle or constable. He wore no uniform, all he had was a staff with a gilt crown on top, that was his authority to make arrests, which was a very rare thing, once in a while perhaps a gypsy or tramp then the offender would be taken in a spring cart to Foxton where there was a police station, a village about two miles away.

He was a great chap, was Uncle Jim and many a good yarn I had with him after that first meeting. I took a great liking to him. At last we reached my Grandmothers cottage which was the usual white washed cottage with thatched roof. Then I was inside with the old lady kissing and hugging me, what a fuss she made over me and all the while her eyes were full of tears. The boys, boy, had come home to see her. My Father had gone away thirty years before and had never come back, but his boy had come and that seemed to comfort my Grandmother. She took me upstairs and showed me my Fathers room, where I was to sleep. The room he had always

used. It was just as he had left it a few books of his still in a shelf hanging on the wall, all the years she had looked after that room keeping it just as he had left it, so it would be ready for him when he came home. She was very happy to know, that although her son could never come home and use it again, his son came and would have the room. As she told me all about it, with her eyes full of tears, I think I was very near crying too.

My Father had died just seven years before. He was going home to see his parents, but fate willed otherwise as he died the year before he intended to go home.

When we went down stairs again, we sat down to afternoon tea, Clara had it all ready for us. So I had to tell my Grandmother all about myself, my Father and Mother and all the family news. So we sat talking well into the afternoon, until my Uncle William came home from Foxton where he had a corn store, and of course I had to tell him all about myself and my doings. And so we yarned and yarned until by the time the evening meal was over and different relations came along to see me, I was feeling rather weary and was glad when at last I was allowed to say goodnight and go to bed.

Tired as I was, I lay there a long while just thinking about my Father and that little room, and wondering about many things I had never wondered about before.

At last I went to sleep and I don't remember waking up until I was called after nine o'clock. I had kept my Grandmother waiting, as she wouldn't have her breakfast until I came down, as she said I must have been tired after my journey from London, so she let me sleep on. I enjoyed that breakfast too. It was bacon and eggs, and plenty.

Uncle Jim and Aunt Eliza lived right at the extreme end of the village, what she called near the Church, as Barrington Church was almost opposite her cottage. After I had my breakfast I went along to see Aunt Eliza. I had a long chat with her and sampled her famous mead, which was a wonderful drink so long as you didn't have too much of it, for her old mead, that is six months old, had a kick like a mule. I have never tasted better mead than what my Aunt Eliza used to make.

Another attraction there for me was she had some great old books and I was very interested in looking through them. Amongst them were two large Vols of the History of the Indian Mutiny. I would have liked to have owned them. She did give me one book which I've still got and think a lot of.

After awhile Uncle Jim came in and after a cup of tea they would have me go and see their orchard, which was about half a mile from the village. So along we went and a nice little orchard I found it to be, by the time I had had a good look around there, it was getting on for dinner time so we walked back to the village.

When I got back I found Clara waiting for me to take me out after dinner to some more relations a couple of miles away, so what with visiting this one and that one my time was fully occupied. Barrington Church is very old, no one knows when it was built, there is no record all they know is its some hundreds of years old. In the church yard old tombs are so weather worn that all lettering has disappeared, other tombs that can be read are very old, nearby is the place where they say the grey stone for the building was quarried.

It was very fine in the evenings to hear the chiming bells

of the old church ringing out.

About a quarter of a mile from the old church are the Fossil Pits where they dig Petrified Stones, they find shells and parts of fish, all turned to stone, in ages past that part of England must have been the sea bed. The Petrified Stones are ground into powder then mixed with chemicals and used as a manure, most of which is exported to America.

The men working in the Fossil Pits were getting half a crown a day and thought the pay was good. The work was about equal to working in gravel pits. The Fossil Pits were the only industry at Barrington outside fruit growing and farming.

Uncle Jim was one of these gifted people known as wart charmers, they can charm warts away. They are not fakes at all but do just what they say they can. Just as those people who call themselves water diviners and with a bent stick or wire will tell you where underground water is, some believe in them and others don't. I don't know anything about water diviners but I do know my Uncle Jim was a wart charmer and could charm them away, and this is how I know he could. For years ever since I was a very small boy, I had warts on the back of my hands. They were the spongy kind and the least knock would make them bleed, so they were a great trouble to me and at sea the salt water seemed to make them more spongy still, and hardly a day passed that my hands were not bleeding. At this time when I was at Barrington the back of my hands and fingers to the first joint was covered with large and small warts, so thick were they that I could not put a pencil anywhere without touching a wart.

So one day Uncle Jim said to me, Young Jim, I'll charm

those warts away if you like! and they will never come back again. We were in the village street at the time. I just grinned, for up to then I only half believed in wart charming. He didn't like me grinning about it, and told me I would have to believe he would do it and have faith in him. All right, I said I believe you can, and will charm them away. So he rubbed his hands over the warts and said something to himself, I couldn't make out, then he left me, that was all, nothing more was said.

Now the curious part of all this is that in three weeks I didn't have a wart on me, anywhere, they were all gone. I didn't notice any of them drop off, nor did I pick any off. I don't remember missing them until those three weeks after he had rubbed his hands on them and charmed, or whatever he did to them, then suddenly I found I hadn't any, where they went, or how they went is more than I can tell. I have never had a wart since. Today if I stretch the skin on my hands by shutting my fist tightly I can see all the white spots where the warts used to be. That's why I believe in wart charming, and that's why I know my Uncle Jim could charm them away. He had a gift all right. You meet some queer gifted people as you travel around.

My happy holiday at Barrington was drawing to a close, my relations couldn't do enough for me, to make my stay happy, but at last I had to tell them it was time for me to get back to London. Uncle Jack wanted me to stay for some time longer but that was out of the question, I wanted to get back so I could sign on again with the *Ellora's* crew.

So at last the time arrived for me to say good bye and I went around saying farewell to all my many friends around about. Then came the day when I said good bye to all in

Barrington. My Uncle William had his light cart ready to take me to Foxton. I said good bye to my Grandmother, she kissed me and hugged me and cried a little, then I got into the cart with Clara and away we went. We drove along the road towards Foxton and I turned and had a last look at dear old Barrington. I was feeling rather sad at going, but it had to be.

Foxton was only about twenty minutes drive so we soon arrived there. The train from Cambridge soon came in and Clara and I got in, she was going on to Shepreth with me. I said good bye to my Uncle and was off. The last I saw of him he was waving his hat. We arrived at Shepreth much too soon for now I was going away Clara and I seemed to have heaps to talk about. We kissed and said good bye and she stood on the station waving her handkerchief until I could no longer see the station that was the end of my visit to Barrington.

I arrived back at the home in Wells Street about seven o'clock that evening. I had a good tea and turned in early before nine o'clock. After breakfast next morning I had a hunt around for any of my former shipmates, but only found one left all the others he told me had gone to sea again in different ships. The *Ellora* had been sold to a firm in Norway.

You can imagine my disappointment at hearing this bit of news. Well as the *Ellora* was now foreign, she was out of the question so I would have to look about for some other ship. Had I known before that she was to be sold I could have remained in Barrington longer. The old ship had sailed for Norway about a week before. I expect she would be used in the timber trade as a matter of fact she was, and about two years afterwards I saw her again in Melbourne with one of my old shipmates a Norwegian second mate of her. She had

brought a cargo of weather boards from Norway and as it was the wheat season I suppose she would load wheat for London as that would be what she would be wanting to load. That was the last time I saw the old ship.

I also never run across any of the others who had been shipmates with me. I suppose the old sailmaker stayed ashore. I had been to his home in Popular one evening before I went on my holiday and he was talking then of giving up the sea and when the ship was sold, I expect he wouldn't bother looking for another. I don't know what became of our old skipper, I never heard of him at all nor met him again, he wasn't a bad sort, I rather liked him.

Now my funds were getting low, and I wanted a ship. I didn't want to stay and at last find myself in the straw house. The straw house was a place in Wells Street below the Sailors Home where sailors went if they had no cash to pay for their keep in the home. They received meals from the home, that is meals of a sort, and were kept there until they managed to get a ship. Of course if a sailor ran out of funds he could stay at the home for a week or two, then, if he didn't get a ship into the straw house he had to go, and anything he owed the home would be paid out of his advance note, or such time when he came back. His name would be entered in red ink in the book, so when he returned to the home, if ever, his name was looked up to see if he owed anything. Why the straw house was called so, I can't say unless it was the fact that men staying there had straw beds to sleep on.

So I had no wish to be a guest there. So down to the docks I went to have a look around and see if there were any ships sailing soon that would suit me. I didn't want to go China or



Frisco. There were plenty of fine ships in the docks and no doubt plenty of hungry ones too. I was looking for a ship that would soon be signing on her crew, but most I saw were still a few weeks off of wanting a crew. I would have liked to ship in my old ship but that was impossible now unless I went to Norway. So I made many trips to the different docks. There were ships I could have shipped in but they were not bound for Australia and I wanted to get back as I was due to go into the Navy. I had been there as a boy, and this merchant service stunt was just to gain more experience, in sail etc. so I didn't want to wander all over the seven seas and maybe miss the vacancy I was looking for when I got back.

One day while down at the docks I heard that the *Avenger* was soon signing on her crew. She was loading for Australia so I was told. I went on board and found she had not yet started to load. I didn't half like the idea of shipping in her when I was told she had a bad name as a hungry ship.

I had left the docks and was walking along the East India dock road, thinking the matter over when I met a sailor about my own age. We got talking and he told me he like myself was looking for a ship. We soon became great chums. Moir, for that was his name wanted to go down to the docks to see two former shipmates of his, their ship had arrived in the dock that morning so back we went together.

We soon found the ship, a large full rigger with white masts and yards. I couldn't help thinking what a work horse she would be in mild wet weather when they had to sand and canvas the rust off the yards. Most white painted ships had this work in plenty that's why many sailors won't ship in them if they can help it.

Moir went on board while I waited on the dock side. In a few minutes he came down the gangway looking pretty glum. I asked him what was the matter, he said my two chums were both washed overboard in a gale, a week before they got into port. I told him I was sorry to hear of it, and for some minutes we both walked along each with his own thoughts. After awhile Moir cheered up a little, he asked me to go along to his home with him for tea. He lived in Hammersmith somewhere, but I told him I wanted to get back to the home. I always regretted that I didn't go home with him then I would have known his proper address, but more of that later.

We made arrangements to meet the next day and have another look around the docks. There was the London Docks, the West India and East India Docks to look over and as these docks are generally full of ships, or was at that time, there was plenty to pick and choose from. Today as I write these notes not a sailing ship could be found in any of those docks, only steamers or motor ships are there now but at the time I write of they would be packed with sailing ships from all parts of the world, speed is the only thing that counts now. So the beautiful sailing ships are a thing of the past. In a way its a pity, but time marches on, and things change.

Moir and I had got very chummy and we decided we would ship together in the same ship or not at all, that is to say if we couldn't get the same ship, but only one could, that one would not sign on. Moir lived with his widowed Mother, and by what he told me she wasn't very well off. Thats why he was anxious to get a ship, he was her only son and I supposed her chief support.

After a good look around the docks the next few days, and

not finding anything that suited us as we wanted to be together we at last went down and went on board the *Avenger*.

She had started to load some days before. The skipper looked at our papers, he kept them and told us to be on board next afternoon when he would pick what men he wanted to form his crew. We were quite satisfied that he liked our looks and our discharges or he wouldn't have kept them, so we reckoned we were certain to be going to sea in the *Avenger*. Next day we went down again and found about twenty seamen there waiting for the skipper.

At last he came on deck with his hand full of discharges, these were the papers the men had given in and he kept to look over. The skipper looked at the papers in his hand and called my name. I was a bit thrilled to find I was the first one called, but that only may have been because my discharge was the very top one as he held them. So out I stepped and stood before him, he asked me a few questions and was satisfied with my answers. He held my papers and I knew I was right to sign on. Moir was called next, and he too satisfied the skipper, we were delighted that at last both of us would be shipmates on the same ship. We cannot look ahead and see what is to be, maybe its best for all of us that we can't.

So the men were called before the skipper one by one until he had his crew. We were then told that we would sign Articles at Greens Home next morning at ten o'clock. Greens Home is a shipping office. I forget now how it got that name. So I parted from Moir in the city and went back to the home and packed my sea chest ready for sea. Being satisfied now that I had a ship, my worry of being short of funds ceased, so I went for a walk along Mile End Road having a good look

over the stalls which lined the road alongside the footpath. You can buy almost anything there, books, ironmongery, clothing, tools, in fact anything you want. Its like Petticoat Lane, which is supposed to be the Cockneys Shopping Centre.

On a Sunday it was just packed with people anything and everything is on sale there. Trick blokes trying to sell three sovereigns for a quid, and he will let you see him drop them one after the other into a new purse, and if you are mug enough to buy one all you find in the purse is three new half pennies. Pickpockets are there too so one has to keep his hand in his pocket where his cash is otherwise he won't have any when he leaves the lane. There is plenty of fun there and I liked to go and have an hour or so there. I never had more than a bob or two on me so ran no risk of being taken down by a pickpocket or others.

Many a sailor has gone to the lane for cheap clothing to fill up his sea chest before going to sea. I don't mean cheap second hand stuff, but new, which is far cheaper than you would get in a clothing store. Of course you can get good and bad stuff, its up to you when you buy to see and know just what you are buying. Now I would not be able to visit the lane again as after the next day I would be signed on and be onboard my ship with no chance of running around the lane or anywhere else.

I went down to the shipping office and found most of the others there, Moir hadn't arrived which worried me a little but I saw him coming along a few minutes afterwards. After waiting about 15 minutes all had arrived the skipper also so it didn't take long for us all to sign on after the Articles had been

read to us, they were the same as usual bare wack, that is pound and pint, salt horse and salt pork. We received orders to be on board the ship before twelve o'clock that night, so that meant good bye London Town, we were off to sea.

Again I didn't go home with Moir. I excused myself as I had letters to write, but the main reason was I really couldn't afford the fare, and I didn't feel like walking back from Hammersmith afterwards. What advance I had drawn I reckoned most of it would go to pay my debt to the home so I had to be careful and watch my step, besides there were one or two little things I had to get before going to sea.

I went back to the home, my chest was ready packed, so I sat down and wrote some letters not forgetting home or the folks at Barrington. At the home we always had coffee and bread and cheese for supper. Those who wanted beer could have that instead of the coffee but they couldn't have both, so after supper I got ready to go on board my ship.

I said good bye to all I knew there the van took my sea chest and bedding and away we went. The last I saw of the home was as we turned the corner of Cable Street. When I arrived on board I went into the Fok'sl.

The *Avenger* had deck houses for Fok'sls, which are far better than a topgallant Fok'sl right forward. This ship had only the orderly Fok'sl right forward, so when I went into the deck house or Fok'sl I expect to find the usual few drunks there as a crew or most of them join their ship more or less drunk.

Everything seemed upside down, with sea chests and bedding, bags etc. just put in anywhere and anyhow. No one could pick a bunk or put his gear away until the watches had

been picked as no one knew which watch he would be in or which side of the Fok'sl we would live. Two or three of the crew already on board were Dutchmen, that is to say they were Swedes or natives of Norway. Any sort of foreign seamen are called Dutchmen or square heads, in English ships. Most of the crew were on board some in the port Fok'sl and others in the starboard Fok'sl, most were drunk.



*The Avenger*

I had taken my gear into the port side, hoping I would be picked in the port watch. Some were rowing and others throwing sea boots at the Dutchmen or otherwise getting what they called their own back. So for some time that night the unfortunate Dutchmen had a lively time of it.

After a while one after another got into bunks and were soon asleep, but during the night off and on some others of the crew would arrive, drunk of course, and start another din. It was a very hard job those days to find a British ship with an all British crew, and it was the rule whenever a ship put to sea

those of her crew that were not British were made as miserable as possible, but after a few days all settled down and became good friends and good shipmates.

The *Avenger* was no exception to the rule for we had a fairly mixed crew as I found afterwards when we got to sea. We had two Germans, a Russian Finn, two Norwegians and one American negro. Our crew consisted of fourteen men, not counting the carpenter and sailmaker. We had a first, second and third mate and two apprentices. So with one apprentice in each watch that gave us eight in each watch.

The *Avenger* was a full rigged ship, that is to say she had yards across the three masts.

Early next morning we were towed out of the docks on our way to Gravesend, four hands had failed to come on board during the night so we were four short in the crew.

On arrival at Gravesend we anchored for the night, during the night the negro whose name was Robinson came to me and asked me to write a letter for him as he could not write. The letter was to a girl in Limehouse and he wanted to send it ashore in the morning. I consented to write it for him. He dictated it and I wrote what he said. As a love letter it was a pearl, something after the style of a school boys first attempt at love letter writing, it concluded Your loving love, C. Robinson with a fair lot crosses for kisses. The letter was sent alright and I've no doubt the girl received it, anyway she would have no need to doubt the faith of her sweetheart after reading it.

Early next morning we got ready to make another start, the four missing hands had not turned up and could not be found. As they had plenty of time to come to Gravesend and

join the ship, it looked very much like they had skipped with their advance money, which was quite common, of course they lost their discharges, but that didn't worry that sort. Most likely they were not their own as such things can be got easy enough. Some seamen sell their papers when hard up. There are plenty of old shops (pawn as well) that buy them, and sell to others who have lost their own papers. Of course they have to assume the name of the person on the discharges. Only one seaman could be found willing to sign on at Gravesend so we put to sea with three hands short, not supposed to of course, but it was often done. Although there are Board of Trade Officers to see that ships go to sea fully manned they often do go very short handed. Owners don't worry much as it means less pay, but it means more work for the crew.

We towed down the river and anchored in the downs for the night waiting for a good off shore wind, there were six other ships there waiting same as we were. One a barque named the *Asterion* bound for New Zealand was lying close to us. I knew that little barque very well. We remained there all that night and in the morning a breeze came along but not the one we wanted however up came the anchor and we set sail, several of the other ships did likewise. So we tacked over to the French coast and back to the English coast on the other tack making long legs of each tack and slowly but surely getting down the Channel. This tacking took us five days getting into the chops of the Channel, a very tiresome job it was but we gradually got clear of it. The watches had been picked while we were being towed down the river. I was in the port mates watch again, so I didn't have to shift my chest



and gear out of the port Fok'sl. Moir my mate was in the starboard watch and of course had to live in the starboard Fok'sl.

After our five days creeping down the Channel and were just clear of the chops of it. About nine o'clock at night and our watch below, one of the watch on deck came rushing into the Fok'sl calling us out on deck for our lives, as a steamer was about to run us down. It didn't take us long to slip out of our bunks and out on deck, every sailor knows what being run down means. Some ran out without dressing, others just pulled on their pants or anything handy. I put on a pair of pants and rushed out. All this only took a few seconds, we didn't risk wasting time, when we got on deck the watch was shouting at the top of their voices. The bell was being rung hard trying to draw the steamers attention to what they were doing.

The night was very dark. I could see the three lights of the steamer right ahead bearing down on us. We were under full sail and going through the water at a good rate. It was the other ships duty to keep clear of us but she seemed to be coming right at us. What sort of a lookout they were keeping was hard to say. Most of the crew were on the Fok'sl head ready to jump onto the steamer if they could, soon as we struck. All of us had our boots off as we stood there and waited it seemed like nothing could save us, all this was taking place much quicker than I can write about it.

Why our lookout hadn't reported the steamer before he did I don't know. It was very dark but he should have seen her side and steaming lights. The lookout on board the other ship was just as bad for he couldn't have reported us. At the

same time the watch officer on the bridge ought to have seen our side lights. Our lookout said afterwards he didn't see the steamer until she was almost on us. Maybe her lights had gone out and were fixed again and then noticed by our lookout but it wasn't likely all her three lights would go out at the same time they were oil lamps at that time not electricity, as they are now.

The steamer should have given way to us, we were sailing so had the road. They must have been deaf not to hear the row we were making. Just as every one of us was prepared to jump there was shouting on board the steamer her helm was put hard over just in time to clear us and as we rushed past her quarter our foreyard carried away his mizzen rigging. We could hear his rigging go as we sailed past. The only damage we got was one lee brace carried away. We had a very narrow escape, and I felt thankful, had we struck I suppose we would have gone down in two minutes. A good breeze was blowing and we were travelling fast under all the sail we could put on her. We never knew what steamer it was, and of course they wouldnt know what ship we were, and I suppose both skippers were glad they didnt. They couldn't report each other, although the fault was the steamers. All's well that ends well.

As the ships missed each other we all stood silent I think we were knocked speechless by our wonderful escape. As soon as we had gone below again it was then that tongues began to wag. Some started to growl about being turned out on deck for nothing as they said, its always the way. Some always growl no matter what happens, that nothing they growled about might well have meant all our lives, those

same growlers were shaking with fright a few minutes before if truth was known.

We turned out to keep the middle watch at 8 bells, and the rest of the night passed off without us touching a sail or line. Now that it was daylight a good look over our gear was made to see if any other damage was done as well as the brace when the two ships brushed each other, but no other damage was found. The brace which had been repaired last night in haste was now repaired properly and all was shipshape again. Early in the forenoon watch the weather became squally but no sail was taken in so the day passed being squally off and on all the time. During the evening in the last dog watch it started to blow very strong, so we had to shorten sail, for the next week we had this kind of weather at times blowing a stiff gale then it would ease down a little but all the while the wind was blowing strong so the ship was kept under reduced sail. She wasn't a bad ship kept pretty dry in spite of big seas running.

The crew had settled down and all were friendly so far, no rows had happened along to spoil our life in the Fok'sl. My watch, the port one, were quite ok. We got along very well together some I really liked very much one who was from Norway, a young chap, was the fun maker of our watch, I got to like him very much, we always sat on our chests together at meal time and yarned. I little knew the time was soon to come when we would lose him and see him no more.

We soon found that the *Avenger* was indeed a hungry ship, several times the crew had gone aft to complain to the skipper about the food which was bad or not sufficient, but every time we went aft we got very little satisfaction from the skipper. He said we got what we had signed for and it was

quite alright. As we got no better food or any consideration we at last ceased to trouble the skipper but made the best of it like most crews do.

We understood that the skipper had shares in the ship, if that was so or not, I can't say, but I do know he was very saving, even all the rope ends and shakings were saved and stored away by him. Nothing in that line was ever thrown overboard if he could prevent it, I suppose he had a buyer for it somewhere.

If the skipper was a bit close, he wasn't too bad other ways, he never seemed to be in a temper and make things miserable for all hands like some skippers. He often used to chat to me when I had a trick at the wheel. He was very well known in Melbourne and had many friends there. He never seemed tired of talking about Melbourne and the many friends he had all around, others said he never used to talk much to them when at the wheel.

As the days passed and the food didn't improve the crew grew a bit discontented. All the ships work was done in such a manner that showed they were not very keen on it. They went about it in a half hearted manner whatever had to be done. The best food we had was soup and bouilli which we got once a week, that was on Sundays. I always enjoyed that and I think all the rest did too. Soup and bouilli is tinned meat and vegetables made into soup. Taking it all together we couldn't be considered to be a happy ship at all.

So time went on day after day being much the same, we had our spell of good weather and our spell of bad, plenty of work at times up aloft stowing sail or reefing down. We had been at sea just six weeks when something happened that was

the forerunner of bad luck for the rest of the voyage. It brought a sorrow upon me that has never left me since for I lost my chum Moir because of the mistake of someone else.

It was the last dog watch, that is from 6 to 8<sup>pm</sup>, it was my trick at the wheel. The weather had eased down and the watch on deck had just finished hoisting the main topgallant yard. The sail had been taken in and stowed during the afternoon. Now we were making sail again. I had been listening to the chanty they were singing while they were hoisting the yard. I was watching its effect on the skipper as he walked up and down the poop deck as the song was a sling off at him and the hungry ship although this chanty was quite a common one and often used the crew always put more into it if the ship did happen to be, like ours, a hungry one.

So far as I could judge it had no more effect on the skipper than water would on a duck's back.

The first two verses were as follows:

*A hungry ship, and a hungry crew,  
leave her Johnny, leave her.  
Nothing to eat and plenty to do,  
So its time for us to leave her.*

*The other day on the fok'sl head,  
leave her Johnny, leave her.  
Someone eat the deep sea lead,  
So its time for us to leave her.*

and so it goes on with many verses each one bringing in something about someone on board generally the skipper and the mates. One man sings the first line, then all the rest join in with leave her Johnny, leave her. The leader singing the first and third lines then all the others joining in, as they

all sing they pull on the halyards keeping time with the song.

As soon as the sail had been sheeted home and the gear coiled down, while the watch were clearing up the deck one of the hands came aft for something and noticed a small brown paper parcel lying on the starboard side of the wheel box. I had never noticed it there all the while I had been at the wheel. The man picked it up and showed it to me, then I noticed written on it in red ink, Poison for Rats. I said you had better give it to the third mate who was then standing at the break of the poop. The mate told him to leave it on the wheel box and he would pick it up when he was going below. Why he didn't put it in his pocket I could never understand, had he done so a terrible accident would not have occurred.

I found afterwards that as the ship was overrun with rats the skipper had asked the second mate to prepare some poison for them, he had got some strychnine and mixed it with oatmeal making a sort of biscuit, these were given to the skipper by him that afternoon. The skipper had put them on the wheel box and forgot all about them when he went below, so that's how they found while I was at the wheel. When I was relieved at the wheel I thought no more about the cakes and went below. It was then 8 bells and the other watch came on deck at 4 bells, ten o'clock the wheel was again relieved. This time by the Russian Finn. He hadn't been there very long before he saw the cakes on the wheel box which the third mate, like the skipper, had forgotten to take below.

The Finn opened the paper, not noticing the writing on it thinking they were just ordinary biscuits, he broke one in half and eat it. My chum Moir coming aft near the wheel just then for something was given the other bit of cake by the Finn. It

was too dark for them to notice the writing on the paper so they didn't know they had eaten a poisoned cake. Not long after Moir had eaten the cake, he felt very ill, and was soon lying on the main deck rolling about in great pain. While this was taking place, I was in my bunk asleep. Moir was asked if he had taken anything but said nothing, perhaps he didn't want them to know he had eaten what he thought was some cake the skipper had left while eating it on the poop.

The only ones who knew about the poisoned cake were asleep, except the second mate who had charge of the watch then on deck, and he never thought of the rat mixture, thinking that the skipper had taken it below long before. The Finn at the wheel knew nothing about Moir's illness until about an hour afterwards, when he at once told what Moir had eaten. The second mate finding it was the rat poison at once called the skipper, who was in a great state when he found what was the matter. He gave Moir something to make him vomit, after that Moir seemed to be a little better and was put in his bunk. The skipper said he thought Moir was now out of danger and would get along all right. The Finn now became ill and although he was not as ill as Moir he was sent to his bunk after he had been attended to by the skipper.

So now two of the starboard watch were laid up. For two days Moir remained in his bunk without getting any better, had we a doctor on board things might have been far different.

The skipper did his best maybe but what did he know about such a case. After being in his bunk for the two days Moir got up and wandered about the deck, he appeared like someone half asleep having nothing to say to anyone. He

should have been taken aft and looked after, as when his watch mates were out on deck, Moir was there on his own and could do just what he liked. He had a great thirst and kept drinking plenty of water which was doing him more harm than good. I being in the other watch couldn't look after him much.

There was a large spare cabin aft at the break of the poop which was supposed to be used as a sick bay in case of any illness, but it was not fitted out in anyway being just bare not a thing in it. At night Moir would go and lay about the deck in the cold. We could not make him stay in his bunk in the Fok'sl. One day someone told the skipper that Moir wasn't so bad as he pretended to be, and was only shamming, that he was always bad when any of the Officers were near, but as soon as they had gone he would jump about the deck. But poor Moir was quite unconscious of what he did most of the time, he must have been in great pain at times. The shame of it all was that the skipper seemed to really believe that Moir was not as bad as he made out to be. He refused to give Moir anything else to ease his sufferings nor would he have him taken aft into the sick bay where he could be looked after, although the crew wanted him to do so.

This was on one of the finest clippers out of London. It is bad enough to be ill on shore, but there you can get the best of attention, its far different and worse to be ill on board a ship at sea where there is no doctor and no one knows just what to do about it, for a sailor to be sick is not very pleasant at any time. If he don't seem to be very bad, some of his shipmates are sure to think he is only shamming and loafing on them, when he ought to be on deck helping them.



The weather still held good, had a sudden squall now and then but only once since Moir's illness did we furl the Royals.

The Finn was still very sick in his bunk, I wondered if the skipper thought he too was only putting it on. The poor old skipper has been dead now this many a year and its not for me to hold him to blame maybe he was misled and thought he was doing the right thing.

The days went on until Moir had been ill six days left to wander about just as he pleased, he seemed very dull and didn't take much notice of anything or anybody even I myself could do nothing to make him stay in his bed. No one was told off to look after him, sometimes he seemed to be almost blind and felt his way about. Always he seemed unconscious of what he did or what was taking place around him. He did not take any interest at all in anything, yet some thought he was shamming. He seldom spoke and when he did he spoke like a drunken man or like someone half awake.

Most of the crew knew Moir was very ill, not shamming at all but what could they do. The skipper would not have him aft, but any sane man could see that Moir was very ill indeed. He took no notice whatever of me, didn't appear to know me at all, which hurt me more than I can say.

The way he suffered and was neglected, and the treatment that at last brought his sufferings to a close. The manner I saw him die without a word was a very great sorrow to me. Maybe that sorrow is with me still. It was because of me he was on that ship, had he never met me that day near the docks we would never have chummed up, and all this would never have happened, but as I said before none of us can see ahead.

One morning it was Sunday, it was always on a Sunday that

any bad luck struck us, as you will find later on. This Sunday morning, it was just after 6 bells (3<sup>am</sup>) in the middle watch, I went into the topgallant Fok'sl to watch Moir. For the last two days we watched him as we were afraid he would wander up on the Fok'sl head and get overboard, he had been lying in the topgallant Fok'sl for some hours right in the eyes of the ship, on some old canvas. It was the sixth day of his illness. I found him on the canvas covered over with an old blanket as he appeared to be asleep I sat down near him feeling very miserable, I sat there until nearly four o'clock and as my watch would be going below in a few minutes, I got up to remove the lamp it being now daylight. As I bent over him I saw that he was awake. I spoke a few words to him and asked if he wanted me to leave the lamp. No he replied I don't want it, he seemed to me to be more sensible than usual, as I removed the light, he spoke again in rather a bitter tone I thought, have you got nothing else to do but watch me. He must have known I was there all the while watching him, I felt a bit hurt, but said nothing. I covered him up in his blanket and went out on deck feeling pretty miserable. I felt so miserable when I went into our Fok'sl that I couldn't turn in, so went on deck again and sat down near the break of the Fok'sl thinking about Moir, and his words to me they were the last words he was known to speak.

I had not been sitting there long when the skipper came forward to see how Moir was getting on, perhaps he had been told that Moir seemed different. He had Moir brought out on deck and gave orders for him to be washed. Moir was too weak to stand by himself, so the skipper tried to get him to walk. Come my man! You know you will die if you go on like

this! Come now! try and walk, but Moir could not walk a step, although he seemed to understand what was said to him. I could stand no more seeing poor Moir like that seemed to unnerve me so much that I went and lay in my bunk just as I was far too miserable to sleep.

When the skipper saw that Moir couldn't walk, he had him carried aft to the break of the poop, and ordered him to be stripped so he could be washed. So some of the watch stripped him naked and as he lay there on the deck some of the crew were ordered to throw some buckets of water over him to freshen him up, this was done, fancy throwing water over an almost dead man, for I fully believe Moir was dying when they first brought him out on deck. So while they were throwing the water over him Moir became unconscious. One of the watch ran into the Fok'sl where I was lying on my bunk and told what had taken place and that Moir was dying. I looked at him in a dazed sort of way hardly grasping what he meant, for somehow up to that time I never thought Moir would die. Its true he said, he can't live many more minutes, go on deck and see for yourself. I jumped out of the bunk and ran on deck, some of the others followed me.

I found Moir laying on the deck some of the watch were rubbing him trying to bring back the life that was fast ebbing away, while the skipper was trying to force a little brandy between his fast closed lips, his face was terribly white with an awful look of agony the like of which I never want to see again. The lower part of his body down to his feet was as yellow as you could paint it, while small red spots covered his body. I could do nothing but stand there and gape too affected to speak or move.

Now, said the skipper, speaking to those around him, if any one of you know of anything that would be to this man's benefit, I will gladly do it. I have done all in my power to save him, but I think it is hopeless. Yes, its too late now Captain, said one of the men, you should have thought of that before, he wasn't looked after from the first. I did all I could for him replied the skipper. I offered to take him aft into the Hospital but he refused to go. You should have made him go, said one of the crew.

That was the first time I heard that the Captain had asked Moir to go into the Sick Bay. All I know is that when we asked him to take Moir aft, the skipper refused, had he been taken aft perhaps he would have recovered with care, but no one on the ship from the skipper down knew what to do in such an illness. Poor Moir gradually sank and died shortly after I ran on deck.

The crew were in a great state over Moir's death and it was agreed that a row would be made about it when the ship got into port, but as certain things happened later on, there was no need for that as you will see and nothing was said about it when at last, we reached port.

Moir's body was placed in the spare cabin aft (that was supposed to be used as a Sick Bay) a blanket covered him. That night was a night of terror for me, each watch someone had to see that the rats kept away from the body. During our watch the middle one from 12 to 4<sup>am</sup>, I was told off to watch beside the body and keep the rats away. I was given a lantern and left to my job, but nothing could get me to go in and sit inside that cabin. So I sat down outside the door in the alley way and when I heard the rats squeaking inside, I would fling

the door wide open and rush in waving the lantern, looking anywhere but where poor Moir was lying. There would be a rush of escaping rats, I would then rush out again shutting the door behind me and trembling like a leaf with fright, for that's the only name I can call it. As I had to rush in and out every few minutes you can guess the state of terror I was in.

At last four o'clock came and my watch below and I was glad to get away and into the Fok'sl. I shall never forget that middle watch even weeks after, that cabin was a place of dread and terror for me.

It was a Sunday when Moir died and it was decided to bury him next morning at 8 bells, eight o'clock, the body was sewn up in a piece of sail cloth, with iron at his feet, and placed on a plank on the quarter deck, the face was left uncovered until the last minute so we could all have a last look at him. As soon as eight bells were struck we all went aft. The ship had been hove to a few minutes before. When we were all gathered aft around the body the skipper asked us if we were all satisfied that Moir was dead, and if any man thought there might still be life left, he would delay the burial another 24 hours, each of us then in turn passed round and looked at Moir for the last time, and when all had been round we said we were satisfied he was dead. The sailmaker then sewed the canvas over the face. The bell tolled and the skipper read the service, but so great was his emotion, he could hardly get through it, the tears were running down his cheeks all the time. He seemed to feel Moir's death very keenly, and as he stood there with his white hair blowing in the breeze, I felt very sorry for him and forgave him if he had been hard with Moir.

The tears were in other eyes as well as the skippers for

most of the crew had wet cheeks. The plank was raised with one end over the rail, and when the skipper said the words, we therefore commit his body to the Deep until the sea shall give up its dead. The plank was tilted and what was left of Moir plunged into the waves. I ran to the side and looked down and saw the white track the body made as it disappeared beneath the surface.

As soon as the burial was over the yards were trimmed and we continued on our course. A burial at sea seems to cast a gloom all over the ship for days, and on everybody on board. When I went below and lay in my bunk I was very miserable indeed and I'm not ashamed to say the tears were in my eyes all the time I lay there thinking about my chum Moir.

Next day we struck bad weather and had to shorten sail again. In the afternoon it fined up a bit so we set all sail again, but not for long as before the dog watches, we had to shorten down again, this time we took in the Royals and topgallant sails. In the first watch all hands were reefing the three upper topsails, so hard was it blowing.

What is it like up on a topsail yard reefing, in a gale of wind? Its bad enough believe me in an ordinary wind but its far worse if its raining at the same time, for then the sail is wet and stiff and hard to handle. You get a fleet of sail upon the yard under your chest and lay on that while you reach over for another fleet of sail, then the gale takes the lot away from you with a roar, sometimes tearing your finger nails and making them bleed, which you dont seem to notice at the time. You are far too busy fighting the sail and watching you don't get thrown off the yard.

You are standing on the footrope<sup>21</sup> and as you heave up the sail your legs and the footrope sway outwards, let your feet slip off that rope, and you are gone overboard, or else smashed up on the deck below. Its hard work for not only are you fighting the struggling sail, but you are fighting for your own safety as well. And there are people who write songs about the jolly sailors up aloft etc. Those writers maybe have never been on a topsail yard in a gale, not even on a yard in harbour. If they had been they would know its not so jolly at all and the men fighting a sail are not very much amused while doing it.

If you happen to be the one who is passing the earing<sup>22</sup> you are sitting straggled legged on the extreme end of the yardarm with your chest jammed against the lift, and your feet locked around the short end of the footrope, while you put all the power you can into your pull on the earing as the rest stretch the reef band along the yard. Suppose the earing parted and you were not lucky enough to grip the lift, then its good bye, for you will never see your home again, but I've never known an earing to part. Seaman take care that its in good order, but parting is always possible just the same, there is always the risk, and men have been lost that way.

Thats what its like up aloft reefing down in a gale! Then again sometimes when you are clewing up a sail in a blow, perhaps the clewline parts, and the sail takes charge, flapping

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21 Each yard on a square or gaff rigged sailing ship is equipped with a footrope for sailors to stand on while setting or stowing the sails. A yard is a spar on a mast from which sails are set.

22 In sailing, an earing is a small line used to fasten the corner of a sail to a spar or yard. It is also called head earing. The two uppermost parts of the earing are put over the ends of the yardarms, and so the sail is made fast to the yard.

about like a mad thing, with reports like guns going off, and up aloft you go to stow that sail. The great danger is getting knocked off the yard by being hit with the iron clew. Of course, if it hit you the odds are you would be killed at once for as a rule if a man gets hit with a loose clew its always on the head he gets it, this risk applies to all sails that are flapping free.

So reefing sail, or stowing in a blow is not childs play or great fun, and no one is jolly while doing it, in spite of what people write and sing about, “the jolly sailor up aloft”. It is strange that more accidents don’t happen up aloft, than do. A man up aloft has to know what to do, and how to do the job safe not only for himself but for his shipmates as well, but at times accidents do happen in spite of all the care and sometimes no one can tell how, or why, they did happen.

The Finn was still in his bunk, very ill he didn’t seem to be getting any better at all, he had got very thin just wasted away to skin and bone, but no one thought he was shamming like they thought poor Moir was. The Finn looked far too ill for that. When Moir joined the ship, he had no sea chest, or even a bag. The few things he brought with him were in a bundle, so I guess he was pretty hard up, although he never hinted to me that he was, so I told him he could use my sea chest and Moir gladly did so although we were not in the same Fok’sl. So I decided to take what few odds and ends Moir had in my chest, aft to the skipper. I felt glad when I had done so for Moir’s gear seemed to make me miserable every time I went to my chest and saw them. So I felt easier after I had given them to the skipper. I suppose they would be sent to his home when the ship got back to London.



The next day the weather was a bit finer, but we were still under reduced sail. The skipper didn't like the looks of the weather I suppose, so for the time being no more sail was made. But during the night the weather had eased so much, that more sail was put on the ship, and by next morning a nice breeze was blowing with no signs of bad weather, soon the ship was under all sail again.

Often during the dog watches, and it was my trick at the wheel the skipper would come aft and sit at the side of the wheel box, where there was a seat, and have a yarn with me. Of course this was only in fair weather, for at sea in bad weather no skipper would talk to the man at the wheel, unless to give an order. In bad weather the man at the wheel has no time to talk, all his attention is on his job of keeping the ship on her course.

One evening about a week after Moir's death while I was at the wheel and the skipper as usual sitting by the wheel box, I was steering full and by. The kind of steering I liked, every little while I could see the skipper cock his eye up at the weather leach of the main topgallant sail to see if it shook. I don't think he ever saw that weather leach shake at any time when I was steering full and by. That is keeping the sails full and steering by the wind as close as possible without letting a sail shake.

This evening the skipper started to talk about Moir, and asked me about his people and where he lived etc. I told him all I knew about him, that his mother was a widow and lived in Hammersmith. He seemed rather disappointed that I couldn't tell him more about Moir than I was able to tell him, he seemed anxious to find out about Moir's people.

Before he went below he told me he wasn't feeling very well and thought he was in for a bad time. I didn't think much about it at the time, but the poor old skipper never sat by the wheel box again, or had a talk with me, that was to be out last little talk. The weather was getting warmer now and finer. We didn't have so much work aloft taking in sail and setting it again.

A few days after my little chat with the skipper he took ill and was so very ill that he was put into a canvas cot on the poop, it being far too hot for him below. So each day he was carried up there but very soon he got so ill that this couldn't be done, so he remained up on deck day and night. The mate attended to him and did what he could, but no one knew for certain what was the nature of his illness. All that we knew was that it was terrible and there was no doubt that he was past medical skill even if we had it on board.

There was nothing that we could do to ease his agony. He was getting worse as time went on. It was decided to alter the ships course for the West Indies in the hope of getting the sick man into Hospital, two days after we had altered the course a sail was sighted on the port beam. A signal was hoisted that we wished to speak her, the signal was answered and both ships altered course to near each other.

The ship proved to be the barque '*Asterion*' bound for Nelson New Zealand, she was anchored in the Downs near us before we left England. When both ships were hove to we lowered a boat and sent it over to the *Asterion* for her skipper to come on board. When he arrived and saw our skipper and got details of his illness from the mate, said there was nothing he could do. I heard him tell the mate, as he went over the

side, that he didn't think our skipper could live more than a few days. However the mate still hoped he would be able to get him landed and into Hospital. As soon as our boat returned and we got it inboard again, the yards were trimmed and our colours dipped and both ships continued on their course.

The weather continued fine and the next day another ship hove in sight, but she had no doctor on board and I suppose the mate thought it useless and a waste of time to ask her skipper to come on board, anyway no boat was sent over. Two days after this we stopped another ship and this time her skipper boarded us, but of course when he saw our skipper, only shook his head, so we still sailed on for the West Indies, hoping to come across some ship that had a doctor on board I think the mate would have felt happier if he could only have a doctor to see the skipper. He was greatly worried about it. The sufferings of the skipper was terrible his moans were pitiful to hear. One day he called the watch to him and asked them to throw him overboard to end his misery. I'm still the Captain of this ship he said, and I order you to do it, of course such a thing could not be done.

Now that we wanted to hurry, the breeze became very light instead of a good stiff breeze to send the ship along fast. Everyone on board seemed to have the blues, no one seemed to have heart for anything, there seemed to be a kind of voodoo on the ship, and our run of ill luck was not over, for we were to have more of it before long, but we didn't know that!

This illness of the skipper was a terrible thing, we couldn't understand how anyone could possibly live under such awful

conditions, as the mate attended to him, parts of his body would come away, just rotted away, there didn't appear to be any of his inside left. Yet he lived like that for three weeks. It was awful to see, whatever the trouble was it was terrible and very quick. Three weeks before, he seemed to be alright and looked well, although he had told me he didn't feel well. One evening as we were gently turning him to ease his agony, he said, Oh my lads! I'm afraid I shall have to leave you all. I never want to see anyone suffer like that poor old man did, his agony was awful. Maybe the trouble was that awful complaint cancer.

The next Sunday the skipper died and his sufferings were ended. It was a great relief to all of us, no longer did we hear the moans of the suffering man. We all knew two weeks before this, he had reached a stage when it was impossible for him to recover, we all knew that, we didn't need a medical man to tell us, so when he passed I think everyone on board was thankful.

Just as the skipper died a squall struck the ship and the halyards had to be let go by the run no damage was done, although it was sudden and severe. The watch had a busy time stowing Royals and topgallant sails.

The next morning, Monday, just three weeks since we buried poor Moir, the ship was hove to, at 8 bells and we all went aft, to attend the burial of the skipper. It was a wet squally morning, when we had all gathered the mate commenced to read the service.

The body was resting on the plank, one end of which being on the rail, we could see another squall coming down on us, and the mate was trying to get the burial over before it

reached us.

A large ship was about two miles off and they seeing us hove to with our flag half way up to the gaff knew a burial was taking place, so they hoisted their flag half mast as well out of respect. We made no signals to each other so I don't know what ship she was and where bound.

The service was over and the plank was tilted to allow the body to slide into the water but it never moved, even when the plank was tilted almost up and down, still the body wouldn't slide off so one of the hands reached over the ships side and shoved it. Then a strange thing happened, instead of the body sliding off the plank feet first, it turned completely over until it was standing upright, then turned over and plunged in the sea head first. The weight at the feet must have acted as pivot.

Just as the body disappeared the squall that had been coming up struck us. The crew noted the fact that the skipper had died in a squall and was buried in one. This and the strange thing that had happened with the body started more talk and made things more blue than before on board this unlucky ship. As soon as the burial was over and the squall passed on, the ship was put on her course again.

There was plenty of talk about the strange thing that had happened at the burial, some saying that it meant more ill luck and sure enough we got it.

Now that the mate was in charge of the ship, Acting Captain, he shifted into the skipper's cabin. The second mate acted as first and the sailmaker was made second mate. The third working mate was reckoned useless to take charge of a watch so he remained as he was before, living aft, but working

with the watch on deck. It wasn't very long before we struck more trouble, for now that the mate was skipper, he found his way to the whiskey and was very often half seas over, and some days didn't come on deck at all. The new mate was not a navigator so for days no sight was taken and we didn't know just where we were only that we were at sea. For over a week this went on. The skipper (as I must call the mate now) never being sober, the second mate (now first) carrying on the real work of the ship.

One afternoon it started to blow very hard so we clewed up the three topgallant sails and stowed them. The Royals had been taken in during the forenoon watch. The ship was made snug and although it was blowing pretty hard and a big sea running, we shipped very little water, before the last dog watch was over, it started to blow a gale. The skipper as usual down below drunk. The gale increased and the mate decided to take in the fore and mizzen upper topsails, so the halyards were let go, and up we went both watches to stow them.

So having made all snug for the time being we stood by for the next order. About half an hour after this the gale blew harder than ever. The skipper had managed to come on deck, no one saw him until his order to set the main topgallant sail came above the howling of the gale, he was drunk but he could give that order alright. To attempt to set the sail in such a gale would be utter madness, so no one moved. Don't you hear yelled the skipper, get a move on, some of you! Don't move said one of the crew he's mad drunk. Again, the order came, then one of the crew went to the weather rigging and started to go aloft, we yelled to him to come back, but he didn't seem to hear us, so we let him go.

He reached the yard and cast the gaskets off, then the sail began to flap about in the gale making a noise like guns going off. We ran to the sheets and began to sheet the sail home but before the clews were half way out to the lower yard the sail was blown to ribbons, we clewed up what remained of the sail, then the skipper was satisfied or had become sobered up a bit. He said that will do the watch, so we, that is port watch went below and we were not sorry. While this took place the mate said nothing just allowed the skipper to carry on. Maybe it was just as well he did, it saved a row no doubt with the skipper in the state he was. The starboard watch remained on deck and we wished them joy. The hand who had gone aloft to loose the topgallant sail had all his work to save himself from being thrown off the yard when the flapping sail took charge. Some of the crew reckoned the mate should have the skipper put below and take charge of the ship himself, but as he was no navigator that would not have made matters much better.

The skipper remained on deck and made things a bit lively for the starboard watch, a dispute arose between the skipper and one of the watch not long after we had gone below. It was over some order the skipper gave and the hand didn't consider it right to carry out. He told him he was drunk and not fit to be in charge of the ship, and he intended to report the matter when we reached port. The skipper then ordered that the man be put in irons, and this was done, had it happened to be our watch on deck, I don't think any of the watch would have carried out his order. Anyway the man was locked up aft and the skipper told him he would remain there until we reached port. What a happy ship we were! The next

two or three days were lively ones for all of us, there was talk of putting the skipper below and locking him up as he was getting worse and worse and if he kept on the way he was going would soon be in the D.T.'s and sure enough we soon found that he was in the horrors.

Another gale coming on while the skipper was like that made things worse for us. At last we had to put a stop to it. The mate had him kept below in his cabin and watched. He couldn't get to the whiskey when he liked, the mate saw to that. So the skipper remained for a week gradually getting better and more sober and came to his senses but was very weak and ill for some time afterwards. As soon as the skipper came round he wanted to know what the man was doing in irons, and was very much surprised when the mate told him what had taken place. He at once ordered the man to be set free. The released man vowing he would make things hot for the skipper when the ship arrived in port and he reported the affair. During the gale and the time the skipper had been kept in his cabin the ship had got right out of her proper course. The mate not knowing just where the ship was, so were at sea in two meanings of the term.

So until the skipper was able to take the sun we wouldn't know how far off our course we were. After the skipper got better he called all hands aft, and told us he was very sorry for what had taken place. He said he must have been mad to go on the drink like he did and begged us to forgive him for being so foolish and not to talk about it when we arrived in port, he begged us to forget all about it. In future nothing like that would occur again. I've no doubt he wanted to keep charge of the ship and take her back to London and perhaps



then remain skipper of her. If any hint of his conduct got known that would have been the end of his remaining in the ship. He finished his little talk with us by telling us if we forgot all about what had happened we would never regret it. Of course the skipper's talk started tongues wagging in the Fok'sl. Some of the hands said it was best to forget all about it as making a fuss would not do any good to themselves or anyone else, besides the skipper had his lesson and it would do him good. To try and spoil his chance of becoming Captain of the ship would not be playing the game and who knows that someday some of us might be shipmates with him again. This was good advice, but there were others of the crew who couldn't see eye to eye with this mans views and reckoned the matter should be reported on arrival, and so the talk went on some wanting to report the affair, others wanting to leave it well alone.

Its always the way in a Fok'sl, they will talk and talk of what they will do and say when the ship arrives in port. It may be on account of bad food, or perhaps the ship being under manned the growl will continue all the time. And when they do arrive in port they say nothing all about what they were so sure they would say. And so it happened with us, not a word was said about the skipper's doings when we arrived, for which I've no doubt the skipper was very thankful. I might mention here, that he did take the ship back to England as skipper, but if he remained in charge of her after that I never heard.

We were now having fair weather. The skipper kept his word and we never saw him the worse for drink again. The ship was soon put right as to her position and now we were

on our proper course once more. The fair weather didn't last very long for in a day or two once more we were busy taking in sail. So we had bad weather off and on for some days. No sooner would it ease down and we set more sail, then it would blow hard again and we would have to take it in.

The Finn was still very ill and showed no signs of getting better he was still laid up in his bunk and was very thin and weak. Once or twice he said he felt better and tried to do a little work such as making sennet but that didn't last long, for soon he was just as bad as ever and just stayed in his bunk.

The weather didn't improve and we were getting tired of stowing sail then setting it again, then reefing, we were on the go pretty well all the while the watch was on deck, and very often it was both watches to stow or reef. To make matters worse members of the crew were getting sick one by one and had to lay up for a day or two. The only three of the crew that had not been laid up were myself and two others, and we expected our turn would come any day. No one seemed to know what this sickness was. It came on very suddenly, they got weak and could hardly walk and could eat nothing, but could drink plenty of water, after a day or two they were quite well again. The skipper gave them some medicine what it was none of us knew, it may have done them good, we couldn't say, if it did or not. Maybe this sickness was brought about by the bad salt horse and pork we were eating, anyway thats what we blamed for it, but I and the other two before mentioned never got sick at all. After a while the sickness disappeared and the crew were not troubled any more.

One day as we were having a little spell of fine weather the skipper took it into his head to have a cleaning out of the

spare junk locker, all the old gear the late skipper had stowed away. When all this stuff was passed out on deck, it was a queer lot of rubbish stuff that no one else would save, it would have been dumped over the side in other ships. There were old lanyards, old blocks and sheaves<sup>23</sup> by the dozens, old ratlines which had been stripped from the rigging when rattling down, old rope ends and shakings. In fact hundreds of odds and ends too numerous to mention, and which no other ship would give storage room to. The late skipper must have been saving this stuff for years, there was so much of it. Out of all this stuff, we saved the lanyards as they contained good yarns, all the rest went overboard.

Next day the mate had the hearts of the lanyards made into spun yarn and foxes. The skipper also cleared a lot of old gear of the late skippers out, such as old coats, sea boots sou-westers etc. I managed to get an old pair of rubber sea boots which I gave to Robinson the coloured man, but when he discovered they had been the late skipper's he took them off and flung them out on deck saying he wouldn't wear the boots of a dead man. He believed the skippers ghost would haunt him, if he wore them. I also had a pair of slippers that had been the skippers, and whenever I put them on Robinson would give me an awful look, he couldn't bear to have them near him. I was always expecting to find them missing some day. I thought Robinson would throw them overboard some time when I wasn't about, but I suppose why he didn't do so was because he was too frightened to handle them. So I still wore them, much to his discomfort and the amusement of

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23 A sheave block is a common lifting mechanism used for rigging. It is a type of pulley block that reduces the amount of force required to lift an abnormally heavy object.

the rest of the watch.

This man Robinson was a queer chap in many ways, he was a good seaman and a good shipmate, never growled or looked for trouble, but he was a firm believer in ghosts. He was terribly afraid of the dark, for its then that ghosts are about. He was always scared if he had the lookout on the Fok'sl and never liked to be there alone. He always liked, if possible, to get one of the watch up there to talk to. It was alright if he had the lookout during a dog watch as there was generally someone always about, but the middle or morning watch was a different matter, it was very lonely there then. The only time any of the watch would go up there was when some job had to be done to some of the head sails such as when some had to be taken in then a hand would come up to pull on the down haul and stow the sail, Robinson then would be delighted.

He firmly believed that all around us were ghosts, belonging to the unseen world. There was plenty of things that we can't see but they are there just the same, we can't see the wind, but we feel it alright, too much of it sometimes he would say. He couldn't write and could hardly read, but he had an answer to all the questions any of us put to him re ghosts. He didn't seem to fear them up aloft on the yards stowing sail on a dark night. He reckoned they were seldom up as high as that, ghosts were always near the ground or surface of things. Maybe his ideas were born in him as most black people fear ghosts. No joke of any kind was played on Robinson by any of the crew, I think they were feeling too blue themselves to play at ghosts.

It was strange that every Sunday for three weeks we had a

stiff blow, it was so sure to happen that we looked for it and would have been disappointed had it failed us.

It was just three weeks after the skipper died and Sunday again with the usual bad weather. It was blowing hard it was our watch on deck that afternoon and soon we would be out to relieve the other watch, we were having our dinner before we went on deck. Peter Winyam was sitting on his sea chest next to me, we were yarning and enjoying our soup and bouilli, our tin plates balanced on our knees.

Suddenly there was a howl as the wind increased a few rapid orders the topsails halyards were let go, then the cry of all hands, both watches on deck. Peter placed his plate of soup in a safe place, saying to me as he did so, I'll eat that when I come back, you bet, but poor Peter never came back.

We all rushed out on deck some of the starboard watch were already going aloft. The three topsails had to be stowed which meant that every man was needed, the only seaman on deck was the man at the wheel. Peter and others went up to furl the fore top sail, I with others went up to the mizzen the rest went up to the main. It was blowing very hard we had to pull ourselves up the rigging going aloft so strong was the wind, it blew us flat onto the ratlines. Out on the yards we went. I went out on the port yardarm, the carpenter being next to me, for at a time like this even the carpenter had to go aloft and do his bit. It was hard work fighting that flapping sail but at last we had it stowed. I was just passing the last turn of a gasket when we heard a shout above the howling of the gale.

We didn't know what the shout was then but on looking down we saw the second mate rush along the poop and throw

a life buoy right on top of a man floating past, we knew then that what we heard must have been man overboard.

As I looked down, the man passed under where I was on the yard. All around him the water was red with blood his head and arms and feet were under water, his back seemed to be bent upwards. As I turned and looked astern, I saw two or three albatross's flying around the spot where the man was.



Our work aloft was finished so we were soon down on deck again when we found that it was Peter who had fallen from the fore upper topsail yard. When we had all got aft, the skipper said If any of you men think it is any use to get out a boat I'll gladly do it, but with this sea running it will be very risky. I think the man was dead before he reached the water, even if he was not killed, he will be drowned long before we could reach him. The crew agreed that it would be useless to get a boat out so the ship was kept on her course.

It seems hard to leave a man to his fate like that, some might call it brutal, but no one has much chance if he falls overboard at sea in a gale, his chance of being saved is small. I have no doubt that poor Peter was killed on the spot for he hit the rail when he fell which must have smashed him up. We found blood on the rail, so falling from the upper topsail yard and hitting the rail before he went into the water was certain to kill him. The blood stained water around him too told an ugly story, even had we known he was alive, before the ship could be brought up and a boat got off the skids and over the side into the water Peter would be two or three miles astern, a ship rushing through the water like we were driven on by a gale dont take long to go a few miles. If Peter wasn't killed, but only unconscious he would have been drowned in a few minutes having his head under the water like he was.

No one on the yard with Peter could say why he fell, nothing had carried away, he passed a man on the yard on his way out to help another, then suddenly he was gone, it was this man who shouted man overboard. It was strange as he fell that Peter never cried out, some thought he might have taken a fit, or had a heart attack but whatever was the cause no one will ever know.

I found out that the mate was near the main rigging and saw Peter fall into the water. He just had time to spring into the main rigging and fling a line to Peter who of course made no attempt to grasp it.

As Peter got to the mizzen rigging that was when the second mate dropped the life buoy on top of him. It was a terrible accident and another gloom was cast over the ship, our run of bad luck seemed to be always with us.

The gale still raged on and both watches were told to keep

*In memory of Peter Winyam,  
who lost his life, by falling overboard at sea*

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*He did his duty until the last,  
as every man is bound to do.  
And through the gates of Death he passed,  
Perhaps, it was better too.  
He died, as many a sailor has died,  
And found a Grave in the Ocean Deep.  
As o'er his grave his shipmates ride,  
But for him, need not weep.  
He may be in a Happier World,  
For God alone, knows best.  
Still we may, just hope and pray,  
He is Happy, and at Rest.*

*J.B.C.*

handy. When we had gone forward the Bos'un said to us, you all know that every three weeks something bad has happened on board of us, and this is not the only voyage that bad luck has followed this ship, every voyage has been the same.

I have never mentioned this to any of you before, because I didn't want any of you to think you were on board a unlucky hooker, but I'm telling you now, and take my advice look out for yourselves when aloft. You can guess when we heard this from the Bos'un we didn't feel in a very comfortable position.



The Bos'un had been to sea in the ship two or three voyages so what he said made a deep impression on the crew.

We wondered what would happen next. All hands were busy talking about what had happened before. Moir died on a Sunday and was buried on the Monday, and Sunday three weeks afterwards the skipper died and was buried on the Monday. And then just three weeks after that, still a Sunday this last and terrible accident had happened, so it was no wonder the crew were feeling rather down in the dumps about it all. There is nothing a sailor dreads more than a ship that has the name of being unlucky.

The next day after Peters loss the weather showed no improvement, it was still blowing hard with a heavy sea running. All day we tore along still under our lower topsails. The deck was pretty wet as we took water over the weather rail every little while, life lines were rigged along each side of the deck, it wasn't safe to go along without having your hand on one of them. These life lines have been the means of saving many a life at sea. If a man can only keep a fast hold when a big sea is shipped, when such a thing happens, and tons of water rush onto you there is a terrible strain on your arms as the big sea rushes over you. If you let go your hold that is if the weight of water drags you from the life line then its two to one, overboard you go. As a rule of course you can generally see the big sea coming, one you know will come on board, its your job then to dodge it, but one don't always have the luck to do so. We had to be very careful going about the deck to attend to anything that had to be done. We kept an eye on the seas, ready to jump for the life line any minute. As a rule too we would get a warning shout from the mate on the

poop if he saw a big sea about to come on board.

For the next two or three days the bad weather continued. What with our run of bad luck, and one thing and another we were not a very merry ships company.

One evening the weather got a bit better the wind eased down and by the morning it wasn't too bad, although a big sea was still running.

Well on in the forenoon watch the upper topsails were set again, then after dinner the main lower topgallant sail was also set. The *Avenger* had double topgallant sails, in the *Ellora* we had singles ones. The single sail is large and takes a lot of work in a blow to stow at times, with double sails its half the work. At the time I'm writing about, all sails had the clew brought into the mast, so the biggest part of the sail was there, this was called the bunt, and was always made up first when stowing a sail. When sails were clewed up the wind would fill a large part of it especially at the bunt in spite of the bunt lines being well hauled home, and this made it at times a very hard job stowing when a blow was on and very heavy work if the sail was wet and hard. I've seen finger nails torn and bleeding by the sail tearing away from the hands with the wind. In later years all this was altered for clews were brought out to the end of the yardarms. This stretched the sail evenly along the yard and was more easily stowed, there being no mass of sail in the bunt.

For years before the sailing ship was displaced by steam, all sails were fitted with the clews to come up to the end of the yard. Its a wonder to me why the idea was not thought of years before it was, of course the sails looked better stowed with the clew into the mast and neater too, but when you

consider what a labour saving the new way meant, that would be more satisfactory. After we had set the main topgallant sail, the lower one, I was surprised that no orders were given to set the fore and mizzen ones as well, but they were not set until late in the afternoon watch.

The weather continued to improve, so much so, that during the first watch that night the upper topgallant sails were set so the Royals were the only sails left stowed.

In the morning the weather was still on the improve the sea had gone down during the night. It is remarkable how quick a sea can get up and how quick it can ease down again. Things in general were much better on board, but the crew went about their jobs in a kind of half hearted manner, everyone seemed gloomy. I supposed this feeling would pass away in time, but our last bit of bad luck seemed to make us more miserable than before, and goodness knows we had the blues bad enough then.

Some of us had very narrow escapes too, I had one that gave me a bad shake up. One night, in the middle watch we took in the main Royal stay sail, I went aloft to stow it, I was just about to pass the gasket around it, when I slipped, feeling myself falling I flung my arms out trying to grab the sail. I managed to get a hold and after falling a few feet with the slack of the sail, I hung in mid air for some seconds, then climbed up the sail into the crosstrees where I was safe. I got a bad scare and it was some minutes before I finished stowing the sail so great was the fright I got. Had I failed to grab the sail I would have been smashed up on the deck over eighty feet below.

Poor Peter too, had a narrow escape from going over the

side just a few nights before we lost him altogether. Some of the watch were on the Fok'sl head pulling on the down haul of the jib. As the ship shoved her nose in, a big sea came suddenly over the Fok'sl, it scattered us everywhere each man made a grab at anything within reach. I and some others managed to hang onto the weather railings, one man was carried over the Fok'sl head with the rush of water onto the deck below. He was not hurt, the water saved him from maybe a bad injury.

We saw Peter carried away to leeward and felt sure he had gone overboard. In a few seconds the water was all cleared away again, then we found Peter tangled up in the top mast stay sail sheets and to which he was clinging for dear life. When we got him on his feet, he said where's my cap! where's my cap! his only worry was the loss of an old cap. We little thought that in a few hours Peter himself would follow his cap overboard. Soon as we had finished stowing the sail we dived below to change into dry clothes, as we were just like drowned rats.

Another time one of the watch had a close shave, we were up stowing the fore upper topsail, a gale was blowing at the time, while we were hauling together getting a fist of the sail up on the yard, his hands slipped from the sail and backwards he fell before he could recover himself. As the yards were braced sharp up at the time he fell against the lee backstays and flinging his arms behind him managed to hang on, in a couple of minutes he was back on the yard. He was very lucky for had the yards been not braced sharp up he would have gone overboard, the same thing would have happened if he had been on the weather yardarm stead of the lee one.

He was just lucky to be on the yard where he was and not a few feet further along it. There is always big risks at sea, even in fair weather, but sailors as a rule are very, very careful as to what they may be doing, and where they are doing it, some jobs are more risky than others.

We had the usual work of unbending bad weather sails and replacing them with fine weather ones. This is always done when near the tropics. Then after that the fair weather sails are taken off and the heavy weather ones put back again, this is all in the days work. The sails are gradually done each watch doing their share of the work when its their watch on deck, the job don't take very long if the weather keeps fine.

Now was painting time too so here and there about the ship the watch on deck were kept busy. Our ship had quite a lot of brass work about the poop and all this had to be clean and bright. The usual cleaning gear used, as was the custom at that time, that is ground up bath brick and oil, I can't imagine anyone using that now on ships, it wouldn't suit the flash mail ships I'm sure, but for many years all brass work on ships was polished with bath brick and oil. Even when the patent cleaning fluid was put on the market, many ships would have none of it, skippers thought it would eat into the brass, now its in general use everywhere.

After our skipper died things were just the same as before as far as the crews food was concerned. The new skipper couldn't alter that, because all the salt horse and pork was the same, not the best so we had to put up with it. Anything is good enough for sailors with some people.

An old joke told in ships Fok'sl hits the nail on the head about that. A ships Captain had a lot of tinned meat on board,

this of course was only for his own use. One day he asked the steward to prepare some of it for dinner, when it was opened it was found to be bad, tin after tin was tried and found the same. So the skipper told the steward to give it to the pig, its no use wasting it he said. In a little while the steward reported to the skipper that the pig wouldn't eat it. What said the skipper, the pig won't eat it! Oh well better take it along to the sailors.

Another good joke about sailors food I heard in the Fok'sl was a certain skipper went ashore at a place where he could buy beef, he took the Bos'un with him to carry his bag and cash. After looking the beast over, he said he didn't think it was in a very good condition for the price asked.

Nonsense, said the seller that beast is in prime condition and will be very tender meat, and turning to the Bos'un who was standing by, said, what do you think of it my man, just feel the beast and give me your opinion.

The Bos'un put his bag on the ground walked up to the beast stooped down and felt its hoofs.

What the devil are you doing, man? cried the seller, thats not the way to test meat.

Oh, said the Bos'un, I was just testing what would be our share of it, and it seems same as usual to me.

The weather was still fair and the crew seemed to be less gloomy. As day after day went by and nothing serious happened, the idea got around that our run of bad luck was ended. Men laughed and joked, and told yarns in the dog watches, one evening they even had a sing song, something that had never been held before, everyone seemed more

cheerful. The weather was good, the ship under full sail for days at a time when it wasn't necessary to take in a sail, and what blows we got now and then were soon over so it really did look as if our run of bad luck was indeed over, we all hope so anyway.

One night in the last dog watch it commenced to blow up again and during the first watch the Royals and topgallant sails were taken in, then in the morning watch when both watches were on deck at four o'clock the fore and mizzen upper top sails were taken in. Later on in the morning watch the main upper top sail was taken in, so now we were under our lower topsails and the weather showed no sign of easing. All the next forenoon it was blowing very hard and a big sea had got up and although we had taken so much sail off the ship, we were shipping plenty of water.

During the afternoon it eased down, but not for long as in about an hours time it was blowing just as hard as ever. Well we were reduced down and were snug enough the fact that we were shipping it now and then over the rail didn't matter much, it gave us some exercise trying to dodge it whenever we had to go along the deck.

That night during the last dog watch, from six to eight, the gale eased down just as quick as it had started in the last dog watch the evening before. Although the wind had dropped to a nice stiff breeze no more sail was made. So we thought by that, we could expect it to blow harder during the night, but we were wrong as all night the wind remained the same. The ship was kept on the reduced sail until the next morning, when at eight o'clock the upper top sails and topgallant sails were set, so both watches were on deck to hoist the yards. As

soon as that was done the other watch went below and turned in. The sea had also gone down quite a lot, but all the same it was still running high and we were still taking it over the rail.

After dinner that day the main Royal was set and before sunset the other two Royals were also set so once again we were under all sail. The sea was going down all the while and we were shipping less over the side.

Just before sunset a large ship was in sight to windward of us, she was a good distance off and had every sail set except her Royals. She was on the starboard tack and going along at a fast rate, as we were on the port tack going in the opposite direction we very soon passed each other, no flags were shown.

During the night the weather continued to improve and by the morning we had good weather with a nice breeze and the heavy sea gone down, our deck was dry as we were not shipping any seas.

The three weeks went by and nothing happened since Peter went, but we did have the usual blow on the Sunday, but it really started the night before, and as usual sail had to be taken in and the ship made snug. It was strange that every Sunday three weeks we got half, or a full gale to make things lively and that of course meant we had to take sail off and sometimes reef down as well.

So when this Sunday passed and nothing serious had happened we all felt very thankful, and hoped that our run of bad luck was over and done with.

The gale blew itself out in the forenoon watch next day, and by five bells in the afternoon watch we were under all sail



again. The sea was a bit heavy still so we were taking in a good deal of water over the rail, but the skipper didn't mind that he just drove the ship on the water coming in board was not heavy enough to do any damage at all. The crew got wet now and then, at least some of them did, when they couldn't manage to dodge quick enough.

I suppose the skippers idea was to make up some of the lost time we had when the late skipper was ill, so he was making the best use of the fair wind, while the going was good. We had passed several ships the past few days but as they were a good way off no flag was shown.

The crew seemed to buck up when no bad accident happened when we expected it would. All seemed to be more cheerful and there was more talk and jokes were passed, and in the dog watches we sat and yarned a thing that was rare before. They told yarns about times when they were in this ship or that, as the old saying goes there's no ship like the last one. They told yarns of ships being dismasted in gales, of being in ships that took fire wrecks and so on. One told a yarn about being adrift in a ships boat for 6 days near the line. He told us what it was like, short of water and food, how they were picked up at last some of them more dead than alive. Ten of them in a boat for only six days, with not a breath of wind, under the scorching sun with the sea like a sheet of glass. His story impressed me very much and I didn't doubt for one moment that he was not telling the truth. I had heard often enough about boats adrift at sea, and had read stories of fact and fiction about the same and I knew just what a terrible thing it often was. If we only knew, from the time men first went to sea, what terrible things have happened,

and what suffering some have had while adrift in boats or on rafts at sea.

Here is a sea picture of such a thing that must have often occurred. Picture to yourself a wide expanse of ocean as far as the eye can reach. The sea as smooth as glass save for the restless even motion which is always with the sea, even in the calmest weather, which a poet has said is the bosom of the ocean gently heaving when it sleeps.

In the centre of this vast circle of water, picture a boat, and in that boat a man. The pitiful sight of a man adrift in a boat without food and water, almost dead after days without food and as the poet says with water everywhere, but not a drop to drink. He sees nothing but sea and sky, as for days he drifts on, and at last is too weak to have hope of rescue left. At first, he was always looking around the horizon in the hope of sighting a sail, but he has long lost that hope, perhaps even now he will lift his shrunken body and gaze with dying eyes around the circle of water. He does this not in the hope of seeing a sail, for long before this he has reached that state of hopeless despair that disappointment, after disappointment has brought him to. But just as it is the habit of sailors when they come on deck to turn their eyes up aloft and around the horizon, so it is with this poor wretch force of habit to cast his eyes around.

So day after day, drags on while a scorching sun burns down on him. The sun sets, and rises on the same scene day after day. With not even a stray sea bird in sight which although it would only mock the starving man, would in a way be something living to attract his attention, dying of thirst while surrounded with water that you dare not drink, is

agony indeed.

The night comes, and goes, then another day is born, the same sea, the same burning sun, the same maddening thirst, the same hopeless look around the horizon, just the same scene day after day, and still no help. Alone, just alone on the sea. Then the end, his sufferings are over, and the boat still drifts on, and in it just something that once was a man, a sailor. Then maybe next day a breeze comes along, and with it a ship. They see the boat the ship is hove to and they lower a boat and they pull only as sailors can pull, when going to the rescue. They reach the drifting boat and know they are just too late. The irony of fate, what is to be, will be.

Thats a picture of what has happened perhaps too often at sea. Its not just drawn from imagination, but has been many a sailors fate, and is one of the saddest pictures that could be painted, but no artist could paint the misery of it all. If the sea could only speak, what a tale of sorrow it could tell.

The days went on, at times we ran into squally weather and had plenty of work stowing sails and then setting them again when the weather got better. Then we would have a few days of fair weather and we would race along under all the sail we could pack on her, until we almost thought such good times would continue. Then the sky would be overcast some night and by morning a gale would be blowing and we were up aloft reefing down after the lighter sails had been stowed, so it went on, but no accident happened and nothing carried away.

Although once or twice we were caught napping when a squall was on us suddenly and it was a wonder we didn't lose a spar or sail before the halyards could be let go, but all were

now quite sure that the bad luck or whatever kind of hoodoo that had been with us had left us alone.

Every few days we would sight a ship but always they were a good distance from us and no attempt was made to speak them, we knew that we were getting near land and our voyage would soon be over if our luck continued. So the time passed with the usual routine of the ship not being interfered with until one morning land was sighted. It was a long way off yet, but the word was passed that it was Moonlight Head on the Australian coast. So although it was only a faint blur in the distance it was a welcome sight, it meant I was nearing home.

The wind had gone down to a nice gentle breeze, but in the afternoon it went around and was dead ahead so we had a head wind. Later in the afternoon it blew strong which lasted for two days during which time we were tacking along the strait, not making much headway against the head wind, we kept beating to windward to fetch the Otway which all ships hope to sight. We sighted Cape Otway three days after we had passed Moonlight Head. Then the wind dropped again to a nice breeze which shifted back and gave us the fair wind again, so with all sail set we made good use of it.

The next morning a ship hove in sight right astern of us and so fast did she come up that just after dinner she was on our starboard beam going along like a racer, up went the flags which told us she was the *Star of France* from London bound to Melbourne 86 days out.

I remember that when we left the Docks the *Star of France* had not finished discharging her cargo. So she had finished that, reloaded a fresh cargo for Melbourne and beat us badly. This was because we had altered our course for the West

Indies, which made our passage longer. Had nothing happened to our skipper the chances are we would have been in port long before. We were a good bit out of our course too during the time that the mate got onto the drink.

We reported to the *Star of France* that we had lost the Captain and two of the crew, then we dipped our flags to each other and before dark the *Star of France* was out of sight. There was no doubt that she could sail. She arrived in port three days afterwards.

When she reported us, we were expected to arrive the next day, but instead of that, we were over in sight of King Island becalmed just drifting about with our sails hanging straight from the yards, while we grumbled and growled and whistled for a wind. The sun set and rose again day after day and still we were becalmed, until five days had passed.

While we were lying becalmed like this the pilots were on the lookout for us and wondering where we had got to and what had happened to us to cause such a delay.

After the five days were over a breeze sprang up and we made good progress towards port. We arrived off the Heads the next afternoon about five o'clock. The wind seemed determined not to allow us to get in without a last puff, for a squall struck us just as we were entering the Harbor, and we had to take in the Royals, and topgallant sails. The pilot had full charge of the ship now that he was on board, and as soon as the squall had passed he ordered all sail to be made. This was soon done, so with all sail set we started up Port Phillip Bay, going up the South Channel.

All that night we kept tacking about, heading up to Hobsons Bay, until we were sick and tired of it. It was hard

luck having a head wind for the last one to take us into port. So all night long we were kept busy as we had to tack ship every little while going up the Channel.

Most ships would have towed up and got to the anchorage quicker but no our ship, they were saving the cost of a tug no doubt.

We didn't arrive off Port Melbourne until twelve o'clock next day. The anchor dropped and it was sweet music to us to hear the cable rattle through the hawse pipe, none of us were sorry to know the mud hook was down at last. We had bent the cables and got the anchors ready soon after we had sighted Moonlight Head and never thought we would be delayed like we were, however we were in port at last and it was good to know that.

We would have to heave up the anchor once more when the tug came alongside to take us to the pier to discharge the cargo. Soon as we dropped anchor the pilot left the ship. We went aloft and gave all the sails a harbour stow, that is we made a far neater stow than we would do at sea, as a rule at sea you haven't time to furl sails as neat as that, and there is no need to, even if you had time. All you worry about is to make sure the gaskets are made fast correctly then often when you have finished on one yard you have to go and help on another one.

After we had finished furling sails we went below to dinner, although we were in harbour that made no difference to our fare, we still sat down to deep sea food such as it was, but we didn't mind even if we had salt horse for dinner, we were in port and there would be no more watch keeping, no more stowing sails and no more discomfort of getting wet

through, now we could have all night in and we didn't give a hang what the tucker was like.

It was a Saturday when we arrived, so next day Sunday we had nothing to do but look over the side at the shore or walk about the deck. I was wishing I was ashore and on my way home, that Sunday seemed to drag on so. At last, the day passed and my last Sunday on board the *Avenger* was over. Night came and I remained on deck some time looking at the lights of the city and longing for the morning when we would go alongside to discharge.

Early in the morning we were called to shorten in the cable and it wasn't long before a tug came alongside to move us to the pier, we soon had the anchor up and away we went. In half an hour we were tied up at the Railway Pier, there were plenty of other full rigged ships there amongst them the *Star of France* looking like she had just come out of dock so clean and trim was she. It took us until nearly dark before we had made everything shipshape, washed down and coiled up all the gear etc. At last the mate was satisfied and we went to supper. That was my last work on board and I think after we had made all snug the *Avenger* looked as well as any of the other ships, and as smart.

I really didn't want any supper, but I sat down with the rest it being my last supper with them. I would soon be home and I guessed there would be a good supper waiting for me for I had let them know I would be home that evening. So I didn't take very long over supper then I got ready for home. My sea chest could wait I wasn't bothering about that then, I could get it later on, all I wanted now was to get home as fast as the train could take me.

So imagine me in my go ashore togs, a flash yankee shirt with a navy blue coat over it, a peak cap on and the usual belt. So I hurried along to the railway station. I was happy that evening as the train rattled along. I thought of my shipmates up early in the morning busy unbending sails and stowing them away in the sail locker while I would be still in bed. I was out for a holiday and very much thrilled at the fact I would soon be home.

At last the train arrived at my station and I was out and walking along as if I owned the earth it was grand to be going home. The world seemed a fine place to me then. I was as happy as a sand boy, why a sand boy is always so happy I don't know, but he is supposed to be very happy and so was I. In a few minutes I was home and what a fuss they made of me, it was a great home coming, everyone was excited and asking me questions all together, and while I was trying my best to answer some of them, I was also busy tucking a supper into myself, the finest supper I had had for many a day.

When I had finished putting the eats away, I could pay more attention to all their questions so for some time I was busy telling all about the ship and our bad luck. They had been worried at the report about us, when the *Star of France* arrived, that she had spoken us and that two of the crew and Captain were dead, and they were wondering if I was safe, and my letter chased all their fears away. They were glad to have me home again and I was glad to be home, so all of us were very happy that night.

Did I enjoy that supper? Believe me I did, just think of a hungry sailor, think of the kind of food he has been having for months, then sit him down to a real good home coming



feed, there would be no need to ask him if he had a good supper. There is no doubt about it I made up for all the suppers I had missed. It was pretty late that night when I at last was allowed to turn in, for we had such a lot to say and talk about, maybe I asked just as many questions as they did.

It was great satisfaction to turn into my own decent bed after a bunk in the Fok'sl. It was grand to feel my comfortable bed under me. I had all night in, no watch to keep or anything else to worry about. I slept well and comfortable it was the best nights rest I had for many moons. The next day after dinner I went down to the ship and collected my sea chest and gear and said good bye to all my shipmates. They were busy unbending sails, and men were unloading the cargo. I found out that I had to go to the shipping office next day to be paid off, so that meant I would have to make another trip into the city.

I got home with my gear well before tea time, and that night we sat up late again talking. Next day I went to the shipping office and met the skipper there and was paid off. I said good bye to him and with my cash and discharge in my pocket I was set. From the time we left the Downs until our arrival we had been 112 days at sea, about the slowest passage the *Avenger* had made to any Australian port, but we could blame the illness of the skipper for that, as altering course for the West Indies made a very big difference.

For many years after that the *Avenger* sailed the seas on her lawful occasions going from port to port wherever cargos could be picked up. The steam tramps were gradually driving the sailing ships off the seas. So fine ships were lying idle in ports and a great many were just hulks.

Up to the time when the great war started in 1914 there were not too many sailing ships about but the *Avenger* was one of those that were still managing to keep at sea. Then one day in the Atlantic as she was going along under all sail, the *Raider Wolf* came along and sunk her, so that was her end, bad luck stuck to her to the last. So somewhere on the ocean bed in Davy Jones locker she rests, like many more fine ships.

Her beautiful carved figure head of a knight in chain mail, and drawing his sword to avenge a wrong is there too, covered with barnacles and sea growth. May-be someday after the bolts are rusted away it will float to the surface and again face the gales. It was a fine work of art, and its a pity its some where in Davy Jones locker. But it is still the *Avenger*.

I don't know what became of the *Ellora* perhaps she also is at the bottom of the sea, or lying as a dismantled hulk in some port, neglected and forgotten the fate of many a splendid ship. Ships are like men few can escape a run of bad luck sooner or later.

The days of the sailing ship are over, but they did a great job those ships and the men who manned them. They sailed the seven seas, in fair weather and foul, for poor pay and poor food. They got far more knocks than pats on the back. No one worried about sailors those days. There was no Seamans Union like they have to day, and most people looked upon sailors as a drunken lot, that spent their hard earned cash on beer until they had no more cash left, then they just went back to sea to earn more. Maybe quite a lot of sailors did that, but not all. It was a mistake to tar them all with the same brush. But in the sailing ship days sailors did have a pretty bad name as far as drink was concerned.

Although the men that manned the ships were a mixed lot, good and bad, they knew their job and what is more they did it. It was the sailing ships that opened up the Trade Ports of the world and although they have now passed off the seas they have left a wake behind that the steam ships of today follow. It was the sailing ships that built up the Empire and made it what it is today, and now it is the job of the steam ships to keep that Empire safe and solid. Both fighting ship and merchant ship, each have to do their part and believe me they can and will do that.

It is a pity, in a way, that the sailing ships have gone, some are still to be seen in different ports, unrigged and used as coal hulks or lighters. I have seen many old hulks lying in ports, that once I knew as fine full rigged sailing ships. It was a sorry sight to see them there, dirty, rusty and long forgotten, yet in their prime they were fine ships and good to look upon, what an end for fine clipper ships, that once was the pride of their owners, no finer sight was ever seen at sea than a full rigged ship under all sail.

Thousands that travel over the sea now have never seen such a picture, and they never will now. Its not likely that the sailing ship will ever again sail the seven seas. What is seen today is some steam tramp rolling along from port to port. But I could not call such a sight, as a thing of beauty and a joy forever, and thats what I could say of a sailing ship.

It was on September 3<sup>rd</sup> 1890 that I paid off from the *Avenger* and for some week I just loafed around having a good holiday ashore. Then I was back on salt water again, just putting in the time until I could get into the Victorian Navy. I had to wait until there was a vacancy. So all I did was

working on one of the bay boats, so I was always handy when the chance came, but the chance of a vacancy seemed to be a long time coming along, and as it didnt seem likely there would be a chance for some time I shipped on board the flag ship for short service, that was in June 1891, so once again I was sailing deep water. After my service on the flag ship, (I've told all about that in Part II of these notes), I at last found myself on board H.M.V.S *Cerberus* and was very well satisfied, that was early in 1892. So I put in a few happy years there in the Victorian Navy stationed on different ships from time to time, and all about those times will be found in Part II, so I won't dwell on it here.

Then came the time when I was transferred into another branch of the Govt. on a shore job. I thought I had finished with the sea, but years later I was unable to master the urge of the sea and back I went once again, and so for a few more years I was serving in the Australian fleet, on H.M.S. *Katoomba*, *Challenger* and *Psyche*, and all about those days will be found in Part II "Under Steam".

It seems to me that I've got off my course a little, forgetting about the sailing ship times, so with a little turn of the wheel I'm back just where I should be. The yarn of the *Ellora* and *Avenger* is just about finished. There's not much more I can tell. I have told the most interesting part of what life was like at sea when those two ships sailed from port to port. Like hundreds of other ships sailing to and from every port in the world. They were much alike, small pay and poor food. I have left out many nautical terms and ship language, for on board ship there is a language of the sea, which would be far too nautical for you to understand. Therefore these notes have

been written in as simple a manner as possible.

Now you know a little about a sailors life, and how he usually got on at sea in the days of sailing ships, those many years ago. Some ships were known as Hell ships, but there were more good ships than bad ships, although the best were bad enough when pay and food was taken into account.

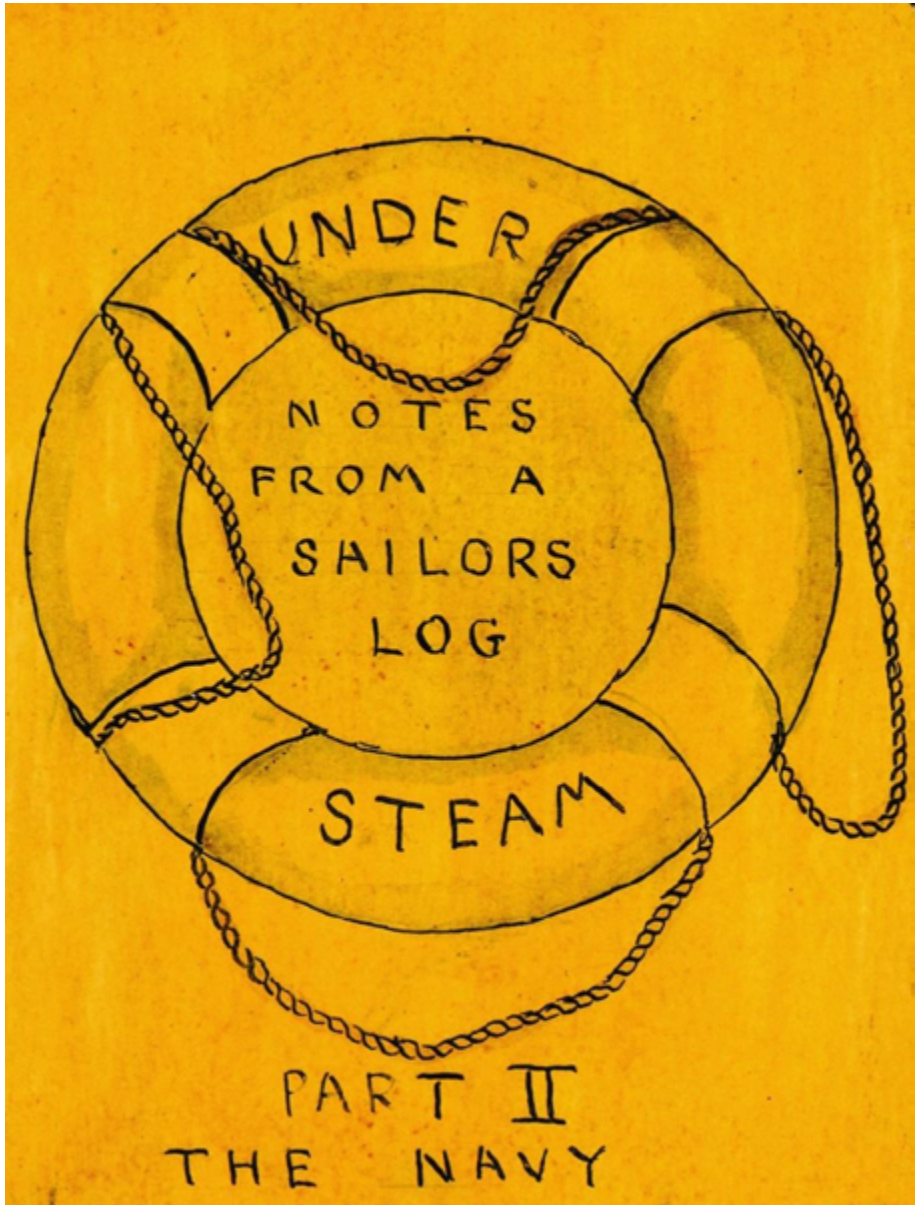
And so this part of my yarn is finished and as they say at sea, "That will do the Watch, so its time that I piped down. If you have found any pleasure in reading these notes, that is all that matters and I am very well satisfied.

*May your voyage through life, be fair and calm;  
Free from storm, and free from harm.*

Yours as B4  
J.B. Conder

*Notes from a Sailor's Log: Under Steam*

James Conder



Up to 1889 all the ships of the Australian Squadron, with headquarters at Sydney, were mostly large corvettes, sloops and gunboats. They were steam and sail ships. The larger ships were all ship rigged, that is they had yards on all masts. The ships of the Corvette class were all fine looking ships. They were the *Cordelia* which was painted white and was a very fine looking ship. The *Curacao* a ship the same as the *Cordelia*. The *Rapid*, *Opal*, *Penguin*, and several other ships of the same class. There were also composite gun boats such as the *Lizard*, *Bullfinch* and *Goldfinch*, they were pretty little ships and very good sea boats too. The *Penguin* was kept mostly for surveying work around the coast and the islands.

There was also the *Calliope* which won fame in March 1889 when with three American and three German men-of-war were anchored in Apia Harbour Samoa, a hurricane suddenly struck them. The ships began to drag their anchors and go ashore, none of the ships had full steam on, and before steam could be got up all the ships had gone ashore and became total wrecks, with the exception of the *Calliope* which struck top masts and getting up steam saved herself from going on shore. The cables were slipped and by steaming full speed had a hard fight to get out of harbour and to sea, but she did it in the teeth of the hurricane. She was the only ship saved. Next day, after the hurricane had finished, she returned to harbour and found all the other ships ashore and wrecked with great loss of life.

The largest ship of all lying in the harbour when the hurricane struck them, was the U.S.A. *Trenton* and as the *Calliope* fought her way out of the harbour, the crew of the *Trenton* cheered her on her way, soon afterwards she too was ashore and a total wreck. Most of the crew who cheered the

*Calliope* were drowned. The escape of the *Calliope* was due to good seamanship and the good engines she had, and also the stokers who stood up to their knees in water and shovelled coal into the furnaces, working like demons to keep steam up. She was a fine ship and deserved the fame she got.

On the station too, there was the little beautiful *Dart*. She had been an ocean going yacht when brought by the Admiralty. She also was used for surveying. She was a fine model and much admired when lying in Farm Cove, she was also known as a very happy little ship, which means a lot for a man-of-war.

The ships being sail or steam, used steam for going out or coming into harbour. Sail being mostly used at sea to save coal, as they couldn't carry a very large supply of coal. But if a ship was in a hurry, both sail and steam would be used.

The largest ship on the station was the Flagship *Nelson* she was an iron ship fully rigged with two funnels. Her main armament consisted of four 10 inch 18 ton M.L.<sup>1</sup> guns, two forward and two aft on the broad side she had smaller guns, most of which were B.L.<sup>2</sup> guns.

The *Nelson* was a fine ship and looked just what she was, a man-of-war. She was the same class as the *Monarch* and *Sultan* and many other ships then in the Royal Navy. I always admired the *Nelson* and she was my idea of what a man-of-war should look like. Its a pity that those fine looking ships are no more. Their place has been taken by men-of-war that have no lines of beauty at all, they are just floating forts that can be shifted quickly from place to place.

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<sup>1</sup> M.L. refers to a muzzle loading gun

<sup>2</sup> B.L. refers to a breech loading gun



Those were the days when all the ports were full of merchant sailing ships, and many splendid famous ships could be seen lying in the ports. But the smartest of all would be a man-of-war if there happened to be one in. With her yards squared and her sails neatly stowed and covered with snow white sail covers, (the covers were always scrubbed clean and put on when a ship entered port), on a Monday or Thursday would be evolution<sup>3</sup> day. It was a sight worth seeing to see a man-of-war sending down yards and striking topmasts clearing the ship for action, or sending down yards and topmasts as would be done at sea in a gale. The pipes would sound and you would see the men swarming up the rigging, then yards and topmasts would be down in about three minutes or less. Then up they would go again, first the topmasts, then the yards would be sent up and crossed so quickly you would wonder how it could be done in such a short time.

The same would happen if it was sail drill, one minute you would see the sails stowed on the yards, the next minute the sails would be dropped together, and sheeted home. Then the sails would be clewed up<sup>4</sup> and stowed neatly on the yards, and when the evolution was over the ship would be spick and span with yards squared as before and all ship shape. That was a long time ago, many changes have taken place since then, ships are different now. Those fine ships, both men-of-war and merchant ships are no longer seen in any port. In their place are all kinds of steam ships, few of which have any

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3 Evolutions were exercises.

4 Clewlines and buntlines are led along the yard and from there to the mast and down to the deck. These allow the bottom of the sail to be hoisted up to the yard, so the sail is effectively folded in two. In this state the sail is said to be in its gear, that is ready for setting or stowing.

graceful lines about them.

The fine looking man-of-war too has gone and in its place we see men-of-war that are just as ugly as the work they are built to do. Today we have ugly music, ugly books, ugly songs, ugly buildings so why not ugly ships as well. Evolutions were not loved by the men, they were known as agony days and if the evolution that was being carried out was not done smart enough to suit the Flagship, or some other senior officer there, it had to be done all over again, and if several ships of the fleet happened to be there, it was a race ship against ship, each one trying to beat the other. Now there are no yards and sails. The days of sending down yards and topmasts, or sail drill, are gone forever. But other evolutions to replace them are carried out.

As there is no running aloft, they now have what is called physical jerks. Men running around the decks, jumping over bars etc. which is supposed to give them exercise and keep them fit. So although evolutions are useful drill, they are no more loved by the men of the lower deck than they were in the days of sail. Out Bower anchor<sup>5</sup>, take ship in tow or prepare to be towed are modern evolutions, and must be carried out as a drill otherwise no one would know how to go about it, so although this drill is not much liked the men know it has to be done.

The *Nelson* was the Flagship of Admiral Tyron, who was later on lost when the battleship *Victoria* went down. The *Nelson* next to the turret ship *Cerberus* was the strongest ship in Australian waters. She left the station early in 1889 for England to pay off. So the finest looking man-of-war ever

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<sup>5</sup> A bower anchor is each of two anchors carried at the ship's bow.

seen in Australian ports left. There were other full rigged ships left on the station but they could not compare with the *Nelson*.

The new Flagship was the *Orlando*, a new ship. The new Admiral being Lord Charles Scott. She was the first ship on the station not ship rigged, but known as skeleton rigged, with only two small yards on her masts for signalling purposes. She was one of the new belted cruisers, that is she had an armour belt 10 inches thick and six feet deep all along her water line. This belt was for protection against torpedo attack. Her speed was 18 knots, displacement 5600 tons, armed with two 9.2 B.L. guns, one forward and one aft. Ten 6 inch B.L. guns on the upper deck, 6 six pounder quick firing guns, and the ten 3 pounder guns on the main deck. Her 9.2 guns were of 22 tons each. Her beam was 56 feet and her length 300 feet, she was completed for sea in 1888.

There were I think four other ships of the same class built, three of them being the *Galatea*, *Undaunted* and *Australia*. The *Galatea* was ready for sea in 1889. The other two were completed I think in 1888 before the *Galatea*. Later on other ships of the same class were laid down. When the *Orlando* arrived on the station she looked very different to the other ships of the fleet. She was the biggest ship that was ever on the station up to that time and was the forerunner of the new type of war ship and could have blown all the other ships of the fleet out of the water. Gradually the old steam and sailing ships (full rigged ships) left the station and were replaced by the new type all skeleton rigged ships.

So the *Orlando* was the first ship on the Australian station that was not ship rigged, and could only steam. Not long after

her arrival on the station her two funnels were built higher in order to increase the draft in her furnaces, so she could steam better. Before that her funnels were stump ones and after they had been made higher her steaming improved very much. The ship looked much better with her higher funnels. All the ships of the Royal Navy were painted black with white upper works with yellow funnels, the water line was red with a white line above it between the bottom colour and the hull. There were one or two ships painted white, on different stations as a rule they were Flagships. The only ship painted white on the Australian station was the *Cordelia* and she looked very fine being full rigged and a good model, she always looked well.

The French grey for war ships didn't come in until many years afterwards about 1901 I think. The French Navy first painted their ships grey, and all the other navies followed suit, but ships looked better in the old style colour. Painted grey ships were difficult to notice at sea if there was a grey background or if ships were lying under the land. But on a clear day at sea ships painted grey loomed up just as much as they did with the old colour on but fashion is fashion.

When the grey colour came in, that put an end to the Tiddly<sup>6</sup> ships, there was no more fine enamel paint on the bulwarks or elsewhere, everything was grey, and one could lean against the paintwork without being punished for doing so, a thing he couldn't do when the old colour was the order of the day.

It was a puzzle to understand why the two yards on the

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<sup>6</sup> Painting areas around anchor cables and turret tops Brunswick Green

masts of the *Orlando* were slung abaft<sup>7</sup> the mast instead of before. No one could guess the reason for it. She was the first and only ship I had seen with yards so slung, and I never discovered the reason for it. I don't know if her sister ships had their yards slung the same way most likely they did.

Apart from the ships of the Royal Navy on the Australian station there were others that were maintained by the different states of the colonies by their own Governments. Victoria had its own little Navy. The ironclad turret ship *Cerberus*, the gun boats *Victoria* and *Albert* and five torpedo boats, also the frigate *Nelson* which was the Flagship.

Besides this there were several steam hopper barges each armed with a 6 inch gun each. Queensland had two gun boats, the *Paluma* and *Gayundah*. They were the same type as the *Victoria* and the *Albert* but smaller. They were known as half boat types with a whale back forward. South Australia had the gun boat *Protector*, same type as the others only a bit larger.

N.S.W. had the corvette *Wolverine* which at one time had been Flagship on the station and was given to N.S.W. by the Admiralty for a drill ship for the local Naval Reserve. West Australia had no ship at all, as far as I know. Briefly that was what the Australian station was like in 1889. The *Orlando* being the only up to date ship of the Royal Navy in Australian waters.

It was in November of that year that I first saw the *Orlando*. I was on a ship in the harbour when she came in and anchored not far from where we were lying. I liked her lines even if she was not a full rigged ship and I liked her beam but

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<sup>7</sup> At the back of or behind a ship or boat mast.

at that time I never thought I would be serving on board her but I did later on. Time passed and I came back from sea and paid off.

I found there was still no chance of joining the Victorian Navy, there was still no vacancy. So I did a season on one of the bay boats and when she was laid up for winter I wasn't sure just what to do, go deep water again or not. I was still keen on the *Cerberus* but if I went away to sea I might miss my chance. Before I could decide what to do I discovered I could go on the Flagship for short service after which I could if I liked sign on for twelve years, which I had no intention of doing.

By joining the *Cerberus* I knew I would have a far better time than I would in the R.N. with about five times more pay. The short service would put in the time and would also be a help when I did join the *Cerberus*. So I went on board and after passing the doctor was signed on as one of the ships company, that was in June 1891.

When we got to sea I found she was a very good sea boat, her mess deck was the whole of the main deck from the cable deck forward right aft to where the marines had their messes. There was plenty of room, mess tables were along the port and starboard sides with the quick firing guns here and there between the messes. There was plenty of room and fresh air for the crew of over 500 men. Being the Flagship she carried supernumeraries<sup>8</sup> to fill vacancies in any of the other ships, that might be short handed at any time. We did a cruise around about the islands, then went back to Sydney and

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<sup>8</sup> A person in addition to the regular complement of crew, but having no shipboard responsibilities.

made fast to No. 1 buoy where the Flagship always tied up in Farm Cove.

Ships of the fleet were always coming into harbour or going out. It was not often that the whole fleet was in harbour at the same time. One ship was always away on a cruise around the islands. As a rule this cruise lasted for five or six months, then another ship would take her place. There was lots of places to visit and police always some trouble to settle with the natives. After the cruise was finished the ship would return to Sydney to dock and refit, and take in new stores, other ships would be visiting the different ports, never very long at any place. The longest stretch they ever had was in Sydney, which of course was headquarters of the fleet, where they could refit and get overhauled.

Although Garden Island was then a busy place it was not as busy as it has become since that time in 1901. More stores have been built and other improvements made. The big hill on the island has been levelled, high up on the top was the signal station with a tennis court near it. The huge wooden sheer legs which were said to be the biggest in the world at that time have gone and steel sheer legs have replaced it. The sheer legs were used for lifting heavy weights such as boilers, big guns etc.

The dock yard is a very busy place now, swarming with men, time marches on. The hospital and barracks are now much larger and there is also a naval prison. So there is a very big difference there now to what it was like in 1901.

The big sail loft was there too, because sails for the ships had to be made or repaired there. Later on when sails were no longer needed, the loft was used as a church where men

from the ships would be landed to attend church service on Sundays.

There was always plenty of work about the island, dock yard parties from the ships drawing stores etc., going from store to store drawing what ever they required. A man always had to be left with the truck, otherwise other parties would pinch some of the stores, any extra stores was always welcome. From time to time ship concerts would be held in the sail loft. These concerts were given by different ships and very good affairs they were as a rule, each rating could bring a friend from ashore to the concerts. Other times people ashore would come along and give a show to the men, and they were very much enjoyed. Now and then a dance would be held, so there was plenty to keep the men amused. No matter what the affair was, a concert or a ball, tickets were issued to each man who wanted to attend, which ticket also admitted a lady friend or some one else. This was done so that none of the opposite sex could go on the island without proper escort. The powers that be were very careful that only the best class of girls visited the island for any show or dance and believe me there were plenty of very tough girls about at that time, and I expect there still are plenty.

The concerts given on the island were very different from what was known as a lower deck concert on board ship, amongst the crew, on board they didn't care what they sang or did, but on shore of course it was different.

When we went ashore which was as a rule every second evening we could get a bed at the Naval House for 6<sup>d</sup> and also a meal very cheap. The Naval House was then a much smaller place than it is now. It was a splendid for men of the Navy



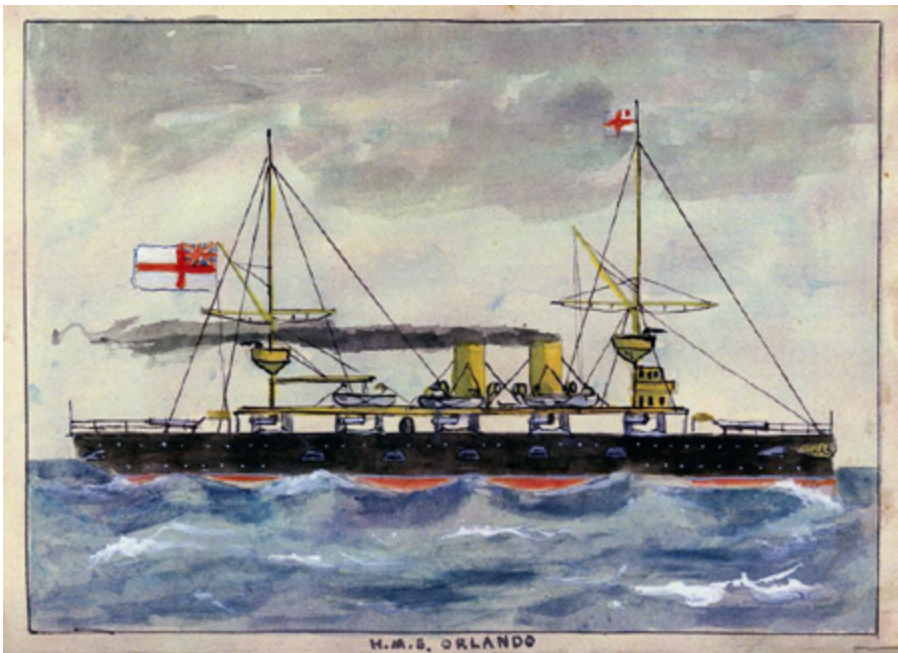
where they were sure of getting a good clean bed.

Anywhere in Sydney you could get a good meal for 6<sup>d</sup>, a three course one in a decent dining place. At Naval House you could write your letters in peace and comfort, get a hot bath for 3<sup>d</sup>, and also play billiards if you wanted to. It was about the same as the Royal Naval rests in England. You were always sure of being called in the morning in time to get down to man-of-war steps and catch the liberty boat you had to catch at seven a.m. Which wasn't so good if it was a wet cold morning. Going on board at 7<sup>am</sup> has always been the custom and I suppose will always be, as it was done one hundred years ago, old customs die hard in the Navy, some never die at all. At six o'clock every morning a chap at the Naval House would come along beating a very large gong, it made a terrible noise. Yes you woke up alright at the Naval House, but it wasn't too good for any watch keepers who were ashore on leave. It woke them up as well, but they could turn over and go to sleep again, thus having two sleeps, while other poor devils had to go back on board. I still fancy I can hear that terrible gong.

My special chums on board was a chap named Dick Read and one named Calder, we would often go ashore together for a ramble around and although we never had much cash, we managed to have a good time everything was cheap then so you didn't need to have a big roll. Naval men were only paid on the 1<sup>st</sup> of every month, so few had much money to spend. A month was a long while to wait for the small pay they got; most were drawing less than two shillings a day. We could get a good seat in a theatre for a bob but it wasn't very often I did that, bobs had to go a long way those times, beer was only 3<sup>d</sup> a pint, but I didn't bother much about that sort of

drink those days.

When visitors came on board the ship on Sunday afternoons, I soon got to know many people and was invited up home many times, so I always had some place to go to if I liked when on leave ashore and many nice evenings I spent like that, which was far better than walking about the city streets to put in the time which was the usual thing sailors did.



On board the *Orlando* we didn't have bags to keep our kit in like on board most ships. She being a new class of ship she had lockers for the crew to keep their clothes in. These lockers were along each side of the mess tables and used for sitting on at meal time or any other time if the men were off duty. They were big and heavy and when the deck was scrubbed were hoisted up to the deck above to be out of the way but before that was done the lockers were scrubbed then when the deck was done, they could be lowered back into

their place, of course, this was only done on a Saturday ready for Sunday inspection. The big trouble with these lockers was that when you wanted to go to your locker for something there would always be someone sitting on it, or someone having a nap on the lockers, or if it was a watch below, maybe some would be there playing a game, so they were rather a bother and not as good as bags in a bag rack.

Not many ships had the lockers, and they didn't last very long, bags being much better. The only reason for the lockers was it saved bag racks which took up a lot of space, but they didn't become general. The bag was always the best as you could get to it without any bother, the only fault was that whatever you wanted was sure to be at the bottom, and if you were in a hurry, you just dived your arm in felt for what you wanted and dragged it out, this of course upset all the contents of the bag so it often had to be unpacked and restowed.

Every morning at five o'clock the Flagship would fire a gun, that was to set the time for the fleet, all hands would turn out, lash up and stow their hammocks, and at 5.30<sup>am</sup> each man got his basin of cocoa, or cocoa de wash as it was called on the lower deck. It was good stuff; you could see the fat in it. It was supposed to be equal to a good meal, there being everything in it. After washing down the decks, cleaning guns, washing paint work etc. Breakfast would be piped at 8 o'clock, 8 bells, of course as far as the Navy was concerned, you really had your breakfast when you had the basin of cocoa. So if you wanted anything else to eat at 8<sup>am</sup> you had to go and buy it at the ships canteen. You could get a couple of

rashes of bacon and an egg for 2<sup>d</sup><sup>9</sup>. The cook would fix it up for you for a charge of 1<sup>d</sup> so there was your breakfast there all for the cost of 3<sup>d</sup>.

But you didn't do that every morning because you couldn't afford it out of your small pay. So maybe you got a 1<sup>d</sup> of cheese the next day, or a 1<sup>d</sup> of German or a saveloy. It would be just the same at tea time, that is if there was nothing left of your dinner meat and it was very seldom that anything was left. They fare very much better now in the Navy. At sea the second day or so out, there would be no fresh meat, as the ships at that time didn't have any cool chambers or any means of keeping the meat fresh. So it was salt horse one day and salt pork and pea soup the next, same as on a merchant ship. The Navy has done some mighty things down through the years, but it wasn't the tucker that enabled them to do it.

One morning I watched the *Cordelia* go out of harbour. A beautiful white full rigged ship, she looked a fine sight as she slowly steamed out of harbour, a splendid picture of a man-of-war. She was bound for a cruise around the islands, which would last for some months. I watched her go then thought no more about her until one morning a few days later. It was a foggy morning I noticed a white ship looming through the fog, passing us I wondered what ship it could be, maybe a foreign man-of-war then when she came closer I saw it was the *Cordelia* and I wondered what she had returned to port for. There must be something wrong. There was no wireless those days, so no one knew she was coming back to port. But we soon found out what was the matter, and what had happened was this.

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<sup>9</sup> The d after a number indicates monetary value of pence.

She was carrying out gun practice at sea when one of the guns burst, six of the crew were killed by flying metal, and others were wounded. A chap named Symper was up on the fore Royal yard when a piece of metal cut the port lift and he was nearly thrown off the yard. The metal just missed him. He had a lucky escape. Some time later I was shipmates with him and he fell overboard and was drowned which I will tell of later. So the *Cordelia* had returned to bury the dead and have the gun replaced, spare guns were kept on the island always.

Amongst those killed were two or three Marines. All were buried at Rookwood in the naval part of the cemetery. The following week the *Cordelia* went to sea again to continue her cruise around the islands.

Spare guns of all kinds used by the ships were in store. The only one they couldnt replace was when the *Nelson* had one of her 10 inch guns damaged. The A tube cracked, so as the *Cerberus* had the same kind of guns, one of her guns was taken and put on the *Nelson* and the *Cerberus* had to wait until a new gun for her arrived from England. The *Nelson* had to keep prepared as she was not only the Flagship then, but a sea going fighting ship. Whereas the *Cerberus* was only for harbour defence and never went to sea.

We never knew for certain how long we would remain in harbour. There would be all kinds of reports on the mess deck as to our movements, we were going to this place or that, but those yarns were of little use and not much notice was taken of them.

The only thing we could be sure about was when a programme was put up on the lower deck notice board, and

that wasn't always done if the cruise was only a short one, and even if it was a long cruise the dates were often altered.

Sometimes we would go up north to Brisbane and ports beyond, at other times we would just go on a short cruise to some bay for gun practice, then we would come back to Sydney for a few more weeks. The Admiral wouldn't always go to sea with us, if it was only for gun firing for a day or two. We were the Flagship, the other ships did most of the long cruising around.

One day after a short cruise and we were tied up at No 1 buoy, a sudden buster (a squall) came along which brought rain with it. They piped slope the quarter deck awning. While this was being done in the rain a chap named Yeo found a hitch had jammed with the rain, and was finding it a hard job to unbend. The officer of the watch yelled at him for being so slow, at the same time using some bad language. The man gave back as good (or as bad) as he had got. The result was he was court martialled and got six months in prison. A boy who was witness for the man contradicted himself a few times and he got 3 months for giving unsatisfactory evidence. One of the newspapers in Sydney took the matter up and made a big fuss about the affair. The paper said the officer wasn't fit to be serving in a ship on the Australian station and should be sent back to England. I think the mans sentence term was lessened and the boys term washed out.

I forget if the officer in question was sent back to England or not. No one is supposed to use bad language on board a British man-of-war, officer or man, but they do, it all depends who uses it, I guess.

Not long after this little affair was over, we heard we were

to go on a northern cruise. There was talk that we were going to meet the new Auxiliary Squadron, but we didn't take much notice of it. We knew that a new squadron was coming out, but there was no official news that we were to meet it. But it wasn't very long before we did know for certain that we were going to meet the ships and escort them around the Australian ports. It was general news that we would soon sail north. The Auxiliary Squadron was the outcome of an agreement between England and the Australian Colonies (as they were then) by which a subsidy was paid by them on the condition that the squadron was kept on the Australian station and kept to a certain strength, and that these additional ships should not be sent off the limits of the station without the sanction of the Colonial Government.

These ships were five cruisers and two torpedo gun boats. They were all given Australian native names. They were as follows *Ringarooma*, *Katoomba*, *Wallaroo*, *Tauranga*, *Mildura*. The torpedo gunboats were the *Boomerang* and *Karakatta*.

In due course we left port and went up north calling at Brisbane (Moreton Bay). We stayed there in Moreton Bay for two days as we were too big a ship to go up the river. After leaving there we went straight to Townsville, our arrival there was made a general holiday. All the people (or most of them) in Charters Towers, the mining township some miles out of Townsville, which really kept Townsville going so I was informed, came down to the port to see the warship. We were supposed to be the first man-of-war to visit there, but I could hardly believe that some people who had lived there many years said they never knew of any man-of-war ever calling there. Anyway they made a big fuss of us and crowded the ship so much so there was hardly room for anyone to move

about. We remained there for three days and each day the ship was packed with visitors, both black and white. It really seemed true we were the only man-of-war to visit them, by the fuss they made of our ship. I guess they never forgot the visit of the *Orlando*.

There was a chap on board who was very good at mesmerism, his name was Somers. At one time I didn't believe in the cult, I thought it was all fake, perhaps some of the shows I had seen different times were faked, but when I became shipmates with Somers and saw the things he did, I changed my mind and became a believer. I saw him do things to people that would be impossible to do by faking.

I've seen him make a man as stiff as an iron bar, then place his head on a chair, and his feet on another chair, then Somers would stand on his body and jump up and down just as if he was on a plank of wood (Somers was about 11 stone), the mans body wouldn't bend an inch. Then Somers would raise his hands over the man, his stomach would bend up, his head and heels would draw the chairs together until the man's body was bent like a hairpin and his head and heels would meet. When I saw him do things like this without hurting anyone I began to believe there was really something in it. Somers would bring the man back to his senses and he wouldn't know what had been done to him before.

If anyone had toothache they would go to Somers, who would just touch his jaw with his finger and there would be no more pain, it would be gone as soon as he touched his face. There was no fake about that.

If you kicked your toes on a ringbolt which is a very painful thing to do, Somers, if he was about, would put his



hand on the hurt foot and the pain would go at once. He would put men off and make them do some very funny things such as eating a candle thinking it was something nice to eat, chewing soap etc. Yet no one was ever sick after it. After a while he was told to cease playing those kinds of tricks on the men as it sometimes started a row. When chaps (that is some of them) found what they had been doing to amuse the others, not everyone could take it.

On the last day we were at Townsville, a little black boy about 10 years old, was going up the iron ladder leading to the Fok'sl<sup>10</sup>, when he slipped as he had no boots or stockings on, he scraped the skin off both his legs from the foot to his knees, his shins were badly hurt, he screamed with the pain. Somers was sent for and he just put his hand on the hurt legs and said there's no pain now, is there sonny? Its not hurting you is it? The boy smiled and said no mister its all right now. Somers had taken the pain away. The boy was taken to the sick bay and the wounds were dressed. The last I saw of the boy was when he went ashore all smiles, but he had badly barked shins. So after knowing what Somers could do, I believe in mesmerism.

After all the people of Townsville and Charters Towers had seen all they could see on the ship, we left for Thursday Island where we were to meet the new squadron, where we arrived and anchored waiting for their arrival. The first day we were there, the liberty men drank all the beer that the one and only pub had, so it was pretty bad for the other watch

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<sup>10</sup> A forecandle or Fok'sl is the upper deck of a ship located at the bow (front) of the ship, typically above the main deck. It is often used as a crew quarters or storage area. The word forecandle comes from the Old English word forecastell, which means forward castle or castle at the bow.

ashore next day, they had no beer at all. The pub was bone dry, but its all in the game, first come, first served. A new supply of beer was expected to arrive any day, so that pleased the crew. If it didn't arrive it would be a poor look out for the men of the new ships when they got in. Thursday Island was a very small place then, that is the little township was. There was the signal station, one pub and not many houses and one or two stores. I don't think the fort was there at that time. Its a much bigger place now and very busy, its gone ahead since 1891. A few days after our arrival at the island, the fleet came in, all except one which was delayed with engine trouble, but she arrived the next day.

They were smart looking ships, skeleton rigged of course, each had two masts and two funnels. They had the Australian coat of arms on their bows, and also on each quarter of the stern they looked very well with the gilded scroll work. The torpedo gun boat *Boomerang* had for a figure head, an Australian Black about to throw a boomerang. The first modern ship I saw with a figure head, that is the new type, I don't think there were any others.

The torpedo gunboats were long, swift looking ships, built as what was known as the half boat type, built high in the fore part, something like a modern destroyer is built now. In fact these class of ships were the forerunners of the destroyer, they were to be able to run down a torpedo boat and destroy it.

The longest part of these ships had a low freeboard, about four feet. They could steam very fast, otherwise they would have been of little use, where torpedo boats were concerned.

The small population of Thursday Island gave the new

ships a great welcome. The fleet held a regatta, the pub had a new supply of beer, so everyone was happy. The crews of the new ships had a very good time ashore and the pub did very good business. After the squadron had painted ship and had a general clean up and the Admiral had inspected them, we went to sea again bound for Brisbane, with the Flagship leading. We had a fair trip down and anchored in Moreton Bay not very far from the pile light. The rest of the fleet went up the river, as we drew too much water we had to remain in the bay as usual. Although the new ships were the main attraction, the *Orlando* was crowded with visitors just the same as always when the ship was open to visitors. The day after our arrival all ships landed all the men they could, and we all marched through the city where we were cheered by the crowds in the streets. After the march was over we had a banquet. We had a great time there was almost anything to eat one could wish for. The people of Brisbane gave us a very great welcome and the men of the fleet were never likely to forget the good time they had. Each day the ships were full of visitors. I think it would have been the same had our stay lasted a week, and the people that visited the Flagship had come all the way down the river to get to the ship, but they didn't seem to mind that, and I guess the small steam boats that brought them made a big pay day.

A strange thing happened in this river years later in 1893, when the big flood came down and lifted the gun boat *Paluma* out of the river and landed it high up in the Botanical Gardens, which became another thing for sightseers. The gunboat was there high and dry for some months, quite undamaged. While the government were worrying how to get the ship back into the river, tenders were called for, but

before any work was started, down came another big flood, lifted the ship up and put it back in the river, still not damaged, so the big cost of putting her back into the river was saved. This sounds like a lower deck yarn, but believe me it really happened as I've stated, anyone can prove the facts if they doubt it.

Brisbane gave us the first big welcome and did us grand and we got the same kind of welcome at every port we called at with the fleet. The squadron left Brisbane and the city was sad to see us go, so the papers said, anyway we were sad to leave because we were having such a wonderful time, but everything has to come to an end and other ports wanted to see the ships they were paying for.

So on our way we went to our next port of call which was Sydney. On our arrival at Sydney another great welcome awaited us, along the harbour were crowds of people watching the ships coming in, and the next day we marched through the city, same as at Brisbane. The streets full of people cheering us on, we marched to the old Exhibition Building, I think it was, where another banquet was prepared for us. They seemed to be trying to outdo Brisbane's welcome but it was hard to say if one was better than the other, both were splendid and would be very hard to beat, they were much the same wherever we went.

Again for a few days the ships were open for inspection and were full of the usual visitors. Then after the ships had coaled and made ship shape, we left Sydney bound for Melbourne. Again we landed and marched through the city and although the streets were so wide, they were packed with people only the centre being left for us to march four abreast.

Again there was a banquet, which was in the Exhibition Building which being so large we had plenty of room. There being about 900 men, we had a very good time. I can't describe all the wonderful eats that was there its so many years ago, but I do know there was almost anything in the way of food.

After the usual stay of about five days we went to sea again and crossed over to Hobart, again a march through the city with a banquet afterwards. Although Hobart was not as crowded as the other big cities on the mainland there seemed to be a big crowd there just the same and we had a real good time. The welcome we got was just as sincere as the big cities gave us.

It was a great sight to see the fleet anchored in the Derwent with yachts and small boats going around the ships. The pubs ashore did a roaring trade with the hundreds of sailors ashore every day, four days we stayed there, then to sea again this time bound for Adelaide.

Soon as we got to sea into the strait we struck a very heavy sea, all our other trips around we have had very good weather with an even sea, but now the sea was running very high as we rolled and pitched along. I never once saw the hulls of the two torpedo gunboats, all I could see was their masts, they were always hid by the heavy seas, that is their hulls were.

We reached Largs Bay on the third day after leaving Hobart. The ships had slowed down owing to the heavy seas, a few of the ships went up the river to Port Adelaide, the rest stayed at Largs Bay. There was no outer harbour there at that time. We had the usual march with a banquet after it, which was held in the Exhibition Building in North Terrace, it being

the largest hall. I don't know how we would have got on if the cities hadn't had Exhibition Buildings handy for the banquets for so many sailors, I suppose they would have to had two sittings. Before we left Adelaide, the ships were painted, they needed it, after the rough passage they had coming from Hobart.

So we went to sea again for Albany, which was the port for Perth, there being no harbour then at Fremantle. We landed and went by train to Perth which was a pretty long train trip, there was a march the same as other places, also the usual banquet, and everyone had a good time. The banquets were the only real feed we had, it was wonderful after the poor fare in the Navy. Although visitors had to come by train from Fremantle and Perth to visit the ships, they came in crowds to see all they could and I suppose they all enjoyed it. I had plenty of invitations to peoples homes, but our stay was too short to accept them and as the train trip was such a long one, I didn't bother about going up to the city after the march.

The ships filled up their bunkers and two of the cruisers left with one of the torpedo gun boats for New Zealand to visit the ports there, as the ships were all of one class, the people would know what the others looked like. The day after the three had left for New Zealand the rest of the fleet left for Sydney. We had a fair trip to Sydney and a few days after our arrival one of the new ships left to visit the small ports up past Brisbane. All the fuss was over so we expected to remain at Sydney for quite a while. Being the Flagship we went alongside Garden Island to refit and have alterations made, half the ships company went ashore into barracks and half lived on another ship alongside which was out of commission, in a few weeks we were out of dock yard hands

and back in Farm Cove.

After remaining in Sydney, a week or two more we again went to sea with some of the fleet. I suppose one reason for going to sea soon after coming out of dock yard hands, was to try out the engines and see that everything was all right. Maybe another reason was to visit Portland and give the people there a chance to see the ships as we didn't call there when escorting the fleet around. Anyway we went straight to Portland and had a rough trip along the coast before we reached there. They must have known we were coming because when we arrived it was a public holiday with all kinds of sports held. We didn't march, Portland is only a small town, it was at that time anyway, but hundreds of the men landed and went to the sports and had a good look around, not forgetting the pubs. I saw some of the sports and also had a good look round the town.

The sports lasted two or three days, there was also a fleet regatta held, boat racing, sailing races etc. The ships were full of visitors as usual and those on board the ships had a better view of the regatta than the people on shore had. The visit of the ships would mean a lot to the town as a big amount of cash would be spent by the men. A visit of a few men-of-war means quite a lot to a small town. We had no march there as I've said, and no banquet, but we got a good welcome just the same and there was tea and eats at the sports. Portland is an open roadstead,<sup>11</sup> and as a rule there's a big ground swell there, big as the Flagship was, we rolled so much that our boat booms almost dipped into the water as the ship rolled to the

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<sup>11</sup> A partly sheltered anchorage; a stretch of water near the shore where vessels may ride at anchor, but with less protection than a harbour.

swell. We remained at Portland three and half days, then we went to sea again and carried out evolutions, such as man and arm ship, take ship in tow, fire quarters etc. The weather was fair and in a few days we were back in Sydney Harbour.

I used to go ashore quite a lot in Sydney. It was nice to get away from the routine of the ship for a while, and see something different, besides there was a girl, there generally is I guess. So sometimes I would go along to my girls place for tea and the evening. At other times I would just walk about the city. Now and then I would take my girl to see a good play. I remember once we went to see a play called *Youth*, George Rignold was the star actor. At the time when the villain was doing his bad work you could hear a pin drop it was that quiet. Suddenly my girlfriend stood up shook her fist at the star performer and yelled out Oh you villain!, Almost everyone stood up and looked at us. I felt like slipping through the floor. Her mother told me the girl was like that, got carried away as it were. Of course, she was very sorry afterwards for making such a fool of herself. But worse things than that has happened to me since, and after all I never married her, one is never sure is one, but at the time I was young and very much in love or thought I was.

The first of every month was pay day and it was nice to go ashore on 48 hours general leave with a few bob in your pocket, and although the pay was poor, things were cheap and ten bob was worth more than a pound now, it went further. There was no boxes of chocs, for 5/- or more like girls want now, they were quite satisfied with a bob's worth of other sweets. You could take your girl out, have a good dinner and a day's entertainment for less than five bob, if you spent more your girlfriend would earbash you, they were the



good old days. A sailor always had a good time although his pay was small.

Going back on board ship at 7<sup>am</sup> was the worst part of it, maybe in the cold and wet. Near the man-of-war steps, at the end of the key there used to be a coffee stall where you could get a mug of good hot coffee with a large square piece of cake all for 3<sup>d</sup>. That stall was a God send to sailors going on board on a cold and wet morning. Sometimes I would be running late and couldn't stop at the stall or I would miss the liberty boat, it was then that I knew what a hard life a sailors was. That stall keeper did a very good trade with the men of the fleet, he was only there at mornings. After the men had gone on board the ships, he would close the stall and go. Maybe he had another job to go to, but the stall wouldn't do much trade after 8<sup>am</sup> anyway. He might get one or two who had missed the liberty boat and would have to get a waterman to take them off, but they would be few. As a rule if a man lost the boat and was adrift, he would go back and make a day of it, just as well to be hung for a sheep, as a lamb.

Those were the days of the steam trams that were run like a train with an engine and two or three cars attached. The two buses and Hanson cabs. Sydney seemed to have more than its share of Hanson cabs and in spite of the trams and buses they all got a good living, and very flash some of those cabs were, but I never rode in one. If I wanted to go out of the city a steam tram was good enough for me, I was never flash.

One day our rigging was full of washing, the evening before had been scrub and wash day. All ships in harbour were the same, their rigging full of clothes drying, as a few showers had fallen during the night, the washing was kept

hanging longer than was usual. No other ship could take down their washing until the Flagship took in theirs. Follow the Flagship motions is the rule. Suppose the Flagships washing was dry and took it in, the other ships had to do the same even if their washing wasn't quite dry. Of course they could get permission to put it up again, which wasn't always granted but down it would have to come if the Flagship took theirs in. A signal would be made down all scrub and wash clothes, all would wait, and as soon as the signal was hauled down, then all the washing would come down together.

On this day when the washing had been left hanging longer because ours were not dry enough, along came a Woolloomooloo buster all of a sudden like they sometimes do in Sydney Harbour, and before the washing could be taken in, most of it was blown out of the stops and overboard. I got all of mine except a uniform jumper and a flannel. As it was a make and mend day and my watch ashore, I decided to go ashore when leave was piped, I didn't want to lose a uniform jumper. I didn't mind a flannel, but the jumper was valuable. There was a chance that some of the clothes would drift ashore alongside the wall, but quite a lot of it would sink, so ashore I went, and was lucky enough to find my jumper also the flannel, and a pair of duck pants belonging to one of the chaps I knew. All clothing has the owners name on it. I was very well pleased as I rung the clothes out and took them onto the Naval House until I went on board next morning. The chap who owned the pants was very much surprised to get them back. He had said good bye to them, they were almost new, a sailor can't afford to lose good clothing, he has to buy it. The Navy don't give uniforms free, only when you first join up. Other times I've had washing lost overboard and

never found it, you can't be lucky always.

We didn't see much of the Admiral when we were in Sydney. He lived ashore at Admiralty House right on the side of the harbour opposite the ships. On Sundays sometimes he would come on board to church service, other times we seldom saw him. The ship was always within his view and if he noticed anything that shouldn't be, a signal would be made about it, that was called being picked up by the Admiral. The other ships were on the move more than we were, what was the good of being the Flagship if you didn't take things easy. Now and then we would leave on a small cruise, but we were seldom long away, perhaps only away to do some firing.

Time passed and the time came when I was near the finish of my short service. I could take my discharge or sign on for a longer term, but I was still keen on joining the Victorian Navy. So when the time came I took my discharge and said farewell to my mess mates and the *Orlando*.

So I went ashore with my kit all packed in my bag. I left nothing behind as I would need it all if I entered on the *Cerberus* as I intended. That night I was on my way to Melbourne. I had seen my girlfriend and said good bye for the time being, and had also visited all my other friends round about. Next day long before dinner I was home.

In a few weeks there was a chance for the *Cerberus* so I went and entered after passing the doctor. Jack Symper who nearly lost his life on the *Cordelia* when that gun accident happened, also joined the *Cerberus*. He had taken his discharge and followed me over.

In the Victorian Navy every man was ships company of the *Cerberus* and that ships name was on his cap, no matter what

ship he might be serving in, the *Nelson*, *Victoria*, *Albert*, or on the torpedo boats, in which case he would be quartered at the depot at Williamstown, all really belonged to the *Cerberus*.

There was a strong Naval Brigade ashore and they would man the lesser ships if they were required. They had their drill halls ashore and also would come on board the ships for gun drill at different times. These men were mostly employed with the Harbour Trust and were ex seamen.

Every Easter when the ships steamed about Port Phillip the brigade went with them and had a weeks good drill with the guns etc. After awhile I was drafted to the *Nelson* and I was quite satisfied, it didn't matter what ship I went to. The leave was just the same, two nights out of three, and two Saturdays to Monday out of three, so that was quite all right and if a man wanted more leave than that on shore, he was hard to please.

We also got 14 days leave a year on full pay and public holidays or some other day instead if you couldn't be spared, so we had nothing to growl about. The food was good and there was plenty of it, the pay was also good, so I was happy and contented. We also got a make and mend every Wednesday after dinner and could go ashore, that is the watch ashore could. We had of course to find our own uniforms as in the R.N.

The *Nelson* was a fine old comfortable ship with plenty of room on board, she was built as a three decker at first and was said to have been one of the fastest ships under sail in the Navy (three deckers). She could steam as well as sail, being one of those ships that could hoist the propeller into a propeller well and lower her funnel if sailing only. She

launched at Woolwich in 1814.

Before she came to Australia she was made into a two decker and years afterwards she was again cut down into a large frigate. She was very heavily armed with 6 inch 64 pounder truck guns on her main deck, with two 7 inch guns as bow chasers. These guns were all M.L. ones, she also had some quick firing guns and machine guns. She was also unrigged, her fore and mizzen masts taken out. The main mast being left for signalling purposes. She was headquarters and guard ship, the Captain of the *Cerberus* lived on board her.

So that is how the *Nelson* was when I first went on board her and still a fine comfortable ship, we had a good reading room on board on the main gun deck with a stove for use in the winter time. She was really a home away from home and I was very happy whenever I was drafted to serve on her and that was several times during the years I was in the Victorian Navy. When a gale was blowing and the weather was cold the men on the *Nelson* were nice and snug, and when off duty could sit in a nice warm reading room. It was no hardship to be stationed on the old *Nelson* believe me.

There was no issue of rum in the Victorian Navy, we got an allowance of butter instead. If any man wanted rum (*Nelson's blood* as it was called) he could get all he needed when ashore. There never was any leave breaking, which was unusual for a Navy ship. There was no need to break leave, a man got all the leave he needed. I had twelve happy months on the *Nelson* then I was shifted back to the *Cerberus*. She was just as comfortable as the *Nelson* with plenty of room, and there was a bogie stove on the lower deck so it was warm

during the winter. As the *Nelson* had more deck space than the *Cerberus* a ball or children's party was always held on board her. When a turnout was given to the kiddies, they had the time of their lives. The big quarter deck capstan was made into a merry-go-round, bos'uns chairs were rigged to a running block on wire ropes from the mast to the bows, so the kiddies could slide along, and have a happy time. There were swings and other things to amuse them and keep them happy. We had no parties for kiddies on the *Cerberus* but had sing songs etc. amongst ourselves now and then. We had a naval ball every year which was held in one of the brigade drill halls ashore. That was a ships company ball.

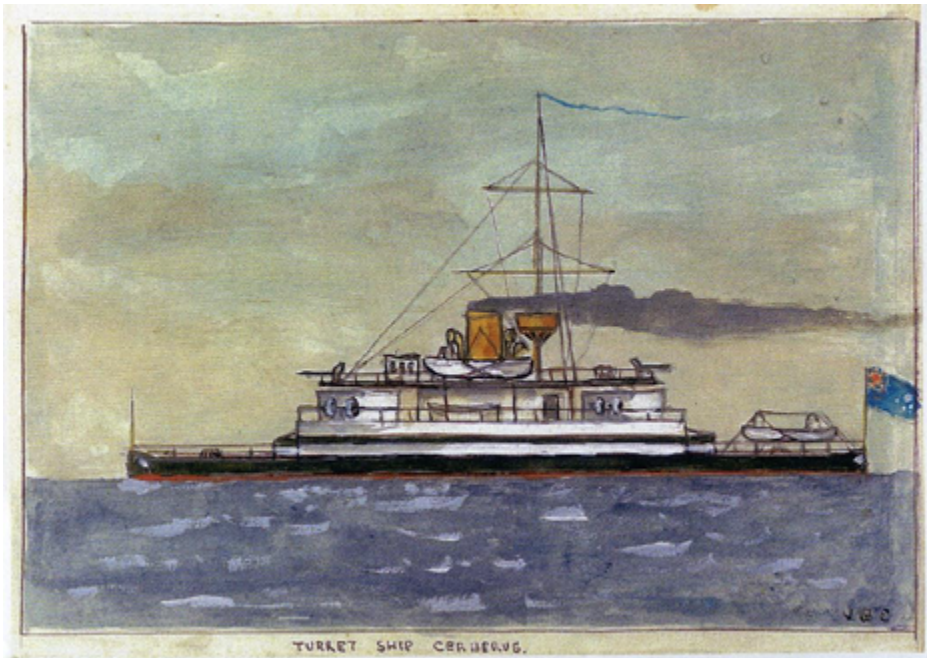
When the officers gave a ball it was always held on board the *Nelson*. There was plenty of room on board her for a ball and I suppose it suited the officers best to have it on board rather than ashore in the drill hall.

The *Cerberus* was a double turret ironclad, her length was 335 feet, with a beam of 45 feet, each turret had two 10 inch guns of 18 tons they were M.L. or muzzle loaders. They fired a projectile of 400 lbs, the powder charge being 70 lbs of pebble powder. The turrets were ten inches thick armour plate near the gun ports and 9 inches elsewhere.

There was also an inner lining of  $\frac{3}{8}$  iron, with a space of 10 inches from the backing, to prevent splinters being driven inside the turret if hit by a projectile. The backing was oak 10 inches to 9 inches thick. The diameter of the turret inside was 21 feet 5 inches. The outside being 26 feet 6 inches, height inside was eight feet 8 inches.

The crew that manned each turret consisted of 34 men, 15 men and one powder man to each gun, with a captain and

second of the turret. The height of the turret above the breastwork deck was a little over five feet, on the flying deck she had two 6 pounder quick firing guns and four five barrel Nordenfelts machine guns.



Later on two 14 pounder guns were put on board. They were breach loader quick firing guns, and were on the breastwork deck between the turrets. The ship was armour plated all over and well down past the water line. So she was a strong well armed ship, and was one time the strongest and only ironclad south of the line. With those details you will have an idea of what the *Cerberus* was like. For her general appearance you will find all you want to know by looking at the sketch of her as she was at the time I served on board her.

There was often dock yard parties sent over to Williamstown, to the depot. The men for this work would be drawn from the different ships, it depended how big the job

was. As a rule they left the dock yard to return to the ships at about 3.45, so that the men that was watch ashore, could have plenty of time to clean and get ready to land at 4.30 when liberty men left the ships.

Most of the men were married and always wanted to be in time for the liberty boat. One day when I was one of a dock yard party, we were all in the boat at the dock head ready to return to the ship. The officer in charge of us was talking to someone and didn't seem to be in a hurry to go back on board, but those in the boat were. As the minutes went by and he was still there talking all in the boat were getting impatient with the delay. Most in the boat were liberty men and wanted to get back on board and get cleaned for shore.

More time passed and still the officer showed no sign of coming to the boat. One of the men called out hurry up, Jo Norden felts! that was the nickname the officer was known by on board the ship, and he wasn't very popular. He at once turned, hurried to the boat, jumped in and gave the order to shove off, and away we went. We had a good mile to pull and bent our backs to it and we was soon back on board. As soon as we were on board we all fell in on the quarter deck and asked who was it that called out, hurry up Jo Jo! No one seemed to know, all heard it of course, but no one could say who it really was, that is they would not say. No doubt some knew who it was, I was there but couldn't say who called out, Although I heard it plain enough but no one would give the offender away. Our leave was stopped for the time being, then each man in turn had to go before the Commander to be questioned again, and one gave the show away by telling who it was that called out to the officer, so that was that!



The offender was detained and the rest of us dismissed, some were late that evening getting ashore, they had missed the liberty boat. It wasn't my watch ashore so I wasn't worried. The outcome of this little affair was the offender was punished although he still denied it was he who called out. The man who informed was nicknamed, Carey the informer. He was court martialled on the lower deck and the sentence was that no one was to speak to him, only in case of duty for six months, and he was to have his meals sitting on the deck away from his messmates, and this was carried out for the full six months. He knew it was no use to complain about this treatment, it would only make it worse for himself if he did. So he took his gruel for the six months, even after that, he wasn't forgiven and few had any use for him. He was well hated. A lower deck court martial is no joke believe me.

Some time later the offender took his discharge and shipped on a sailing ship going to England. As the ship passed us being towed out, the man (our former shipmate) who was working on the Fok'sl again yelled out, good bye Jo Jo! I often wondered what that officers thoughts were. The man came back some time later and I hear was in a job in Melbourne but I never met him.

On the *Nelson* when there was a blow on with a heavy sea running, the liberty men used to get into the boat by using a jumping ladder hanging over the stern, from the poop. They would throw their bundles down first. Those times every man carried a bundle going home, washing or such like, so after throwing their bundles down to the boat their hands were free for going down the swaying jumping ladder.

One day a steward threw his bundle down, a chap that tried

to catch it, missed it and it fell on a thwart<sup>12</sup> and came open, and out fell some silver back hair brushes and other things, which belonged to the officer of the watch who was then standing on the poop looking into the boat so he got a surprise to see his own property going ashore.

The steward was ordered back and put in the rattle, later on he was punished and dismissed from the service. He was blamed for stealing other things from the officers cabins. On board ship a thief gets no sympathy from anyone, its a great crime to rob a shipmate or a messmate, yet its done.

When a salute had to be fired it was always from the *Nelson*, being senior officers ship, the *Cerberus* had saluting guns, but she never fired a salute. The *Nelson's* 64 pounder guns were used with a reduced saluting charge and I've known times when windows ashore on the front were broken by the firing, if the wind was in the right quarter and when the *Cerberus* was miles away down Port Phillip doing some firing, her 10 inch guns would make the crockery rattle in homes many miles away when the wind was in that direction. I've known windows to rattle 12 miles away.

One day some of us were at drill on the *Nelson*, we were at a Nordenfelt machine gun which fires a steel projectile 1 inch in diameter, they are in a hopper on the gun which had five barrels, and five shots can be fired at one time. Dummies are used for drill and are tested to make sure that no live ones are amongst them. We had been at the gun some time, each time we fired the dummy shells would fall from the gun. The gun was sighted for the chart room of the *Cerberus* where some men were at work cleaning the paint work, suddenly there

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<sup>12</sup> A structural crosspiece forming a seat for a rower in a boat.

was a report and we knew a live charge had been fired.

I looked at the *Cerberus* expecting to see that one of the men had been shot. They were lucky, what happened was, the projectile hit the top sail on our poop which altered its course and it smashed into the top of the chart house on the *Cerberus*, thus missing the men, which was a good thing for them, as well as us. There was a big row about it and the gunner got a rub down over it, but it was never discovered how the live charge got into the hopper, as all those used are tested before using for drill. It seemed impossible for a live one to get mixed with the others, but that did happen.

The chaps working at the chart house got a scare, it could easily have been a tragedy. There were no more mistakes after that, they made very certain the hoppers contained only dummies.

Having plenty of shore leave two evenings out of three, I did quite a lot of dancing those days, two or three times a week to a dance sometimes, or maybe to a ball which meant from 8<sup>pm</sup> to 3 or 4<sup>am</sup>, then back on board on the ship at 7<sup>am</sup>. I often got home just in time to change into uniform and go back to the ship. Those were the dancing days and I was young and could dance too, as well as the next one. Yes, I had great times ashore at that time.

One long leave I went to Sydney, the main reason was of course was to see my girlfriend. I went by steamer which I liked better than going by train, which was a slow weary journey then, besides I could go by steamer and have a bunk, and meals all for 10/-, that was a cheap trip. All the shipping firms were cutting each other down, with fares, they went from 25/- to a pound then 15/- and the last one was 10/-. So I

went to Sydney and back during my annual leave, twice I spent my leave like that then my girl came to Melbourne for a holiday and we talked of getting married, but fate ruled otherwise and she returned to Sydney, and soon after that we parted for good.

She was a fine singer and while here we went to parties etc., where she always sang two or three songs. She finished up by singing my swan song, got married and has now a grown up family and grandchildren. After she left, it was 12 years before I saw her again and by then I was married too, with a family of five. What a queer world it is, we often think we are hard done by but are we? That is the question. Fate was kind to me later on.

The torpedo boats, when not in the water were kept on steps in sheds at the depot, next to the dock yard. When wanted for a run they could be launched from the slip way at very short notice, they were well looked after and kept in first class order. It was torpedo men that looked after them and manned them, they lived at the depot, and had a good easy job.

Every man in the service had to go through a torpedo course of training, whether he took up torpedo work or not (that is a torpedo rating). You had to be able to take your place in a torpedo boat, as well as behind a gun on one of the ships. It was different in the R.N. as gunnery was separate from torpedo work. A large torpedo boat was ordered and built in England, she was the latest thing in torpedo boats being ocean going and very fast. Torpedo boats were getting larger and larger, until the torpedo boat destroyer was built and that was the finish of the torpedo boats, but at this time when the

new large torpedo boat was ordered, destroyers were not thought of.

This new boat sailed out from England rigged as a brigantine and sailed all the way as she couldn't carry enough coal for a long voyage. She was a good sea boat and made a good trip out to Victoria. After she was unrigged and conditioned for service she looked a smart little ship and had room for a large crew. When she was ready, she was put in the dock which was flooded for the occasion, ready for the ceremony of christening. She was dressed with bunting, rainbow fashion and Lady Hopetoun came from Government House to christen the ship. The dock yard was crowded with sightseers, it was a great day. So she was christened the *Countess of Hopetoun* but the only name she got in the Navy was the *Countess*, the other was much too long for sailors. After the ceremony was over many of the visitors (special ones of course) were given afternoon tea in the depot.

The new boat became the pride of the Navy after she was put in commission, she was the fastest boat in Australian waters and the most up to date, sometimes she would go down to Swan Island where we would do torpedo running for a week. Little trips like these were a nice change from the usual routine of shipboard. We could fish in the evenings and there was a fort there, where we could visit the canteen and have a very good time. Then when that was finished and we were homeward bound, if the weather was good, the *Countess* just seemed to fly through the water. It was then I could say I was really having a fast time.

Sometimes on a Wednesday morning we would land for Battalion drill, every man that could be spared was landed

and we marched about drilling until about 11.30. There was always an army of small kids there to watch us, maybe wishing they were sailors. Then back to the ships we would go have dinner, and those who's watch ashore it was landed at 1.30 on leave while the rest left on board had a make and mend<sup>13</sup>. It was a great life in the Victorian Navy.

When parliament opened we would land for a guard of honour, we would march up Collins Street spick and span and I guess none could find fault with our marching. The men of the *Cerberus* could march, take it from me, well so they should. They were all well trained and knew their job, we would have the Brigade band to lead us, there was no looking to the right or left, but straight ahead, stepping it out like guardsmen.

If any man turned his head, he was sure to be spotted by some officer and would know all about it when he got back to the ship. The permanent artillery would also march and form up opposite us. They were good to watch as they marched along just as good as the Guards. I was told once that the men of the *Cerberus* marched as well as the V.P.A and that was praise good enough for me.

One time there was a big review at Albert Park, Lord Hopetoun took the salute. We landed and marched right up to the north side of the city by the Haymarket then back again to Albert Park to the review. When it was over we marched back to Port Melbourne with the usual army of kids marching with us. It was alright on such times as that for those of the watch ashore for they were already dressed in

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<sup>13</sup>. Ships call 'to make and mend clothes'. Actually, just an afternoon off if kit was up to date.

their best and hadn't to get ready, only maybe a brush down to get some of the street dust off, and maybe a wash.

If those kids that marched from the review to Port Melbourne with us were not tired, I guess we were. We had put in a pretty tough day, going to and coming from, and then as well, all the marching about at the review. It was an outing and did us no harm, and that's what we were trained for. As I look back to those days, I know we had a very good time of it with little to growl about. I had been to one or two reviews and if marching made a man fit, I had a fair share of it and should have been fit enough, that's certain. We all had a pretty good time and we knew it.

There were times when we all got under way, the *Cerberus* and the two gun boats and did some manoeuvres and gun practice for a few days, and there would be no chance of getting home but that was not often. But at Easter time all the ships and the torpedo boat would go away for a week for exercises. The Brigade would go too, some on each ship and they would have plenty of it before they got back. At night time if there was no torpedo boat attack we would often have a sing song on board the *Cerberus*, we always had plenty to amuse us one way and another, but we were there for exercises and we got them, man and arm ship, exercise action, repel torpedo attack and plenty of other evolutions. Sometimes late at night after all those off duty would be in their hammocks, the bugle would sound clear ship for action or some other exercise and all hands would turn out, with more or less growling, it was all in the game and was soon over. We could always be turned out like that, it was the Navy, always was so and always will be I reckon, men must be prepared.

After the rounds had gone and all found at their stations and all correct, we would be piped down again. We expected to have plenty of breaks like that, turning out at all hours of the night.

It was during one of these trips that Symper lost his life, the chap I mentioned before who had been on the *Cordelia*. It was during the daytime, a sea boat was called away, it was a ten oar cutter and Symper was one of its crew. As the boat is still in the davits when the crew man it, then it is lowered into the water. When he was getting into the boat Symper fell overboard and went down like a stone, a mark buoy was dropped and the ship stopped. As Symper didn't come to the surface a diver was sent down but couldn't find him, his body was never recovered. Why he sank like a stone and didn't come up again was a mystery to us all. He hadn't been long married. The death of Symper cast a gloom over the ship for the rest of the trip.

Apart from dancing I often went to a party, those times such affairs were quite common, but such turnouts I missed because I happened to be watch on board and couldn't get ashore. Surprise parties were all the rage too. No one was supposed to tell the people who were getting the party anything about it, that was the surprise. Those that got it up all met somewhere went along to the house and knocked on the door, when the door was opened everyone rushed in, cleared all the furniture from the largest room and started dancing. Then there would be a few songs, and finish with a supper, all the eats etc. was brought by the people taking part.

Sometimes the people were put wise that a surprise party was coming such and such a night. Care was always taken to



make sure there was no illness in the house, if so the party was put off. Everyone enjoyed those parties and when they were over everything was replaced as before.

The last party of this kind I attended, was the very last one for me, for I never went to another. The reason was, we went to the house and as soon as the chap opened the door there was a rush to get in. He was jammed between the passage wall and the door, which had one of those big keys in it. The key was forced into the mans body and there was a hospital case instead of the party. He was badly injured and was laid up many weeks. That was the finish of surprise parties for me, I never went to any more, I had had enough of them.

Then another time the dancing club I belonged to decided to have a picnic in the country. So all the chaps and the girls went in two big vans. It was a public holiday so everyone could go. We arrived at the place, miles into the country, and while the chaps got the hot water going for the tea the girls spread table cloths on the grass and got the eats ready. At last we all sat on the grass and started to enjoy our dinner. We were not sitting long when one of the girls jumped up and danced around screaming. We were all in a panic at once thinking a snake had bitten her. We soon discovered that she had been sitting on a bull ants' nest and was covered with those savage ants, she was very badly bitten. Some of the girls took her into one of the vans, stripped her and got rid of the ants. Not long afterwards she collapsed and was so bad that we had to pack up and take her back to the city where she could be attended to. She was very ill for over a week. So our great picnic was spoilt by bull ants. It was our own fault, we should have made sure no ant nests were about where we prepared dinner.

When Sir Fredrick Sargood was Minister for Defence, he invited the men of the Navy with their wives and children to spend the day at his lovely place *Rippon Lea* at Elsternwick. So as many as could be spared got leave to go, leaving on the ships just enough men to look after things. Four drays each with four horses were provided for us.

The drays were waiting for us outside the station in Flinders Street and they were soon packed full, with all the wives and children, and the best girls of the single chaps, and away we went. Some of the chaps in the leading dray fixed a barrow, on outriggers like davits, over the stern, with two handy billys to hoist it or lower it down. As we went along St Kilda Road a chap would drop off the dray, there would be the cry of *man overboard*, the dray would stop and the barrow lowered then one of the chaps would wheel it back pick up the man overboard, and return with him in the barrow, when the poor supposed half drowned man was hoisted on board again amidst the cheers of the crew in the dray.

St Kilda Road was at that time just a metal road not the fine street lined with trees and lawns as it is now, and it wasnt very busy. So the chaps could skylark as much as they liked, there was no traffic much to hold up. After the barrow was hoisted and all made snug, the drays would get under way again until someone else fell overboard when again the barrow would be lowered to save him. There were no trams along there then only a few buses ran along that way. The man overboard business caused much amusement amongst the people passing along, as well as to the women and children on the drays. That foolery was all right those days but it couldn't be done today, what with all the trams and all the motor cars rushing along.

At last we arrived at *Rippon Lea*, what lovely grounds it had, beautiful lawns and flower beds, shrubs and trees, it was a beautiful place. The old mansion is still there but most of the lovely grounds have been cut up and built on now, and theres a railway station quite close called *Rippon Lea* after the mansion. We were made very welcome and had the freedom of the place, we could use the large ball room and the billiard room, or we could roam where we liked about the beautiful gardens. A very nice dinner and tea was provided, we had a very enjoyable day. A day to be remembered, I know I've never forgotten it. The kiddies had swings etc. to keep them happy too. None of us were ever likely to forget Sir Frederick Sargood. I've had plenty of good outings, but the day I spent at *Rippon Lea* stands out as the best.

The two ten oar cutters of the *Cerberus* were both Canadian built. Such cutters were supposed to be the best pulling races. They must have been fine racing cutters as they had never been beaten by any other ship's boats, British or foreign. So it was either the cutter, or the *Cerberus* crew that pulled the boat, maybe it was both, but the fact remains they had beaten all comers.

It was usual when a man-of-war came in for a cutters crew to pull over to our ship and toss their oars under our bows, as a challenge to race. Foreign ships too would challenge us and we always took it up and always won. We had beaten Russian, German, French and Austrian cutters as well as R.N. ships on the station.

One day an Austrian corvette came in and as soon as they had dropped anchor, they sent a cutter over and challenged us. We didn't disappoint them. The race was arranged for the

next afternoon, the distance being four miles. When the race came our cutter won easily. The Austrians complained that we had a much lighter boat. There was no doubt about that, our boat was much lighter. Their cutter was lined inside and was much heavier than ours. The outcome was that our boats crew offered to lend them our boat and they would pull in the Australian boat, and race again, so another race was arranged, the cutters being swapped, and again they were beaten badly by our crew pulling their boat, so we heard no more complaints.

Our cutter was clinker built while theirs was a diagonal built boat. So our cutter was a very much lighter boat. Anyway the race was fair and square. The boats being changed decided which was the better boats crew.

Kept in one of the sheds at the depot was the old captains galley that came out in the *Nelson* (the old two decker), it was there only for show, being too old for use. It was the finest galley I ever saw, it was a beautiful boat.

After a good spell on the *Cerberus* I was sent back to the *Nelson*. I didn't mind which ship they sent me to, one was just as good as another, with the same routine on each.

I was never drafted to the depot or to the *Victoria*. The only time I went onboard the *Victoria* was for a bit of gun drill at her 8 inch gun, but later on I went to the *Albert* and as she had a gun the same I never had to visit the other ship for drill. When the *Victoria* came out to Australia she had a 25 ton 10 inch gun forward, with a length of 26 feet. It was really too big a gun for such a small ship. The yarn was told that when the gun was fired it stopped the ship and sent her astern, but I reckon that was only a sailors joke. Anyway, they did

consider it was too big, so it was taken out and put ashore in one of the forts at the Heads. A 8 inch gun was put in its place.

I wasn't very long back in the *Nelson* when she went into dry dock for a general overhaul and clean the bottom of mussels etc. After a long spell at her moorings there would be many tons of mussels on her, and this time she had a fair issue, so we had plenty to do scraping them off the bottom as the water was being pumped out of the dock. When the dock was almost dry there were tons of fish trapped there. It didn't take long for the news to get about, and soon there were men, women and children with bags, trucks and anything they could carry fish away in. We gathered all we needed, and they soon took all they could carry away, and what was left was hoisted out of the dock to be carted away and buried. It was a pity to see so much good fish wasted, but the dock had to be cleaned out. It was only once in a while that so much was found in the dock when pumped out, but at times a good haul was made. As soon as we had cleaned the bottom of the ship and painted it, the dock was flooded and we came out and made fast alongside the dock pier.

A merchant ship was ready to go into the dock, ships after they had unloaded went into dock for cleaning or painting before loading for the homeward voyage. So as there were plenty of ships loading or unloading the place was pretty busy.

When we came out of the dock we still had plenty to do, the paint had to be burnt off her hull, cleaned and then repainted. She was a big ship and that job took nearly two weeks to do. When the work was finished we went back to our moorings. The old ship looked spic and span in her new coat

of paint. I was glad she was back at her old place as I could land at Port Melbourne instead of going right around from Williamstown while at the dock, I could get home in half the time landing at Port Melbourne.

The *Cerberus* would soon go into dock I knew and I hoped I wouldn't be one of the dock yard party as men from all the ships would be sent to help clean and paint her in order to make a quick job of it. If I was working party and returned to my own ship each evening, I would be all right but if I had to stay on board the *Cerberus* that wouldnt suit me. I didn't like the long journey by train if I went on shore leave. In a week or two the *Cerberus* did go into dock and I was told off as one of the working party to clean and paint her, but as we were to return to our own ship at four o'clock pm, I was well satisfied.

That job was soon finished and the ship back at her moorings. Not long after this we started to get up the *Cerberus* moorings, so they could be examined and be sure they were safe, it was a hard heavy job. The cables being very large, a punt with sheer legs and steam winch was got from the Harbour Trust for the work. I was one of the working party told off for this job, and I didn't care much for it as it would be a very dirty job, the cables being covered with mussels and silt.

When I first went on the punt, I noticed that the big wheel of the winch was cracked so I pointed it out to the gunner who was in charge of us and the job. He looked at it, and reckoned it was safe enough, as the harbour had used it, but I didn't think it was safe enough to get up the heavy moorings of the *Cerberus*, others agreed with me. But he was in charge of the job and all we could do was to carry on. We worked all

that morning and then knocked off for dinner, after dinner we started again at the moorings and expected to finish the job before four o'clock.

We hadn't been working half an hour when the big cog wheel of the winch flew to pieces. The heavy cable was too much for it, bits of the wheel flew in all directions, one piece of iron just missed the gunners head and cut a piece out of one of the sheer legs. Others of the working party had narrow escapes but one man was hit, his shoulder was smashed by a large piece of iron. He was taken to hospital, his shoulder was so badly smashed that they wanted to remove his arm as it would be quite useless to him, but he wouldnt have the arm removed.

He got better at last, but his arm was just hanging useless at his side. He was invalided out of the service and given a job at gate keeping in the dock yard, he got some compensation as well. The job he got was a life time one.

Another punt was got, and care taken that nothing like that occurred again, but it wouldnt have happened had they sent the punt back when the flaw in the wheel of the winch was discovered. We all learn a lot by an accident, we completed the job next day and I wasn't sorry that it was over.

One day another Austrian man-of-war came in. The captain of it wanted permission to execute a man while the ship was in port. It was an extraordinary request to make, of course it was refused. So the ship went to sea next morning and when they were outside the three mile limit, the man was stood in the gangway and shot, a weight being tied to his feet he went over board and sank at once, then the ship returned to port.

We found out that the offender had stabbed one of the officers, and that's why he had been shot, that's all we heard about it. I don't think this affair got to the newspapers. What we couldn't understand was, why the man wasn't executed before they came into a British port and asking permission to carry it out then.

The ship remained in port nearly a week and before they left, they landed a sick sailor and sent him to the Melbourne Hospital, where he soon died. We landed and gave him a naval funeral. As his ship had gone to sea, his body was carried on a field gun as is usual with a guard as well. He being a foreign man-of-war's man he got the same honours as a British one would have got. Coming back from the cemetery the band played lively tunes, that is supposed to cheer the men up after a funeral, but does it?

My next shift was to the *Albert* the smallest of the two gun boats. I expected I would go back to the *Cerberus* from the *Nelson* but the *Albert* was just as good to me, so I didn't mind at all. I found the *Albert* quite all right, we were all comfortable and contented on board. There wasn't very much room on her mess deck, still we were all happy enough. She was armed with a 8 inch B.L. gun of twelve tons. That gun was right in the bows of the ship and fired over the whale back, right aft at her stern she had a 6 inch B.L. gun of four tons, with a shield of steel 3 inches thick, as a protection from machine guns and splinters. She also had two 5 barrelled Nordenfelts so she was well armed for a little ship.

I had just got settled down and got used to a small gun boat, when there was talk on the mess deck, that we and the *Victoria* were soon to go to Westernport Bay to survey it and chart all



the soundings. It wasn't very long before I knew the talk was true, we were to go soon and would be away for six weeks or more, and that news didn't worry me, it would be a nice change away. There would be plenty of boat work but that didn't worry me, it wouldn't be any hardship, we were well used to boat pulling. It was summer time so it wouldn't be too bad, had it been winter the work wouldn't have been too good pulling about in boats, maybe in cold and wet weather.

The married men wouldn't like the idea much of being away from home for so long, on the other hand their wives would be glad to get rid of them for awhile, perhaps! and again, perhaps not! Anyway I was single and didn't care a hoot. I knew now why I had been sent to the *Albert* instead of the *Cerberus* and I was quite satisfied. I would welcome the little trip away, it was a change from swinging at the moorings most of the time. So we left one morning and went to sea.

When we arrived at Westernport Bay, we anchored off the township of Cowes on Phillip Island, and that was to be our headquarters. The two gun boats would remain there until all the surveying was done. Captain White R.N. the Commandant came with us. Our first job was to put up beacons along the coast line of the bay to guide during the survey. Several parties were told off for this work. I was one of the party working towards San Remo. On the island others were doing the main land. The beacons were for taking bearings from. While the survey work was taking place scrub had to be cleared away here and there for a clear view, so the job took several days to do. We always returned to the ships for dinner by boat unless we were within easy walking distance that was us on the island. Those over on the main land had to pull across the bay, we had no steam cutter with

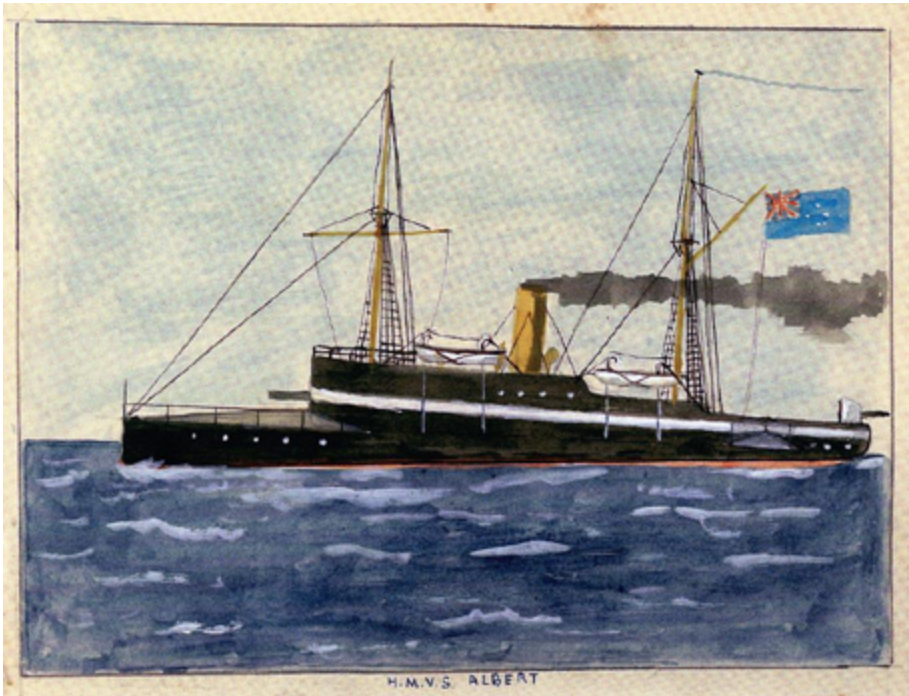
us.

One day my party having finished one part of the island, the officer in charge of us told us to go ahead and find out if we could get anything to eat anywhere, as he wanted to put another beacon up before we went back to the ship. He told us he would come along later and settle up. So we went along towards the township which was about two miles away. At last we come to a cottage by the roadside, it was also a little store, so we went inside.

We met a very nice elderly woman who told us we could not get a good dinner until we got to the township but if we liked and would be satisfied, she could give us plenty of eggs and bread and butter. We said that would do us so we went into the little sitting room and sat down.

She got busy and set the table, telling us she wouldn't keep us waiting very long. She came in with a large plate of bread and butter, and a little later brought in a large basin of eggs. It was full of them, so we set to, and soon the eggs were all gone, so was the bread and butter. She asked us if we would like some more eggs, but we considered we had had enough.

We had already told her that the officer would be along soon to settle with her. She asked us if we would like to take some eggs on board with us, we thanked her and said we would. She went out and soon returned with a large basket full of eggs, our eyes stuck out like hat pegs to see so many eggs. She told us to take as many as we liked as she had plenty, so we took off our silk handkerchiefs and filled them with egg, with the corners tied we could carry them alright.



There was no payment, she just gave them to us. I said to her, you must have a lot of ducks to have so many eggs. She looked surprised at me and replied why bless you, they are not duck eggs, they are mutton birds eggs.

They were large eggs and we all thought we had been eating duck eggs, so we were much surprised when she told us they were mutton bird eggs. They were very good, and that was the first time I had seen such eggs or eaten them. The mutton birds had a rookery on the island and their eggs were plentiful.

The officer came along and also had some eggs and tea. I don't know what the old lady charged for what we had eaten, but I don't think it was much. That evening we went on board all of us well loaded with mutton bird eggs, so we had eggs for breakfast for a day or so. I think each one of us brought

on board about three dozen eggs in our silks and there were eight of us. After that mutton bird eggs were in great demand on both the gun boats.

Every day at low tide there would be a mud bank stretching across the bay off the island, and every evening it would be black with wild swan, thousands of the birds would gather there (the mud bank has long since been dredged away).

The officers shot some of the birds which were hung up in the fore part of the ship, they were left there until they were very high game and we were all sick of the smell of them. We could hardly stand it, but it was no use growling about it. But we were getting all the smell, the officers were not having the high game at their end of the ship so had nothing to put up with. The idea of the high game was to make jugged swan after the style of jugged hare, when the birds were very bad indeed, so much so that we reckoned they should be thrown overboard.

The cook got busy, I wouldn't have liked his job. The swans were cut up and boiled for hours. The awful smell from the cooks galley was all over the ship. I don't know which was worst, the birds hanging or while they were cooking. The stew seemed to be just as ripe as the birds were before being cooked. This awful stuff was strained, and all the meat discarded, then port wine etc. mixed therein and that was jugged swan. The officers seemed to enjoy it, and strange to say none died or got ill after it. The smell of it was quite enough for us, none of the crew tasted it, although the cook offered us some, it was too dead for us believe me. It was days before the smell of that dish left the ship and us.

Day after day we were out in the boats taking soundings, pulling across the bay back and forth, while an officer sat in the stern marking them down on the rough chart. The weather was quite warm so we didn't worry. We had to be careful when the tide was running out that we were not caught on a mud bank.

One day this happened to one of the boats, they were caught on a mud or sand bank when the tide was running out fast, and before they could get away the boat was hard and fast in the mud. As they couldn't get the boat back into deep water they would have to remain there until the tide turned.

If we had a steam cutter we could have towed the boat off, but that's what we didn't have. A boat was sent over with their tea, the idea was for some of the crew to get out of the boat and carry the eats and tea to the stranded boat, but they found they couldn't do that as the silt was too deep, they walked till it was over their middle then had to give it up. Those on the mud bank had to stay there all night, which wasn't much of a hardship as the weather was quite warm. They floated off in the morning when the tide came in and returned to the ship, had a good feed and some sleep, they were let off duty for the day. No other boat was caught on a bank after that, they took fine care it wouldn't happen.

On Saturdays no surveying was done, as all hands were needed with the usual Saturday routine cleaning ship. After dinner leave was given and most of us went ashore for a ramble. On Sundays we would march to church. The Captain would read the lesson, then after dinner there would be shore leave again, then sometimes on a Saturday some of the officers would go shooting over to French Island and while

the boat would be waiting for them the crew would fish and would catch a good haul as a rule, so we had plenty of fish for food off and on.

It was on Phillip Island that I saw my first bush fire, it broke out one Sunday, about a mile and half from Cowes. So a lot of us went ashore to see it and help if they wanted it, but we were told the fire couldnt do any damage, there was no danger of any homes being burnt, but I thought it was a very terrible fire, it was rushing along the tops of the gum trees as if they were sprayed with kerosene.

It would clear out a few snakes they told us. It was just a belt of big timber and scrub and burnt itself out next day. The people of Cowes didn't seem to be worried at all over the fire. They just let it go when they knew no homes were in danger. The fire was a great sight to me, and gave me a good idea of what a big bush fire on the mainland was like when many miles of bush was burnt and maybe homes as well, as I had often read about.

Time passed and we had good times ashore and on board too, then the job of surveying the bay was finished, we had done the job in seven weeks. We remained at Cowes for two more days then prepared for sea and early in the morning we left for Port Phillip and Melbourne, and late in the afternoon were again made fast at our moorings. That evening I went ashore again and home. After tea I cleaned up and went out to see my pals and have a yarn. It was nice to be around the old haunts again, there were just the three of us who were great pals. When I was ashore we were nearly always together and were known as the three graces, how we got that name I forget, but it stuck to us. We went to dances together or to a

play or a walk around on a Sunday when I was home on leave. We were all single then and girls didn't trouble us much. We had good times together, it was a great palship. Now many years after those days, one has passed on, the other pal who is overseas keeps in touch with me and for over 48 years we have been writing to each other almost every mail. We have never had a misunderstanding of any kind and I reckon that is a pretty good record. The palship is still the same, ever since we were lads.

On the *Albert* when it happened to be my watch on board, I had to take my turn at watch keeping through the night, that is I would be on deck for four hours, from 8 to 12 or 12 to 4<sup>am</sup>, there was always a man on this duty. You struck the bell every half hour to keep the time, and the hail alls well was called from each ship, and if you didn't hear the hail from the nearest ship you reported that fact to the officer in charge who of course would be turned in.

If a ship near you didn't hail you that all was well, then there would be something wrong, and it would go hard with that man on watch if he was found asleep. The man on watch had to challenge any boats coming near the ship, and sometimes if the weather was fine a boat would go the rounds, from the guard ship and woe to you if it was allowed to approach your ship without being hailed, if it did, you was up for neglect of duty.

You also had to keep the log and enter before you left off watch, what the weather was like etc. and the direction of the wind. What with one thing and another the man on watch had to keep his eyes open. If it was a rough and wet night you were pretty safe, as no officer would care about visiting your

ship on such a night, but you were never sure about it, and it was best (if you didn't want your leave stopped) to keep your eyes peeled and a good look out.

Before the rounds went at nine o'clock at night (2 bells) the galley fire had to be put out and the furnace door open so that the officer could see that the fire was really out, and all correct. But sometimes if it was a cold night, a few coals would be left banked up at the back of the furnace and covered up with some ashes. This could not be noticed unless the officer doing the rounds stooped right down and looked in which they never did, so the risk of leaving a few coals was often taken and got away with.

When the fire was banked like this, the man who had the middle watch, that is from 12 until 4<sup>am</sup> could start the fire and make a cup of tea and have a warm every little while. Sometimes the one who had the first watch 8<sup>pm</sup> until 12 would start the fire and make a cup of tea or coffee, it all depended what kind of night it was and everyone turned in.

One very cold night I had the middle watch and about 2<sup>am</sup> I decided to make a cup of coffee and also fry a bit of beef steak. I had the frying pan going and every little while I went out on deck to see that all was right and no boat near the ship. I had made the coffee and was just finishing frying the steak, then I heard someone say, very nice Conder! very nice! I looked around and saw the officer in charge standing at the door, of course he must wake up just then and come on deck. I hadn't a word to say. I was caught red handed sure enough, maybe he could smell the steak and coffee and came along to see what was doing. There was no excuse that I could make and I expected nothing less than the Commanders report and



that would mean a stoppage of shore leave. As I said it was a pretty cold morning, and all he said to me about it was, that coffee smells very good Conder, I think I'll have a cup of it. So I gave him a cup and also offered him a bit of steak but he refused that. He drank his coffee and went back and turned in. I went on with my supper feeling pretty good, I reckoned I wouldn't be reported for my neglect, nor was I. I heard no more about it. Maybe there was another reason why I got off, for when certain B.I. steamers came in he would often ask me to pull over and get some cigars for him from the officers, and if he reported me, he knew I would refuse to go for any more smokes for him. I was lucky and so was he.

Some time after this little affair, I was watch on board and again I had the middle watch, it was a clear morning and very calm. About 2<sup>am</sup> I noticed smoke coming from a large sailing ship which was alongside the Town Pier. She was an American ship named the *Hilaria* and had been unloading cases of kerosene for a few days. She also had 500 barrels of resin on board. After looking at the ship for a minute or two I felt sure she was on fire, so I went and woke up the officer in charge and reported it. He rubbed his eyes, looked at me and said, are you sure she's on fire? Yes, I replied she's on fire sure enough!. Have they sent on board for assistance? he asked. Not as yet I told him. Oh, then if they do, you can come and wake me up, then he turned over and went to sleep. He wasn't worried about it at all.

Anyway I had reported the fire so I was alright. I went back on deck and heard the clatter of fire engines rushing along the pier, soon flames were showing and more dense smoke came drifting over from the ship. Four fire engines were pumping water into the ship but still the fire gained.

At daybreak they sent for a tug to tow the ship away from the pier but owing to the list she had they couldn't shift her. One of the firemen, an officer, tripped over a wire in the smoke and fell into the fore hold. Another fireman put on a smoke helmet and went down to bring the other man up. He was got out of the hold and was sent to hospital. He had a fractured skull and other injuries, he died that evening.

The delay caused by getting the men out of the hold made it impossible to shift the ship as she had listed more with all the water that was pumped into her. Then they sent a 12 pounder gun from the *Nelson* mounted in a boat. Several shots were fired into the hull with the hope of sinking the ship, but the small holes made in the thick timbers didn't allow enough water in to sink her. A six inch shell from one of the gun boats if steam had been up, would have done the job. After awhile her three masts and yards fell across the pier with a great crash. The ship burnt to the waters edge.

When my watch was over at 4<sup>am</sup> I remained on deck watching the fire. It was a fearful sight to see such a fine ship burnt like that. Sailing ships loaded with kerosene always unloaded at that pier.

Sometime after this fire I was one of a boats crew that went in to bring off the mail, the rest of the crew had gone along the pier for a walk. I was standing by the boat, a lorry load of cases of kerosene was coming along the pier from one of the ships there. I notice a boy hanging onto the back of the lorry, like boys do, whip behind, as its called. He was yelling out, but I took little notice of that, as they are always doing something like that, but when the lorry got opposite me I saw blood on the wheel, so called out to the driver to stop, and

ran over. I lifted the boy down. He had got his foot caught and dragged in between the hub of the wheel and the block of wood that's just over it, his foot was crushed to pulp. The boy didn't know his foot was crushed off. He asked me if his foot was bleeding and said don't tell my Dad. I tied the leg and stopped the bleeding, wrapped him in my oil skin coat. At the hospital they took his leg off at the knee. He got better and I saw him afterwards about the port with a wooden leg from the knee and he got about very well. That accident put a stop to boys whipping behind the lorry loads.

Time passed and there was another change around and once again I packed my kit and went to the *Cerberus* where I soon settled down as usual. I knew everybody on board, so it wasn't like going to a ship where I knew no one.

The *Cerberus* at that time had torpedo nets, they were very heavy and when not spread, were kept tied up along the sides of the ship. Some big ships in the R.N. had a special ledge for stowing the nets. Heavy iron booms were arranged along the sides of the ship and when the booms were hauled outboard, the net would be spread about 15 feet from the ship's side and about 8 or 10 feet in the water, this was to protect the ship from torpedos. Then a torpedo was invented that cut its way through the nets, so nets were no longer a protection, they were done away with. So we took off the nets of the *Cerberus* and sent them to the dock yard, never to be used again, and we were not sorry to see them go.

We soon got under way to carry out some gun firing etc. and one evening we dropped anchor off Queenscliff. At tea time someone threw a piece of bread across the deck from one of the messes, it hit someone in a mess on the other side

and of course he threw something back, then the game was on, a lower deck battle, in half a tick loaves of bread, tin plates etc. was flying across the deck. If you didn't dodge anything. well that was just too bad for you. It was all in fun, but you could get a nasty knock if you didn't dodge what was thrown across the deck from mess to mess.

It happened that when we anchored some soldiers from the fort thought they would pay us a visit. They arrived on board and were just coming down to the mess deck when the battle was on, when they saw things flying across the deck, boots, bread, large lids and anything they could fling. The soldiers thought there was a mutiny on board and cleared up to the upper deck, as fast as they could. Some of the chaps went up after them and explained what the mess deck battle was, so they returned and spent a very good evening with us. They said they had the wind up at first thinking they were in the middle of a mutiny.

Sometimes when we got the chance we would go ashore and visit the fort, and always had a very good time there, but as a rule we didn't anchor there as often as we would have liked, but these little trips were a break and we always had a good time, with sing songs of an evening so the time passed very well.

After being away nearly a week we went back to our moorings and shore leave was on again. One foggy morning when I was returning to the ship from leave the train was held up for awhile and by the time I got down to catch the liberty boat, it had shoved off without me, so there I was adrift, a leave breaker. I knew if I explained about the train being held up over the fog, would be no good, that excuse wouldn't be

accepted at all. I would have to have something better than that, and I didn't want my leave stopped, so I thought out a better excuse.

I walked along the sea front until I came to a chemists shop, it was still very foggy and a bit after seven o'clock. I knocked on the door a few times, an upper story window opened and the chemist asked who was there. I told him I was ill, had very bad pains inside and asked if he could give me something for it. All right! he said, I'll be down in a minute or two.

He soon came down and let me in. I told him I was sorry to trouble him so early in the morning, but I couldn't help doing so, that's alright he said, now what is the trouble? I told him about the bad pains I had, he asked me what I had been eating. I told him what I had for tea etc. so he said I must have had a touch of food poisoning and he gave me some stuff to drink, what it was I don't know, but it burnt a bit. I was told to sit down for awhile. After a few minutes he asked me how I felt, and how the pain was. I told him I still had them every little while, so he mixed some other stuff which I drank. I was hoping the stuff he gave me was quite o.k. and worry me as of course I had no pains at all, there being nothing wrong with me.

After a while he asked me how I felt. So again I told him I still had the pains now and again. Well!, he said. I can't give you anything else just now, you had better see your doctor when you go on board the ship. I asked how much I owed him and he said 1/6 will do, so I paid him. Then I asked him if he would write on one of his dockets what he thought was wrong with me and what he had given me for the trouble. He did that for me and I was satisfied. The docket was to prove I

had been ill and so on.

I had no chance of getting on board until the seven bell boat came in at 11.30, so I waited for it and went on board. My only worry was the stuff I had taken, so far it hadn't done me any harm. As I got alongside the ship, I could see some of the chaps grinning and nodding meaning I was in for it for leave breaking, I handed in the docket from the chemist and that was that! Before long I had to see the doctor, he asked me how I felt. I told him I felt pretty well alright again. He told me to report if the pains came on again, and out I went. I was ashore again that night my leave being still good. That was the first and only time I had broken my leave, and it wasn't my fault. I never felt sorry for the deceit I was guilty of for saving my bacon.

The *Countess* and *Childers* torpedo boats were going away to Swan Island for a weeks torpedo running, and that would mean that a party from the *Cerberus* would also go with them for a torpedo course, as every man had to do his bit of torpedo work. At that time a seaman gunner had to be a torpedo man as well, now they are separate. I was hoping I would be one of the party to go, as a trip away to Swan Island for a week was like a picnic, and when the time came for the boats to go, I was one of the party sent from the *Cerberus* so I was very pleased.

We had a good time down there and in our spare time did plenty of fishing so we always had plenty of fish for breakfast and tea whenever we liked. All the extra men, apart from the crews of the boats lived on the island, in very comfortable quarters, we lived well so there was nothing to growl about. At night time we could go over to the fort and have a good

time in the canteen. Beer was only 2<sup>d</sup> a mug (pint). I was sorry when we had to leave Swan Island, it was really too good to last long.

So back the boats went to the depot, and we of the *Cerberus* back to our ship. I was lucky again because it was my Saturday until Monday leave so I was ashore and home for the weekend. During the time I had been on the *Albert*. The *Cerberus* had a new upper deck put in and new better dead lights so she was now much better than before. The new deck meant plenty of holystoning, but that was all in the days work, and with her new teak deck she looked a different ship.

The next big thing was our annual ball. The Naval Ball was always a big affair, and it was very bad luck if you couldn't get ashore the night it was held. However I always managed to get there. I took for a partner one of the girls I knew at our dancing club and we had a very good time, it was a grand ball. Later on that girl became my wife, but at the ball that night I had no idea the day would come when she would be my wife, we can't look far ahead can we?

Although the drill hall was a big hall, it was far too small for all that went to the Naval Ball. They were the dancing years for me, and I missed some I would have liked to go to, but those I missed were not very many.

Time marched on and once again the old ship went into dock for cleaning, painting and overhaul, although it was only for a week I was glad when we were finished with the dock and back at the moorings.

I didn't like the long train journey around to the city, it took 3/4 of an hour those times, and coming back on board in the morning I had to turn out extra early in order to get on

board at 7<sup>am</sup> but I really didn't have anything to worry about. I had no dull times. I suppose I was really too happy and contented at that time for fate gave me a kick in the pants and woke me from my dream.

The Government of the day found that state affairs were not too good. The papers said that expenses should be cut down. The Government was not in a good financial position, so retrenchment was the talk of the day, and the time came when it touched the *Cerberus*. The order came for some of the men to be paid off, those paid off received six months pay as compensation, quite a lot of the men put their names down as willing to take this with their discharge.

The gold fields had just been discovered in Western Australia so they were hoping to get to the gold fields, but all couldn't get their discharge, but about thirty did, and most of them did go to W.A. and did no good there.

I had not put my name on the list as willing to be discharged. I decided to bide-a-wee. I intended to hang on to the service as long as possible. I guessed the bad spell would pass and all would be right again, and that is just what did happen. Before twelve months passed most of the men who had been paid off were back in the service and the powers that be were glad to have them back too. Although the men were back again, that is most of them were, the papers were still talking retrenchment, so we were not at ease at all, anything might happen, but so far there was no more talk about retrenchment in the Navy.

Time passed and then one day a notice was put on the notice board, stating that any man who would like to transfer into another Government department would be transferred



if he passed for that position, so thinking that was the thin edge of the wedge, and sooner or later there would be more retrenchment. It would be better for me to transfer if I could. So I put my name down as willing to go. Many others put their names down, but out of the lot, only myself and another passed the stiff exam of the doctor. They all failed for some little fault.

So it came about that I was duly given my discharge and transferred into a shore job. That was in January 1896, I drew my deferred pay and settled down in my new job. I was getting better pay too. I had far more to do. I had said farewell to the Navy, I thought for good, but the urge of the sea was still in me, and some years afterwards I was back in the service.

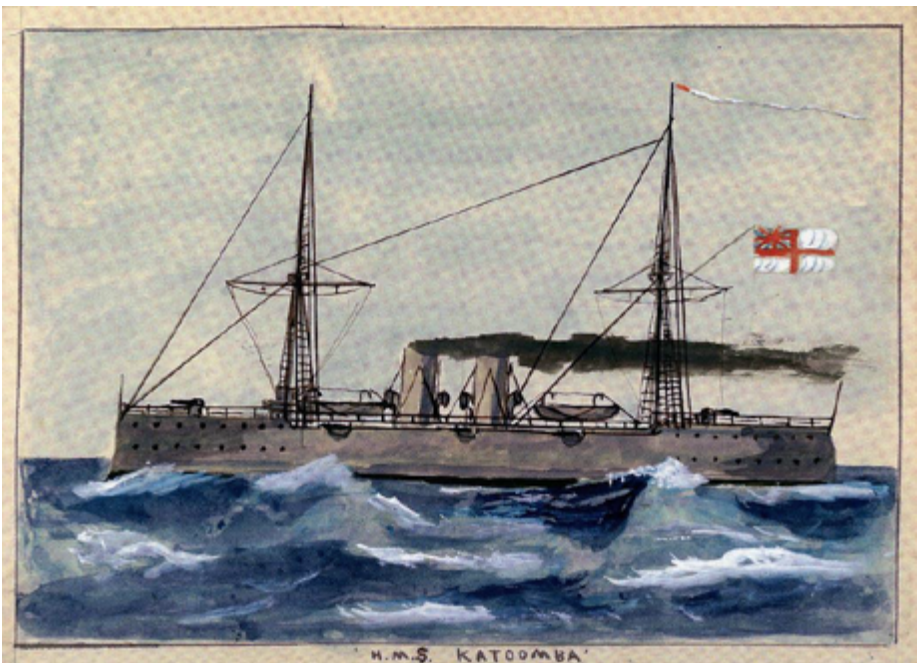
In 1904 it was decided to recruit men for an Australian Navy. Which later on was known as the Royal Australian Navy. Which took over all naval defences in 1912, but in 1904 there were only Royal Naval ships in Australian waters that is seagoing.

Several ships of the R.N. were sent cruising around the ports to recruit men. H.M.S. *Katoomba* was going from port to port from Victoria to West Australia, another ship went to the northern ports, another went over to New Zealand and Tasmania.

So I decided I would go back to the service, as ex-service men were asked to rejoin to form a backbone as it were, for the recruits. So there I was back in the Navy. The idea was to recruit and train 500 men who would man a new fast cruiser which would be sent out from England, then other ships would be manned by Australians. The ships would be

maintained by Australia, and there would be no need for men to come from England to man them, which would be a great saving for the Admiralty.

The first ship sent out was the *Challenger* a big new cruiser, and enough trained men were got to man her, long before the R.A.N. took over in 1912. But to get back to the very start of it in 1904, I made myself at home on the *Katoomba*.



I really didn't like her looks in the new style of grey paint, she didn't look so well as she did in the old colours, she of course was one of the auxiliary ships I mentioned before which came to Australia in 1891. Most of the recruits entered were about 18 or 20 years of age, each were issued with a kit worth £10. Then after that they had to keep their kit up, at their own cost. I had resigned from my shore job, and some said I was foolish to do so, but fate was driving me on I suppose and good or bad move there I was well and truly

signed on in the service again. It was the 1<sup>st</sup> of June that I went on board and could have had the job of the ships corporal (acting) but I didn't care about that job, so instead I took on being Bos'un's foreman, quite a good job and one that suited me quite alright, as it was a store job. I wouldn't be working part of the ship very much. I would be below most of the time, so I was very well satisfied with being in charge of the Bos'un's stores.

The *Katoomba* was of 2595 tons and a bit out of date, she was armed with eight 4.7 guns and had a torpedo tube in her bow and stern. Her speed was 19 knots when built, but she was an old ship by 1904, and wouldnt be able to keep that speed up for very long. But although she didn't look as smart as she did in the old style of painting, she still was a good ship and a very good ship at sea in bad weather. At this time the grey paint was mixed on board each ship by the ship painters (putty) and this was the cause of no two ships being painted in just the same shade of grey, some ships would be a light grey and others a very dark grey. So the Admiralty stopped that by issuing the paint to all ships already mixed the one shade of grey, so now all war ships are painted alike.

I soon settled down and was home every second night, while we remained in port. I had married soon after I had left the *Cerberus* and now had a family of five. I had



Believed to be  
Mrs. Victoria Agnes Conder,  
James' wife and mother of  
their nine children.

married the girl I took to the Naval Ball, mentioned before, and a better mate no one could have had. It was rather tough for me to go back to sea and leave her and the youngsters like I did, but she knew why I was going back, and she didn't blame me or complain, she said I knew what was best, but later on, many a time I was sorry I had left them, even for a while, I did miss them all pretty badly. After I had been on board a few days I received word I was to get a send off from my other job, so I went ashore one evening to attend the send off. It was a good evening a few songs, and some speeches, and eats. They presented me with a large French marble clock with a silver plate thereon, with my name and date and why it was presented etc. The clock was pretty heavy and I was glad when I arrived home with it and rested it on the mantle shelf. The clock has been ticking ever since and has never had to be taken to a clock maker for repairs, so it must be a good one.

The *Katoomba* had no long mess deck on the main deck, like most ships had, she didn't have a main deck. The mess deck was in her long Fok'sl and the stokers mess was on the deck below that, but there was plenty of room for the crew. The officers lived aft in the poop, which also contained the ward room. Below the poop was the after flat, with a few cabins for officers, and also the Warrant Officers mess. The rest of the ship was taken up with the engine rooms, stoke holes<sup>14</sup> etc. Although our quarters were comfortable enough as a mess deck, when the hammocks were piped down, they were slung pretty close together. The stokers mess deck being below ours, was not a very nice place at sea, as all the ports

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<sup>14</sup> Coal was stored in the stock holes.

had to be kept closed, so they didn't get too much fresh air down there.

We had coaled ship and it wasn't long after that before I had to say good bye to all at home, we were going to sea bound for Adelaide. I had a good spell in port after joining the Katoomba just on four weeks, so I couldn't growl, I had plenty of nights home during that time, so one morning we steamed away and were soon rolling along to Port Adelaide, there was a pretty heavy swell on and I found that our mess deck kept very dry. She was a good sea boat I guessed and I found she was, before I left her. I was in some very rough weather all right. The one trouble was, her stern torpedo tube leaked at sea there was always a fair lot of water in the tube during a heavy swell, there was always water to mop up down there, just enough to make a bit of work and cause a little growling by those told off to mop it up. I was a bit down in the dumps at leaving the wife and youngsters but I had made the plunge so I had to make the best of it. I knew I wouldn't be away from home very long, that consoled me a lot. All the same I knew it wasn't fair to them for me to venture again on salt water. It was no use being down in the dumps there was plenty of work to do and other things to think about.

The new hands who had never been at sea before, had to be taught the routine of work at sea and drilled into their duties of their part of the ship, each watch (port and starboard) were divided into four parts Fok'sl, fore top, main top and quarter deck. These parts of the ship were of course handed down in the Navy from the time of full rigged ships, so each man had a part of the ship, which he belonged to and worked there cleaning ship and other duties. Once they got their sea legs the new hands would be quite all right, much

depended upon themselves how quickly they fitted into the groove of man-of-war routine. A few of the new hands were sea sick but they soon got over it and settled down. It was nice to get the tang of the sea into my lungs again and as I looked over the side at the distant coast I was not so much feeling down in the dumps about leaving home. I would be back again in about two months I reckoned.

There was nothing out of the common during the trip to Adelaide the weather remained good and we arrived at Largs Bay and went up the river to Port Adelaide. The outer harbour was not then built, we made fast and shore leave was given at 4.30. I went ashore and the first thing I did was to go along and write a few lines home, telling of my arrival etc., then I went up to the city and had a ramble around. It had been a good many years since I was in Adelaide last, but it didn't seem to have altered much, just a few new big stores I noticed. We were to remain up the river about two weeks and the day after our arrival recruits came on board to join up. Each day there were classes of recruits who had joined in Melbourne getting put through seamanship, knotting and splicing etc., at the same time the routine of the ship was carried out, I was most of the time down below in my store pretending to be busy.

There was also plenty of drill going on, in some part of the ship, so the recruits were kept pretty busy, one way and another. As soon as a recruit joined up, after he had passed the doctor, he was kitted up at once, a full kit of clothes boots, bed, blanket and his hammock. The hammock belonged to the ship and if he lost it, he would have to pay for a new one. After getting his kit he would get no more free clothing, his kit would have to be kept up at his own expense. All the kit

that was issued was known as pussers<sup>15</sup>, and not what was known as tiddley suits<sup>16</sup> which were made on board by the men. There were always plenty amongst the crew who took on jewing (that is sewing). Such men would have a hand machine and would make a tiddley suit up in a short time, and the charge wasn't very much. Pay day was on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month and men could draw what soap and tobacco they wanted, also clothing was issued to those who had put a chit in for what they needed, the cost of which would be taken out of their next pay.

The uniforms issued on the ship, were strict service, they were not what was known as tiddley suits with very wide pants. No man, if he could help it would go ashore in a pussers suit so it wasn't very long before all the recruits took up serge, for which they had to pay, and had tiddley suits made with the wide pants and went ashore dressed the same as the rest of the crew. One of the chaps that joined up in Adelaide asked me to go home with him and meet his people. So one evening I went home with him and was made very welcome. I spent a very nice evening and afterwards when we went to Port Adelaide, I often went along to see his people. It was nice to have friends ashore where you could visit, it was much better than just walking around the city.

Our Captain didn't enjoy very good health. He was a very sick man pretty often. He couldn't bear much noise on board, so on that account we got more make and mends than we should have had. If he wasn't feeling so unwell, a make and mend would be piped after dinner and the watch ashore

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<sup>15</sup> Naval slang indicating Navy issue.

<sup>16</sup> A sailor's best uniform, often tailored and not strictly to regulation.

given leave. So with many of the crew out of the ship, things were pretty quiet on board, the watch on board being piped down, no work was done, only which had to be done. The worst of this extra leave was, that some of the crew didn't seem to understand they were on a good wicket and broke their leave, which made it bad for all hands.

Leave breaking got so bad at last, that these extra make and mends, were stopped so we didn't get as much shore leave after that. There never was a good thing, but someone spoilt it. It was the new hands that broke their leave, more than the old ones, trying to be Jack's the lad, I suppose. So we went back to the usual routine of a make and mend every Thursday which was the usual routine in port or at sea if the ships work permitted it. After being in the river for two weeks, we left and went down to Largs Bay, where the recruits got boat drill, pulling and sailing, this took up all the fore noon, after dinner they had classes of seamanship, most of them were doing very well.

After a day or two in Largs Bay we left for Albany. When we got outside it was blowing a gale with a big sea running, but the *Katoomba* kept pretty dry, she was a good ship at sea in heavy weather. We had heavy weather all the way to Albany and we arrived early in the afternoon, leave was given at 4.30, so I had a run ashore. Albany was not the busy place it used to be when all the mail boats stopped there, but when the new harbour was built at Fremantle, the mail boats called there instead, so Albany was dead, not much business being done there. I posted a letter home and after had a walk about the small town I went back on board.

We stayed at Albany two days then left for Fremantle, and



had a fair trip around, and arrived there on July 13<sup>th</sup>, 1904 in the evening, we anchored in the stream, there was no shore leave given that evening. On the second day after our arrival I received a note from an old friend living in Fremantle, she was one of the girls who used to go to our dancing club years ago in Melbourne, she had gone to West Australia and married there. She had heard I was on the *Katoomba* so wrote to me. I went ashore to her home and met her husband and two children. We had a good old yarn after all the years since I saw her last. She was the sister of my pals wife in South Africa, that was in 1904. I met her again and spent a good evening at their home. Now as I write this its 1947, and a few days ago I received news from her daughter that her mother had passed away. So I lost another old friend, that I used to write to for many years. We remained at Fremantle for a week a few recruits joined up, we didn't get any at Albany.

At Fremantle I went ashore as often as I could, and mostly I went up to Perth, my wife had a cousin there so I went along and saw her, spent the evening and went back on board. I promised the wife I would call and see her cousin, I seemed to have someone to visit in every port we called at.

The Captain expected to pick up more recruits at Fremantle than we did, just the same we were getting a bit crowded on the lower deck, and soon some of the hands would have to be drafted to other ships to make room for more recruits, those who joined up were doing very well, they could splice, heave the lead, and steer that is most of them could. They knew their drill and could pull an oar with the best, drill was carried out every day so its no wonder they got on so well. We left Fremantle for Adelaide after a weeks stay. The weather was good, so we had a fair trip to Adelaide

we went up the river to Port Adelaide and made fast at the same place we were before, just after our arrival it started to blow hard, so we got into port just in time to miss it. There was talk on the lower deck that we were to remain at Port Adelaide until the 10<sup>th</sup> of the next month but it don't do to put much faith in what one hears on the lower deck, its as a rule just idle talk, so I didn't take much notice of it. I was a little worried because I had no letters from home for some time and when we arrived no letters for me came on board, thoughts of sickness worried me, but a few days later a delayed letter arrived from home and all were well, so my worry left me.

During my spare time on board, I sometimes got busy painting cards for the lads to send home, or to their girlfriend. I charged 6<sup>d</sup> each for them and that was pretty cheap, anyway I was satisfied, and the cash came in handy for when I went ashore. I also did a lot of tattooing nearly all the new hands that joined the ship wanted some design put on their arms or chest. They didn't consider they were sailors unless they had something tattooed on them. So I put them on and didn't charge very much, so at times during my watch on board I was busy, tattooing or doing cards.

I was still Bos'uns foreman and had a very easy time. I didn't work part of the ship, the only thing that touched me was when lower deck was cleaned. That pipe touched everybody, of course I had to do gun drill whenever that was on the way. My job was what was called in the Navy, a square slumber, and I got out of all the mucking about on the upper deck, it was a soft job sure enough. I was first class for leave so could go ashore as often as I liked, so I was pretty often ashore. During this visit to Adelaide we gave a concert in the

Port Adelaide Town Hall, with a dance after the concert. The hall was packed and a big crowd stayed for the dance and had a very good time. The affair was in aid of some local charity and it was a big success.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of August we left the river and went down to Largs Bay, we anchored there for the night and next morning we left for Melbourne, where we expected to go into dry dock. I had written home and told the good news that I would soon be homeward bound. It was grand to be going back to my wife and the kiddies so as we steamed along, each hour bringing me nearer home, I was feeling pretty happy. It was a good trip an even sea running and nothing to slow us down, we made good headway and soon reached Port Phillip, we anchored off Port Melbourne before dinner. It was good music to me to hear the cable rattling through the hawse pipe. That evening I went ashore and was soon at home. What a welcome I got, and what a fuss the youngsters made of me, and all the questions they asked. I could hardly get a word with my wife at all, until the time came for them to go to bed, then we could talk in peace. It was grand to be home again, but I had to go back on board at 7 next morning.

After breakfast we went into dry dock for cleaning and painting. During the few days we were in dock I went home as much as I could, which was almost every evening. If it wasn't my watch ashore, I got someone to look out for me and went ashore in his place. It was a long train trip from Williamstown to the city and that delayed me somewhat, so I didn't arrive home as early as I did when we were at Port Melbourne. Still I got home and that was all that mattered. When we were finished docking we went back to Port Melbourne, but our stay there was all too short, for soon we

were on the move again, this time for Geelong. At Geelong we got a few more recruits and while there we had plenty of evolutions, gun drill and boat drill, still we had a good time there and I had many rambles ashore. I knew some people at North Geelong so often paid them a visit. I had no chance of getting home, only when I could get weekend leave, and go up to Melbourne by a bay boat on a Saturday and have the Saturday night home. But I had to leave again on the Sunday morning in order to be back on my ship at 7 o'clock on Monday morning, so the weekend leave only meant one night home, and I had to leave before dinner on Sunday. So it was really not much good going all that way for one night home. If I could have spent Sunday home it would have been alright but there was no chance of getting leave until Monday afternoon. We remained at Geelong for some weeks, sometimes going to Port Melbourne for a couple of days, so that gave me a chance of getting home, but most of the time we were at Geelong, which was unlucky for me. Sometimes we would only go a few miles away in the bay and do torpedo running, and gun practice, then if we went up to Port Melbourne, I was home again, so I didn't do too bad.

We left Geelong and went back to Port Melbourne for a few days, we would soon be going to sea again bound west, and Adelaide would be our first port of call. We coaled ship and that was a sign that we would soon be on our way. So one evening I went home to say good bye again, it was my last night home for some time. Next day we were rolling along towards Adelaide. It was another good trip a smooth sea which was all the better for the new hands we had joined up. It was December 2<sup>nd</sup> when we arrived at Adelaide, we went up the river to our usual place.

It was hard luck not to be home for Xmas, I didn't expect to anyway. I had told the wife we would be away for Xmas and I wasn't sure just where we would be when that time arrived. But soon after we arrived at Port Adelaide, we heard that we were to remain there all December, so it would be Port Adelaide where we would spend Xmas. It was just my bad luck we wouldn't spend it in Melbourne. Time went on, with the usual routine of evolutions, gun drill, and boat pulling for the new hands. I had my usual rambles ashore most of which I went up to Adelaide, just knocking about seeing what I could see. Soon it was getting on towards Xmas, and each mess was getting ready for the great event, when each mess would have a good blow out, some would have poultry, some pork and some just roast mutton (in port when we got fresh meat, we never got mutton, if we ever had it we had to buy it ashore) and some mess may just have boiled bacon and other meat, and of course every mess had a big Xmas duff. Every mess would be gaily dressed for the occasion, every man would search his ditty box for photos of his wife and family or his best girl, which would be displayed on the mess tables. Every Xmas that is done, so other of his mess mates can see his photos etc.

On some ships a prize would be given by the officers, for the best dressed mess, but there was no such prize on the *Katoomba* and that did not prevent each mess from doing their very best at making the mess look better than the others. There was no extra food issued on Xmas day by the Navy. What extra the men wanted they had to get ashore, and each one paid his share of the cost. In port we got fresh beef, but at sea it was salt pork one day and salt beef (salt horse) the next. On pork days we got pea soup as well, which was the

best of the lot. The leading hand in each mess, kept a tally of all the extra food a mess bought while in port, and on pay day each member of the mess would pay his equal share of the amount. Each mess was entitled to certain foods from the ships store, some of these stores, if the men didn't want them, they would receive mess savings instead, but most of the stores the men could draw. There was no savings for at all, so if you didn't draw them, that was so much better for the Admiralty. It was the mess savings that came in handy. When the ship was in port, we could get the extra things we wanted ashore.

On Xmas day it was the custom for the Captain and officers to go the rounds of the mess deck before dinner and inspect the messes and the decorations and of course inspect all the photos etc., on the tables when the men would explain who the photos represented, his parents, or wife or best girl as the case might be, only the very best photos were shown of course. The Captain was expected to taste each Xmas pudding (this is a very old custom in the Navy). The Captain took a sample of each pudding as he went from mess to mess, so by the time he had been around them all he had tasted a good many samples. I never heard of any Captain being ill afterwards. No doubt it was because the duffs were pretty good, for they made good duffs in the Navy. There was nothing wrong with them, believe me.

Each mess made their own duff and each mess tried to make the best one. At dinner time we would all go around getting a sample of the duffs in the other messes. And so we had Xmas in Port Adelaide that year, and all had a very good time. My mess had a roast leg of pork, leg of mutton, vegs, cakes and biscuits also fruit, so we had a very good dinner,

the other messes had just as good. Xmas day is the only day in the year that the men are allowed to smoke on the mess or lower deck and if there were cigars in the canteen, which were 10 a shilling there would be plenty of men smoking them in the messes, and it was always a make and mend day.

After dinner the hands would be piped down and shore leave given to the watch ashore, no work was done only such as had to be done per service. Rum was issued each day at one bell (12.30) and such a day as Xmas day those going ashore as a rule left their rum for their mess mates benefit. They could get all they needed when ashore. Yes Xmas day is the best day in the Navy.

While the ship was in port we lived pretty well and always had a good dinner on Sundays, which we paid for out of our own pocket of course.

One day when some of us were ashore, we visited the market in Adelaide. There was a cheap Jack who had a stall there. He sold tickets at 6<sup>d</sup> each, each one was numbered, and there was a chance of getting a very good prize, if you failed to do so, then you could get something worth 6<sup>d</sup> from the stall. These prizes were dinner sets, suits of clothes, horse saddles, and many other things, how he made profit I don't know, but he did, so much so, that years afterwards he built 6 shops near the market and ran them all. Drapers shop, grocers, ironmonger, small goods, butcher, and boot and shoe shop, so he had done very well.

We brought some tickets and one of the chaps won a prize, so he picked a large turkey already dressed for the oven. So with the turkey we went on our ramble around the city. The chap that won it wouldn't leave it anywhere, but carried it

with him whenever we went. He hung on to it all the while and it wasn't long before the paper wrapping was mostly off the bird, then he carried it by the neck. I left them after awhile as I had a visit to make, and later on I heard all about their adventures, from pub to pub they went, and of course the turkey went too. (It was the next day that I heard all about it).

By that time all the wrapping was off the turkey and it was hanging in his hand more naked than when it first came out of the shell. The bird getting very much the worse for wear as they went along. All the time his mates kept close watch that he wouldn't lose it but there wasn't much chance of that. The winner kept his prize and wouldn't let it out of his hand for a moment. So they wandered about the city from pub to pub with the turkey still with them, getting more tender I guess, as time passed. They were all soon half seas over, and were still zig zagging about until dark. They stayed somewhere in the city that night, and came on board in the morning very much the worse for wear, so was the turkey which they still had. It was cooked and eaten that day and I bet it was tender after the rough treatment it had had. After that we often tried our luck for a prize, but we never won anything else.

After Xmas was over, we still remained up the river until 16<sup>th</sup> January, then we went to sea bound for West Australia. As we went along the river at one of the bends, we met a big shire liner coming up, she was a large ship with four masts and towered high above us. It seemed impossible for the ships to miss each other. It seemed certain that this big ship (the *Essex* was her name) would hit us on the beam, it seemed impossible for us to turn off in time to miss the other ship.



Our bugle sounded for stations water tight, doors were closed and each man stood at his station, all this took only a few seconds then just when we expected the two ships to strike each other they just missed. Our ship turned off in time and the two ships scraped sides. The side of the big liner shaved all our port boats and davits off, like cutting a slice from a loaf of bread. She even scraped the fiddle backs off the ports, all our boats on the port side were just match wood. We continued on down the river and anchored in Largs Bay. We had to wait advice from Sydney to know if we were to go to Melbourne to refit or remain at Port Adelaide. I was hoping that we would get orders to go back to Melbourne to the dock yard there, others reckoned we would go to Sydney. However, word came that we were to remain at Port Adelaide until new boats and davits should arrive from Sydney. So we went back up the river and made fast in our usual place, so that was that! I missed a chance of going back home. Not far from where we always tied up, there were some fishermens homes, and kiddies from these homes would come to the ship every day and collect loaves of bread that we didn't want, oatmeal, tea and sugar, and sometimes tins of meat and jam, in fact all the stores that we didn't get mess savings for and didn't want. When at sea we saved it for them until we came back to port, that is all stores that would keep. It was a God send to them, every time we came to Port Adelaide the kiddies would be waiting there with their trucks ready to collect what we could give them. They seemed to know just when we would be coming in. We always saw that each kid got an equal share of what we had. Sometimes they got 7lb tins of meat and tinned corn mutton, also tinned rabbit, which would be issued to us at sea and very little of it was

eaten by us. It was better to save it for these kids than throw it overboard as most ships did.

All tinned meat, issued in the Navy, was known as Fanny Adams and for a long time the men wouldn't eat it, they threw it overboard. Whenever it would be issued, out the ports it would be dumped, so very much good stuff was dumped, even although they were hungry and tired of salt horse or salt pork. The reason why it was dumped overboard and why it was called Fanny Adams is this.... there was a man named Adams who supplied the Admiralty with tinned meat. He had a daughter named Fanny. One day she was at the factory having a look around, she was seen to enter a part of the works, and not seen to come out, and she was never seen again, what became of her was never discovered. The yarn got about that she had been murdered, her body packed with the meat in the tins. Thats why the men in the Navy wouldn't eat tinned meat, and called it Fanny Adams.

I don't suppose there was any truth in this yarn, but it was supposed to have put the firm of Adams out of business. All the tinned meat issued to us was packed in Australia, but it was still Fanny Adams as far as the men were concerned, and most of the crew wouldn't eat it, but I've had plenty of it, Fanny Adams, or no Fanny Adams. And I'll bet that the fishermens families enjoyed it too, they wouldn't care a fig about the yarn of Fanny Adams. Give anything a bad name and it will stick to it is a very true saying.

In about three weeks time our new boats and davits arrived. The fiddlebacks over the ports had been replaced while we had been waiting. The ship repainted so all looked as it had been before the accident. The new boats etc. came

by one of the inter state steamers and in a few days everything was in place and the ship ready for sea again. So on February 2<sup>nd</sup> we left the river and went to sea. Albany was to be our first port of call. Outside we struck a rough sea, we had a number of stokers in the sick list when we left Port Adelaide, so as it was such bad weather some seaman had to work in the stoke holes in place of the sick stokers<sup>17</sup>. The seaman were not ordered to do this work, that is not done in the Navy. They are asked to do the work and can refuse to do so if they liked, but of course wouldn't refuse to go into the stoke holes in such a case when it was rough and they are short handed. I was one that went below. The work was hard for us who were not used to it, but we worked in three watches. I liked the change and we missed all the upper deck work, we were hot, but we were dry. So we rolled and pitched along the weather being bad all the way to Albany, where we arrived on the 6<sup>th</sup>, and next day took in 200 tons of coal to top the bunkers up. After coaling ship and cleaning up after that dirty job, we repainted the ship again. The rough weather we had made us look rather rusty here and there, and a man-of-war must be always looking its best. We really did need a new coat of paint although we had painted ship just before leaving Port Adelaide, a rough sea plays up with the paint work.

I went ashore once or twice, but Albany is a very quiet little town and there's not much to see but you can have a good ramble around after being cramped up on board ship, that was the only reason I went ashore. But later on when the fleet called there I was to find it a bit more lively of which I'll tell

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17 A person whose job was to stoke fires, especially on a ship or a steam train

later. I always sent a post card home from every place we called at, with a local view if I could get one, and I seldom failed to do that. I wrote home to the wife and kiddies went ashore to post it and also get a post card and post that too. There was a fort well up the mountain side overlooking the harbour and that was about the only place we could go to and spend the evenings. We were always made welcome, we had a good time with the soldiers, I was glad to get ashore after coaling and painting ship.

I hated coal ship days its the worst job in the Navy. Its true you can go as you please, smoke while at work, and wear any old rig thats not fit for any other kind of work. Its a dirty job. You are covered with coal dust from head to foot, its in your eyes and down your throat and no matter what you do to prevent it, the dust is everywhere all over the ship. The mess deck is in an awful state and when dinner is ready you grab whatever you can coal dust and all. There is no time to wash and even if there was, there wouldn't be any water to wash with unless you used salt water. No water for washing was issued until the coaling was finished and the ship washed down, then you could wash.

Coaling was done with a rush, it was an evolution each ship trying to beat another ships record of so many tons an hour, so every time we coaled ship every man from the Captain down, was glad when it was over. That was the old style, now it is different, theres no coaling ship in the Navy, its all oil burning now. There is no dirt and all is clean and nice, men in the Navy now don't know what coal dust is. They have only heard about it, and for that they can be thankful for. After the ship was coaled, the next job was to clean the ship, she was washed down fore and aft. The mess deck scrubbed and all

made ship shape again, then we could wash ourselves.

Each mess had two tubs and all the mess stripped and one washed the back of another, soon the water was like black ink, but before it was too black each one washed his face and it takes some washing to get all the coal off. The one wack of water had to do all the mess, there was no chance of getting a fresh tub, so after all had washed their faces, the water was pretty black for washing the rest of their body. It was alright if shore leave was given after coaling those lucky enough to be able to go ashore could go somewhere and get a good hot bath then they would feel cleaner and be cleaner.

We left Albany and arrived at Fremantle on 23<sup>rd</sup> February, after a fair trip around, leave was given to the watch ashore, as it wasnt my watch ashore I had to remain on board. Next day we went to sea to do some gun practice and came back to Fremantle the same evening, too late for shore leave. For the next few days it was the same routine going to sea each morning for gun practice and returning to port in the evening. Then we remained in port for a few days and I had a few runs up to Perth. On March 1<sup>st</sup> we went to sea again for more gun firing, we were getting plenty of it, we stayed out for two days then went back to port. A few days in port then out again for more gun practice. At last the gun work was finished for the time being and we were in port for awhile. There was talk that we would remain in port until the end of the month, and then go back to Victoria, although I didn't take much notice of it, I was hoping it was true.

After dinner I got a letter from home, all were well but it reminded me it would be my eldest daughters birthday on the 5<sup>th</sup>, she would be six years old. As I write this so many

years after, she has now a grown up family of her own. Time marches on! Or does it fly! I went ashore that evening to buy a birthday card for her, I posted it, maybe she has still got that card. I always seemed to forget when it was any of the youngsters birthday, thats why my wife had to remind me. I never even thought of putting the dates in my book, but they always got a card just the same even although maybe at times they didn't arrive on their birthday.

On Sunday evenings some of us used to go up to Perth. The reason was that at the Cathedral there was a very good choir and it was a treat to go and hear the singing, there wasnt anywhere else to go on Sunday evenings and that was better than just walking about the city. I knew some friends in Fremantle but Sunday evenings I didn't consider a good time for visits unless I was expected, so I generally left such visits for week nights. I never liked to butt in and find other visitors there. After we came away from the Cathedral we would go back to the ship and turn in.

When we were at Port Adelaide we always had Church Parade ashore, but we never landed anywhere else for church. The church being close to where we tied up in Port Adelaide maybe that was the reason. The first time we landed for church there, I found it was very high church. As I wasn't a high churchman didn't like it at all, so before the next Sunday I saw the Commander by request. He pointed out to me that I was entered in the ships book as C. of E. so must attend Church Parade. I told him as I objected to attend high church I was willing to land with the Wesleyans and go to that church, so after thinking it out for a while, he granted my request. So after that I landed and went to the Wesleyan church whenever the ship was at Port Adelaide, which I liked

much better as the singing was very good they had a good choir too. At Fremantle, church was always held on board.

After dinner leave was given but I didn't feel like going ashore although it was my watch ashore. We had the usual crowd of visitors on board during the afternoon and of course there were plenty of small boys on board as usual.

After evening quarters we furled the poop awning, hoisted the galley, turned out the 1<sup>st</sup> cutter and lowered it. Next morning, Monday, was evolution day, and first thing we did was to get out the bower anchor, also the kedge anchor<sup>18</sup>. I was in the first cutter which didn't please me at all, as it being Monday morning we all had clean duck suits on, and working the bower anchor is a dirty job. This evolution is carried out, just in case some day it had to be done in order to get a ship off a reef, or if she had ran aground. The anchor is lowered and slung under the biggest boat the ship has, a spreader is placed over the boat which carries the wire sling to which the anchor is made fast. A wire rope is also attached to the anchor, and when the anchor is taken to where it has to go and dropped, the wire rope is taken to the capstan<sup>19</sup> and by that means, the ship if not too fast ashore would be hauled into deep water. As an evolution (drill) the next order would be to weigh it by hand, this was also drill in case there was no steam, that is the capstan would be manned and the anchor brought on board again. Of all evolutions out Bower anchor was the most unliked. After the evolutions were finished and

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<sup>18</sup> A kedge anchor is a secondary anchor that is used in addition to the primary anchor on a ship. It is typically smaller and lighter than the primary anchor making it easier to handle.

<sup>19</sup> A capstan is a vertical-axled rotating machine that was developed for use on sailing ships to multiply the pulling force of seamen when hauling ropes, cables, and hawsers

all the gear replaced, we prepared the ship for sea. Steaming covers were placed on the main mast, these are canvas covers laced around the mast so the paint won't be blackened by the smoke from the funnels. They were a bother and were taken down when the next port was reached. They would be pretty black with the smoke, after being scrubbed they were dried and put away until the ship as going to sea again. Mast covers are no longer used, I'm glad to say.

In the evening after supper, I spent the time writing some letters, one home. Next morning we went to sea we expected to do some target practice but anchored outside instead. In the afternoon we had man and arm ship then battle stations, we remain anchored all night. In the morning we had visitors, a Major General and his staff came on board, thats why we had remained there. There was a fort to be built and they wanted to inspect the sight from seaward. So we got underway, and during the afternoon we carried out some target practice, which I suppose was for the benefit of our visitors. We also fired some shrapnel shell, the firing was very good, so I guess the Captain was well satisfied. Later on in the afternoon we landed the General and his staff, that was about 4 o'clock, then we went back to port.

Next day as well as the usual routine, we started to dismount guns for a good overhaul and clean, so I was busy with the gun party. After dinner a make and mend was piped and leave given, but we of the gun dismounting party had to carry on with our job, we would get our make and mend later on. After supper when we had packed up for the day, I went ashore for a run, went up to Perth and came back on board by 12.30. By Saturday our work on the guns was finished so I got my make and mend and went ashore on a visit to some



friends at North Fremantle. After seven o'clock I went up to Perth for a ramble around the city. It started to rain which kept up all night, I returned on board at 12.30 as usual.

Next day, Sunday, the Bishop of Perth came on board and held the service, I rather enjoyed it. He was a good speaker and gave a very good sermon, at least I thought he did. It was a much better service than we got as a rule when the Captain held it on board, we didn't carry a parson.

That morning it didn't look too good, but the rain held off and by dinner time it got clearer and the afternoon was fine. As our steam cutter was not running we had no visitors on board. Our steam boat was the only means they had of coming on board, there never seemed to be any watermen about to take visitors off to the ship. I could see plenty of would be visitors on the wharf, but they were disappointed and when they found there was no steam cutter running, they went home again.

Next day there was some excitement on board, someone had robbed the paymaster of a large sum of money. It had been taken from his office down in the after flats. The lower deck was cleared and when all the hands had fallen in on deck, all the bags and ditty boxes were searched, and every part of the ship as well. It wasn't likely that who had taken the money would be foolish enough to hide it in his bag or ditty box. He would find a better place than that. Even soap was cut up to make sure no coins was hidden in it. The stolen money was all in sovereigns. They searched high and low, but no trace of the money was found. When all the searching was over we were piped down again. I thought it strange that none of us were searched when we were fell in.

A few days after this, the Captain of the Head<sup>20</sup> was busy cleaning paint work in his part of the ship (the heads) there was the usual few hands hanging around, suddenly as he wiped a ledge with his cloth, down came a shower of sovereigns, imagine the surprise they got. The master at arms was sent for, who took charge of the gold. Another search was made but no more was found. The ledge was the only place there that hadn't been searched before, only £10 was recovered, out of £60 pound stolen. The chap who stole the cash had put some of it on the ledge, or maybe the whole of it, and didn't get the chance to remove the lot when the search was over, maybe he was disturbed and left some of it. Not long after this a marine deserted and some reckoned he was the offender, but that was only because he had deserted. It was very hard to guess who had taken the money, we had so many on board, it could have been taken by anyone on board. At this time I was not looking after the Bosun's store, I had another square job, I was side party. My job was to see that the outside of the ship was kept clean, so most of the time I was over the side, busy with the paint work etc.

During the dog watches in my spare time I would be tattooing as per usual, most of my pay was paid into the bank so the wife could draw it so any extra pocket money I could earn came in handy for shore leave. One day we went to sea with about 30 visitors on board. We came back at 4<sup>pm</sup> and landed the visitors. Why they came on board was more than I could guess. Some kind of picnic I reckon. Next morning we started to survey cables, we got the starboard cable up from the chain locker and ranged it along the deck, so it could be

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<sup>20</sup> Toilets.

examined link by link. Its a hard job dragging the heavy cable along the deck with chain hooks but many hands soon do the job, and the sooner its done and stowed back in the chain locker, the better for us.

Next day we got the port cable out for survey. While this survey was taking place the ship was tied up to a buoy in the stream, we finished the cable and stowed it back again, washed down the deck and by that time it was supper (tea) time. I cleaned and went up to Perth to see a play. I didn't like it, but sat it out. I got back on board by 12.30 and turned in. I didn't go ashore again until the next Sunday and went to the cathedral to hear the singing which I enjoyed far better than the play.

On the Monday morning we coaled ship, we were at that all day, full of coal dust and as black as the coal itself, we took in 230 tons, some of the hands did the carrying, myself being one of them. Its hard work carrying a big basket of coal from the lighter to the bunkers, and when the last basket was taken in I wasn't sorry. Then we had the same old job cleaning ship and ourselves, I was too tired to go ashore, that evening I received a letter from home which cheered me up and made me forget coal dust.

Our next job was to clear out the hold. All the stores had to be taken out and stowed on deck, examined and tallied. The hold cleaned and all the stores put back and stowed we were glad to see the last of it going back to where it belonged. It was April 1<sup>st</sup>, All Fools Day.

There was talk that we were going to sea on the 5<sup>th</sup>, anyway as we had just coaled ship and that was a sure sign we wouldn't be long getting to sea. We were supposed to be

going east, and I hoped the talk was true, it would suit me alright. Next day was Sunday and a very wet day up to dinner time when it cleared up. A Minister from the port came on board and held church service. That afternoon I had a final run up to Perth, I stayed there all night, came back to Fremantle by the 6<sup>am</sup> train. Next day the ship was under sailing orders, we were busy getting the ship ready for sea, so we were going to sea sure enough and I wasn't sorry.

No shore leave was given that night. As a rule when under sailing orders, leave was given until 11.30<sup>pm</sup> but this time there was no leave at all, so some were beat out of a final run. I wrote home that evening and told them we were leaving, I thought for Melbourne but I guessed if we were going there, I would arrive before my letter did as it would have to wait for the interstate boat. I also wrote to some friends telling them we were going to sea, and saying so long to them.

We went to sea next morning at 8 o'clock. It was blowing pretty hard and we found a heavy sea running outside, but that made no difference to us. A man-of-war goes to sea when its supposed to no matter what the weather is like, only a hurricane would keep them in port I reckon. The officers have the same discomfort as the men, we had a head wind and sea, and as the ship dived into the big seas we shipped plenty of water, so our upper deck was very wet, but the mess deck was dry enough that was one comfort. So we rolled and pitched along doing only about nine or ten knots, even that slow pace made us a very wet ship, we had a heavy head sea. All day it was the same no sign of better weather and that night was a very dirty one. The weather seemed to be getting worse than better. Next morning the weather was the same just as bad as it could be, still blowing hard with very heavy

seas. During the forenoon two gun ports were carried away. The seas were worse and our mess deck was no longer dry, as plenty of water washed along it there was hardly a dry spot to be found anywhere.

I've heard of a man selling a farm and going to sea, but I've never met one that did. If such a man was with us on that trip, he would find it better ploughing the land than ploughing the sea. Britannia rules the waves but she never rules them straight, we were getting a doing over sure enough. While we were at dinner, the 1<sup>st</sup> cutter which was slung outboard for use as a sea boat in case anyone went overboard, a big sea caught it and lifted it out of the falls, only the gripes saved the boat from being washed away, but it only needed another sea like that to hit it, then good bye boat. The watch on deck had a job to secure the boat, all those doing the job had a very wet time of it, there was also a good chance of being washed overboard too. However the boat was made safe without any accident and all was safe again and the men able to put on dry clothes. Some seamen were asked to go below to trim coal for the stokeholes, that is bring the coal from the bunkers, so some went down, they would be dryer and warmer there. It took us two days to get past the Lewin, that is the Cape, so we were making very slow headway. The next day it was still blowing hard and the same heavy sea, the ship very wet fore and aft. It was pretty miserable on the mess deck, we had no comfort at all. Had we been going the other way, west instead of east, with the wind and sea with us, we would have been a dry ship, but you can't get it the way you want it at sea, always.

This was the worst weather we had met with so far. We passed a barque, she had the sea and wind with her, and was booming along under reduced canvas, fore stay sail, lower

topsails and reefed spanker. She was making good weather of it, racing along ahead of the seas and I guessed her deck was dry, she was riding the seas like a duck.

It was very different with us, facing it all and diving into the seas. Not long after we passed the barque we shipped a very heavy sea which filled up the waist and the hammock nettings and of course flooded the ward room and cabins aft as well. Very few of the crew had dry hammocks that night, so most of us tried to get some sleep the best way we could. if we could find a dry place, which was not easy.

The next morning was finer the wind had gone down a lot during the night, but a big sea was still running, we had some sunshine for the first time since we had left Fremantle. As it was Saturday we carried out the usual Saturday cleaning routine, but goodness knows we had been well washed out the last day or two, so the ship had pretty clean decks, with the seas we had shipped, just the same the cleaning routine for Saturday must be carried out. As the wind had gone down so much and the sun peeping out, all our wet hammocks and bedding was hung in the rigging to dry. The nettings (bins along the inside of the bulwarks for stowing hammocks) dried out, ward room and cabins so we had plenty to do.

After the ship had been cleaned and we had gone to quarters, scrub and wash clothes was piped, all of us had plenty of wet clothes for drying and we washed some others. So the rigging was soon full of all kinds of clothing should the weather keep fine all would be well, but if it started to blow up again, down would come all our washing. Our hammocks and bedding had been taken in before we hung up our washing, so we had dry bedding that night and we needed it.

Our washing was dry before evening quarters so all was well.

It kept fine all night, but next morning the weather didn't look too good, we expected more wind and rain.

It being Sunday we had the usual church service, we were just about half way to Melbourne. When we left Fremantle I thought we might call at Adelaide, but I now found we were going direct to Melbourne, and that fact was nice to know, I would soon be home again. In my letter home I had said I expected to call at Adelaide so unless she saw in the paper that we were on our way to Melbourne, she wouldn't be expecting me to arrive home yet awhile and my arrival would be a surprise for her.

In the evening during dog watches it came on to blow again with rain as well. The big sea was still running but we were not shipping so much water as before, but our decks was anything but dry. The rain didn't last long, but plenty of spray was coming on board keeping the decks wet, so we were still a wet ship and it was blowing hard all through the night. The next morning it was just the same with a big heavy sea still running, about dinner time, rain squalls came along and we had them every little while and before evening quarters it was blowing as hard as ever again, and the mess deck still very wet, it was also very cold, the sea was soon running higher. I was wishing we were in port where we would have dry decks and more comfort. We expected to pass the Otway next morning we were still going slow and making bad weather of it.

In the morning the wind had dropped a lot and the sea had gone down too, and we expected to see the Otway light that evening.

During the first watch while I was on the lookout, I saw the Otway light, that was just after 8 o'clock, we passed the Cape at 10.30. We were still going slow, only doing about 8 knots on account of the big head sea, it was still running high although it had gone down a bit. But before morning the sea had gone down so much that we increased speed during the middle watch.

We were off Port Phillip heads by daylight. As we passed through the heads and steamed up the bay, it was good to be in smooth water at last. I guess we looked a sorry sight with our funnels and upper works white with salt spray that had been flying over us, we didn't look as spic and span as a man-of-war should look. So we went up the bay and made fast alongside the Town Pier at Port Melbourne, and as soon as all was secure and the ship tided, leave was piped and I wasn't long before I was cleared for shore, and was soon on my way home.

After the liberty the men had gone ashore, the watch on board struck topmasts (that is the top masts were sent down) so I missed that job and wasn't sorry. I had a great welcome home and for a while I couldn't get a word in at all. What with all the questions the youngsters asked me, and what they had to tell me about themselves. At tea time I had to tell them all about our work, they were allowed to stay up a little later than usual on account of my home coming. It was not until they had all turned in that the wife and I had a chance for a talk. It was grand to be home and find all well, with more comfort than I had had lately on board ship.

Next day the papers had all the news of our rough trip from the west and how salt encrusted the ship looked, and



the result was that plenty of people went down to see the ship. No doubt the ship looked more like a tramp steamer that had been at sea for months, some people seeing our top masts down thought we had lost them at sea, and had to be told they were down for overhauling etc. Next day we started to paint ship and we needed that pretty badly, and before long she was looking a bit more ship shape. All hands painting the ship, soon make a quick job of it. That evening I was home again, it was grand to be home and have a good meal in peace and comfort. I had gone ashore in place of another chap who stayed on board and took my place, thats called a turnout of watch. I would do the same for him in some other port where he wanted to land.

Next day was Sunday and number ones was the rig for divisions, that is cloth pants and serge frocks, a kind of jumper with cuffs on the sleeves, which was our best uniform. After dinner leave was given and as it was my proper watch ashore of course I couldn't miss going home, so I was home for the afternoon and night, until 7 o'clock next morning, that was my first home for tea for some time and I reckon I enjoyed it. The ship looked smart once more in her new coat of paint and during that Sunday afternoon quite a lot of people visited the ship. I was home and happy to be there. It was funny that next morning (Monday) just after the ship had been painted and looking so well, we should coal ship. We should have coaled ship before we painted her, but there it was. The lighter came alongside so we had to coal ship, they do queer things in the Navy at times. Before dinner time the ship and all of us was covered with coal dust. As luck would have it! After dinner I was taken away from coaling, as being side party I had to do a job over the side so I got out of most

of the dirty work, but I got a ducking over my job. While I was busy over the side I was called inboard for something, so I grabbed hold of a lanyard that held a spar fender on the side between the ship and the pier which kept the ship from the pier. Someone had unbent the lanyard, that is had taken the turns off the pin and as I went to climb up the lanyard to get on board, the line came away with me and of course over I went into the water, between the ship and the pier. I knew the danger of being crushed, so I didn't take long in getting under the pier out of the way of the ships side. Then I scrambled on to one of the fore and aft fenders, got hold of one of the lines that held it in place, and so climbed on board, and soon changed into dry clothes.

After attending to what I had been called inboard for I went back over the side and worked there until suppertime 4 o'clock. Next morning I put in a request for leave on Wednesday (turn out of watch) so I had to fall in and see the Commander about it.

The leave was granted and I felt OK, but when you think you are going along quite alright, there's always some little set back that spoils it all. That evening at quarters I was asked if the work over the side was finished. So I said it wasn't yet quite finished, so I was told I would have to finish it before I went ashore next day, so all the next day I was hard at it trying to get the job finished, but try as hard as I could I didn't get it done until 5<sup>pm</sup>, then I cleaned and went ashore and home.

I had put in for leave to land earlier than usual, but I landed much later than liberty men went ashore. Anyway I was home and that was all that mattered, even if I was late.

Why I had put in for the leave was because we were going

to Geelong next day, and there wouldn't be much chance of getting home from there unless I got weekend leave, as I did a few times when we were there before. Next day we left for Geelong just after dinner and got to Geelong about 4 o'clock. Soon as we anchored I had to grey wash the cable from the water to the hawse pipe. The cable would be rusty, so it had to be done over and made the same colour as the rest of the ship. This was done by sitting in a Bos'uns chair and riding the cable down. It was also my job to put on the guest warp, a line from the gangway to the lower boom, by the time I finished, liberty men had landed and I didn't bother about going ashore later. I wasn't in any hurry to land at Geelong, I wasn't able to go home.

As it was my watch on shore, I had nothing to do with the general routine of the ship, the only thing that would bother me, was clear lower deck! if such was piped, otherwise I could please myself what I did that evening. The watch on board had an evolution, man and arm ship but didn't touch me, so I remained in the mess and glad I was able to do so while the watch on board were hard at it. Later on in the evening there was a big fire ashore, so a fire party landed in case their help was needed. It was a large house and the local fire brigade saved most of it. The fire gave some of the watch on board, the chance of a run ashore which they didn't mind at all. Almost every port we called at we would pick up one or two fleet reserve men, that came on board to do their annual drill, they could go on board any man-of-war that happened to call there. They had to put in a certain number of days on board, generally about seven days, if the ship was staying that long, if not, then they put in as much drill as possible. These reserve men were in jobs on shore or else on some merchant

ship. Four came on board us at Geelong, they had a good time and wasnt troubled much, they had their dinners on board and landed at four o'clock every day.

The next Friday was Good Friday, so it was Sunday routine on board. Church service was held and after dinner leave was piped, so I went ashore and paid a visit to some friends I had in North Geelong. It would have suited me, if I could have had leave from Friday until Monday, but I knew I would have no hope of getting it, if I put in for it. I spent the evening with my friends and went back on board at 11.30. Next day being a Saturday, we had the usual Saturday routine cleaning ship for Sunday. The port watch went ashore after dinner, some got leave from Saturday until Monday. It was my watch on board but I hoped I would get weekend leave next weekend.

On Sunday we had a lot of visitors on board and most of my time that afternoon I was showing people around, got an invitation to visit some of them anytime I cared to, I promised some I would if we stayed there long enough. After the visitors had gone we cleaned up decks and went to quarters, then the rest of the evening was just ours, unless something turned up to disturb us.

Next day, Easter Monday, leave was given after 9<sup>am</sup> until next day at 7<sup>am</sup>. I was wanting all the leave I could get and it was just too bad we were not at Port Melbourne where I could get home.

When we went to sea it would be hard to guess just when we would be back. Before long I would be due for long leave (14 days) and I was hoping we would be back at Port Melbourne so I could get it. I went ashore and a walk around, had dinner at one of the eating houses, as we called them,

then another ramble around. I had places I could visit, but I decided that Easter Monday was not a good day to pay visits, so didn't bother about it. I had tea where I had my dinner before, and booked a bed for the night. I went on board next morning at 6.30. So Easter went, the same as Xmas, without me being home, for the first time since I had married.

After Divisions<sup>21</sup> at 9<sup>am</sup> we carried out evolutions as they were not done the day before as usual it being Easter Monday. So we got out Bower anchor, and as that wasn't done smart enough, we had to do it again, all hands were pleased, I don't think! That evolution took us until near dinner time, we returned all the gear and went to dinner. After dinner we got out the stream anchor, also the kedge anchor. By the time this was done and all the gear stowed away again, we were all feeling we had had enough of evolutions, and were glad there was no more for the rest of the day.

I was a bit worried because I had not heard from home since we had left for Geelong, I was thinking there might be some sickness. Next day I went ashore and had tea with some friends who had visited the ship the last Sunday. I had a very good evening with them and got back on board at 11.30. I almost missed the boat as it was just about to shove off as I reached the pier. I was lucky there was a letter for me, it had come on board with the late mail, after I had gone ashore, all was well at home so my worry left me.

Next morning we got under way at 7.30, we were going to run torpedos. I was told off for the steam boat at 6 o'clock, we would do the marking, as there was to be some target practice

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<sup>21</sup> A division is the smallest naval formation, most commonly numbering between two and four ships.

as well, our job also was to pick up torpedos after their run. So we followed the ship to where the firing was to take place. All the morning we were torpedo running, and in the afternoon the gun practice took place, I was on the steam boat all day. After the gun, we had out collision mat, which was an evolution, then we had man and arm ship, then we anchored for the night. We were left in peace and had the night to ourselves.

Next morning, I was working at dismounting guns, I was at that all day. The torpedo running was continued also the gun practice, then at 4<sup>pm</sup> we returned to Geelong. Leave was given to the port watch, it was my watch on board, but that didn't worry me I didn't feel like a run ashore. After we fired the torpedoes from the stern tube it leaked a lot so I and a few others were bailing the tube out until 7 o'clock. At 8 o'clock we had some more man and arm ship, we were getting plenty of that kind of thing lately, it was all in the days work, and if it wasn't that it would have been something else. Next day I was back painting over the side.

I put in for leave from Saturday until Monday, for the weekend. The leave was granted, so on Saturday I caught the 3.30 boat that left for Melbourne. I had written and told the wife I would be home, so all the youngsters were on top line waiting for me. Of course I had to leave again on Sunday morning to get the boat back to Geelong, so that cut my home leave short. Anyway I had been home and that was something. I had my dinner on the boat and tea in Geelong, stayed there for the night and went on board at 6.30 next morning.

After evolutions that morning we started to paint ship

which kept us going all day. Next day the painting was finished, we were going to sea soon, which fact I had told them at home. We expected to go to Sydney to refit and draw stores. I went ashore that evening and said good bye to some friends, stayed the night at the usual place.

Next day we were busy getting ready for sea. After dinner a make and mend was piped, leave was given until 11<sup>pm</sup>. As the ship was under sailing orders no all night leave was given. It being my watch on board I touched up the water line, where it needed doing. After evening quarters we got the copper paint inboard and stowed it, made the 2<sup>nd</sup> cutter secure as well. Then I wrote home wishing all good bye once more, and telling them we were going to sea next day, bound for Sydney, to refit, draw stores etc. Next morning at 9 o'clock we went alongside the pier and drew fresh water, we didn't get away until 1<sup>pm</sup>, we dropped anchor at Queenscliff, and sent down a diver for his quarterly practice. This took an hour, then we got up anchor and went to sea. It was after six o'clock by the time we were well through the heads. The weather was splendid, quite a change to what we had coming from the west to Melbourne.

The sea was smooth and we made good headway. Next morning we passed a collier, and later on a mail boat, the sea was still calm. The good weather continued all night, it was up to us to have some decent weather anyhow, but our good luck wasn't going to last very long. In the afternoon we scrubbed and washed clothes, and while they were in the rigging drying the weather changed, suddenly it started to blow hard, down all wash clothes was piped, and we all scattered after our washing which was blown all over the ship some of it overboard. Before we could get what remained of

our washing in, down came the rain, it rained heavy so we all got wet through. I was lucky to get all my washing but lots of the chaps lost theirs. I always had good clothes stops and made sure my washing was secure, just the same good stops don't always prevent clothes from being blown overboard in a squall. The rest of our trip to Sydney was just one squall after another, and we had plenty of rain as well, but just before we reached Sydney Heads the weather cleared up, so it was fine weather when we went up the harbour, the sun was shining.

It was the 9<sup>th</sup> when we got to Sydney, there we found the Flagship *Euryalus*, *Mildura*, *Cadmus*, *Wallaroo*, *Penguin* and *Dart*. There was also the German gun boat *Condor*. This was the first time I had steamed into Sydney Harbour since I had left the *Orlando* many years before, and I notice many changes on the shores of the harbour.

I was very glad to find a letter from home waiting for me, all were well and that evening I answered it and told what news I had. All next day we were busy getting out shell and powder into lighters. In the evening I went ashore at 5.30 and booked a bed at Naval House, posted my letter home, and had a ramble about the city, had a good supper then turned in about 10 o'clock.

Next day we started to paint ship, and also a general clean up in the shell rooms and magazines, which had to be got ready for the new issue of shell and powder. That evening I didn't go ashore, didn't feel like having a run about the city so stayed on board and turned in at 10<sup>pm</sup>. Same routine the next day, painting ship etc. We finished the painting before evening quarters, and stowed all the gear away, paint pots,



stages etc.

After supper I got into my best uniform and went ashore. I decided I would have a run out to Redfern and see if my old girls people still lived there. I hadn't seen them for twelve years so I hopped on a tram and went out. I walked along the old street and reached the house, the front door was open, I knocked and called out, is anyone at home? Then I heard a voice, Yes I know who that is, I know your voice, and the old lady came to the door and welcomed me, she knew my voice after all those years. She made a fuss of me and we had a great old yarn. I told her all about my wife and family, and she told me all the news. My old girl was married too and had a family of four, she will be very glad to see you, she told me, will go along and give her a surprise. So away I went just a few streets away, that was after we had a cup of tea. My old girl did get a surprise to see me, but she made me very welcome and of course she wanted to know all about my wife and family. After a while her mother left us to it, still earbashing, I promised I would stay for tea and meet her husband, so we were left alone for awhile. Then she told me why it was we parted years ago, no fault of mine, I didn't ask for the information she just told me, anyway it was no use worrying about it now, she was happily married, so was I. I met her hubby when he arrived home and I liked him, we became great pals later. So I spent a very nice evening at my old girls place and yarned and yarned until 10 o'clock when I said good night, and went to the Naval House and turned in. I was satisfied my old girl had married a good chap so all was well. I had no regrets. He promised to come on board the ship the following Sunday to look over it and have tea with me, and after tea I would come ashore with him.

The next day it being Saturday we would carry on with the usual Saturday routine, cleaning ship for Sunday, but early in the morning we were informed from the Flagship that the Admiral would inspect our ship on Monday morning. So that meant a lot of extra work, holystoning etc., everything would have to be extra good for the inspection as the Admiral would be looking for faults as usual. It depends how he feels at the time. If he is out of sorts, then he would be sure to find faults. Then there is also Gunnery Jack who would be with the Admiral. He would inspect the guns etc, seeing what fault he could find. If he thought a gun wasn't just clean enough, then the gun's crew would have to go to cleaning stations again in their spare time. So we were all very busy all the morning, all the paint work had to have an extra good clean, so all this took time and we finished later than usual. The guns got an extra good polish, the guns were always clean, just as clean as they could be, and when a gun is that clean, it can't be made any cleaner. But if Gunnery Jack wanted to find fault with any gun, well he would find it. By Saturday evening the ship was like a new pin, we had done all we could to make it so, and left it at that.

On Sunday we had deck cloths down to keep the decks clean for the inspection next morning. We had church on board, and leave was given to the watch ashore, after dinner it was my watch ashore, but I didn't land with the liberty men as I was expecting my friend from Redfern to come on board. I would land with him later on. However he didn't come on board until well after three o'clock so I didn't have much time to show him over the ship before it was tea time but I showed him around a bit, then we went to tea in my mess. I went ashore with him when all ship visitors had to leave, I went to

his home and spent a very good evening. He was known as Chappie, and we had become great friends. I stayed that night at Naval House and went on board the ship at 7<sup>am</sup>.

There was still plenty to do on board. The Admiral was coming at 9 o'clock, so everything had to be ready. All hands cleaned in their best uniforms, and at 9 o'clock we all fell in at Divisions and five minutes later the Admiral was piped over the side onto our quarter deck. He walked along the ranks, looking at each man from his cap to his boots, if he found anything wrong with his dress, he pointed it out, then back again looking at the back of the same rank and so on to the next rank.

The officer of each division walked behind the Admiral ready to hear of anything wrong with the appearance of his men from the Admiral. As the Admiral passed along the ranks and didn't find fault with anyone not being properly dressed etc. we felt more at ease, so far, so good. After he had inspected us, we remained at Divisions while he inspected the ship all over, above and below decks, and while he was doing that, Gunnery Jack was inspecting the guns. When the Admiral came on deck again, we all had to muster by the open list. This is really running the gauntlet, each man has to go before the Admiral, take off his cap, stand at attention, and give his official number and rating. While his cap is off the Admiral could see if his hair was cut right, if it was not, he would be told to get it done, and if anything was wrong with his clothes he would be told about that as well. We passed through that all right, but there was more to come before the agony was over (all Admiral's inspections were called agony days in the Navy).

The next order was to shift into a clean white working rig, we had a few minutes to change then all hands were piped to fall in again. This was for evolutions, no one knew just what evolution it would be. It might be out bower anchor, prepare to be taken in tow, or to tow another ship, man and arm ship, out collision mat, away all boats, or any other evolution, we didn't have to wait long. The first one we did was out bower anchor, then we got it in by hand. After we had done that, we had to prepare to take a ship in tow, when that was done and all the gear stowed away again, it was away all boats and pull around the Flagship. When we got back and all the boats were hoisted, the lower deck was cleared and we all fell in again, everyone aft to hear what the Admiral had to say. He found no fault, the ship was very clean, and the evolutions were carried out very smartly etc. That wasn't bad, no fault with the ship or ship's company, that would please the skipper, and us too. After his little speech the Admiral was piped over the side into his barge and we were very pleased to see him go. Then we were piped to dinner and we needed it.

That evening the *Prometheus* came into the harbour and brought back with her one of our chaps who had deserted when we were over in the west. He was brought on board our ship and put in the cells, to wait until he was dealt with. He got 90 days in the naval prison on Garden Island. After doing his punishment, he made good in the service and was later sent to Whale Island for a gunnery course and came back as a gunnery instructor. Some years after he was a Lieutenant during the 2<sup>nd</sup> big war, so he made up for deserting his ship. The day after the Admiral's inspection we were back to our usual routine.

I went ashore that evening and had a run about the city,

and stayed the night at Naval House. When I got back on board next morning I was told off with a dock yard party to draw stores from Garden Island. We were doing that for most of the day. When I got back on board, I found a letter waiting for me from home, all were well. It was great to get a letter and you know there was nothing to worry about. So I was happy, but when letters were delayed, which was sometimes the case, then it was just misery for me, thinking something must be wrong, the children might be sick, I couldn't help worrying. It was just over 12 months since I had gone back to sea, and it seemed much longer to me. It was tough leaving the wife and youngsters like I did, but she never complained, she was like that, but I was never happy about it. I was longing for the time when I would be home for good, then I hoped to make up for the separation, she believed what I had done was all for the best. She was a great girl, one of the best this poor world has ever had, and no one knows that better than I do.

After tea I wrote home, by the time my letter writing was done it was time to turn in, which I did. Next day I had what is called a soft job. I was working in the Bos'uns store, a nice quiet job away from all the fuss of upper deck work, so I had nothing to worry me. After supper (or tea) I cleaned myself and went ashore. After booking my bed at Naval House, I got on a tram and went to Redfern to see Chappie and his wife, where I spent a very good evening. When I got back on board next morning I found we were going into dry dock to get the ships bottom cleaned and painted, as we didn't have steam up, a tug boat came alongside and took us to Cockatoo Island where the dry dock was. So we went into dock and before supper that day we had almost scraped the bottom clean, this

was done from punts while the water was being pumped out so we had to keep going as the water went down.

While in dock if I went ashore to the city I had to take a ferry that called at the island. We went to supper and what was left to be done could be done from the bottom of the dock after the water was all pumped out. Next morning we rigged stages ready for painting the bottom. To my surprise at dinner time they piped a make and mend, so one watch could go ashore if they wanted to. The watch on board had no make and mend, they had to carry on with the painting. As it was a Saturday, leave was given until 11 o'clock on Sunday night, so I went ashore and caught the ferry for the city then went up to Chappies place and stayed there that night and Sunday. It rained but I had a very good weekend with them just the same, as I had to be back on board at 11<sup>pm</sup> on Sunday night. It wasn't very nice going on board as the night was a very wet one. All next day we were pretty busy in the dock, after work was finished I went ashore again and went out with Chappie for the evening. I went back to the dock that night and turned in about 11 o'clock.

Next day I was sent to Spectacle Island to clean and gauge shells. This is a small island where shells were cleaned and filled ready for the ships, I was working at that all day. I was disappointed when I got back to the ship at 4 o'clock to find there were no letters for me, I expected one from home that day. The rain had cleared off and it was a fine evening I decided to have a run ashore, so I went up to see Chappie and stayed there all night, went back on board as usual at 7<sup>am</sup>. As the ship was in dock, I guessed we would soon be going to sea, being cleaned and painted in dock was a pretty good sign.

Next day was Empire Day, but as we were in dock we didn't have to dress ship with the usual flags. I was still cleaning shell all day. It was a very nice day, but I didn't go ashore that evening, I remained on the ship still miserable at not getting any news from home. All the next day we were busy getting in shell, and by supper time I was feeling a bit tired, but I went ashore and up to Redfern again, stayed there that night. They were always asking me to stay there when I was ashore, so I stayed with them now and then, I was always very welcome.

Next day we were again getting in shell and finished the job before dinner, it was all in and stowed in the shell rooms and I was very pleased, it was heavy work.

After dinner the dock was flooded, we were to go out of dock next morning, so at 9<sup>am</sup> we went out of dock. I was in the 2<sup>nd</sup> cutter being towed by the steam cutter, following the ship to our moorings in Farm Cove. We hadn't been long tied up at the buoy when the Powder lighter came alongside and for the rest of the day we were busy stowing the powder on board. All day long the powder kept coming along, it had to be stowed at once in the magazines, I was kept at it until the job was finished and all our powder in the magazines. I missed my tea as I had to finish the job. I didn't mind that as I intended to go ashore, I would have a good tea when I landed, so I went ashore at 6.35, had my tea and then went to Redfern. I stayed there all night, that is until 12 o'clock when I had to be back on board. Next day was Sunday and very wet, but that didn't stop them from sending us to church on Garden Island, rain or not. We were supposed to go to sea that day, and that is why I had gone up to Redfern the night before to say good bye. Chappie was to come down and see us leave but I guess it was too wet and he would be wise to

remain at home, anyway I didn't notice him anywhere on shore.

We left at 4<sup>pm</sup> and steamed slowly down the harbour and out to sea, it was still raining hard, and outside the heads a heavy sea was running, we were going first to Jervis Bay to do some gun practice, which wouldn't take us very long. Then we would be on our way to Melbourne. I had written home before we left Sydney to tell the wife I would soon be home again. I got no letters before we left, I suppose they would arrive just after we had left port, they would be sent on to Melbourne. I was feeling a bit blue at not getting the letter I expected. Anyway I hoped I would find them all well when I arrived home.

The next morning at 7 o'clock we were in Jervis Bay and no time was lost getting ready for firing. A target was soon put out and during the day 64 rounds were fired. The shooting was good and I was very well satisfied with my firing too, I did very well. It would be just awful if a gun layer didn't do good shooting. After the firing was finished we had to clean the guns, which is a very dirty job. The powder charges make the dirt, guns have to be hosed out, then they have to be sponged dry. While the guns are being washed out the water is like black ink. After they are sponged dry, they have to be polished again, so theres plenty of work on them after firing, so with our guns oiled and clean again we could cover them up ready for sea. The weather was now fine and before 5 o'clock we had secured for sea and were on our way out of the bay. I little thought as we went to sea and passed Captain's Point, that in a few more years I and my family would be living there, and my youngest daughter born there, but so it was.



The next morning was not so good we had rain squalls, a big sea was running, but as we had it with us, we made good headway, the sea was helping us along. The next day was the same very squally with a big sea still running, at last we sighted the heads and entered Port Phillip at 2<sup>pm</sup>, we picked up a pilot and went up the west channel. We anchored at Port Melbourne but no leave was given that evening, it wasn't my watch ashore anyway so I wasn't worried at there being no leave. Next morning we got up anchor and went to buoys between the two piers so there we were made fast to a buoy ahead and one astern so the ship couldn't swing. After dinner a make and mend was piped and it didn't take me long to clean into a shore going rig, and was soon on my way home.

When I arrive home, I found all very well so I had nothing to worry about. There was a letter from Chappies wife to tell them I was on my way home, in case my letter went astray. It was grand to be home again, but the worst of it was I had to go back on board that night at 12 o'clock as we had to coal ship next morning.

So next day we were hard at it coaling ship, it was as usual a hurry up job, we were going as hard as we could till dinner time then no chance of a wash, we just grabbed what we could at the mess table, there was coal dust as usual everywhere. I often wondered how much coal dust a Navy man swallowed in twelve months, during coaling. We took in 280 tons that day, and by the time all the coal was in the bunkers and the ship washed down and all of us cleaned it was well onto 7 o'clock, leave was given at 8 o'clock until 12 pm that night, so I didn't think it was worth while to go ashore and home. I wasn't expected home that night anyway. I was soon going on 14 days leave, it was good to think of it.

Kept in brackets on the port side of the nettings, at the break of the Fok'sl, was an amour plate. This plate was 4 inches thick, and was used to cover the top of the Glory hole, which was a place on the fore deck where bags of the crew were stowed. The armour plate was put on the opening when the ship was cleared for action, it had a ring bolt in the centre through which a spar was put, so it could be lifted into its place. I was standing in front of this plate, looking over the nettings. I didn't notice that the upper clamp had shifted. I felt the plate move and jumped back, but I wasn't quite quick enough. It fell on the deck with the ringbolt under it, and it was that ringbolt that saved my feet from being smashed, but the edge of it caught my toes on both feet, (I had no boots on) and all my toes were crushed. Had the ring bolt not taken most of the weight I most likely would have lost all my toes. Some of the crew took the plate off my feet and wiped up the blood from the deck with a swab, before any of the officers could see it. Somehow I hopped into the mess and bandaged my toes and stopped the bleeding. I dared not go to the sick bay for treatment as I would have been put in the sick list and I wouldn't be allowed to go ashore on leave, so I couldn't risk that. If I had been found out I would have been punished as it was a very serious offence to conceal hurts like that. How I managed to dodge the master at arms and others is more than I can say, but I did, I was lucky. When I had to fall in at evening quarters I managed to force my boots on to hide my injured feet, it was very painful but I got away with it and wasn't found out. It was a very painful operation putting my boots on and off.

Next day I fell in with liberty men to go ashore, again I passed muster and went ashore, as I walked along the pier my

feet started to bleed again and the blood was squeezing through the eyelets of my boots. I had to put up with the pain of it while near the ship as the officer of the watch was walking up and down the Poop deck, so I couldn't take my boots off. At last I could stand it no longer so with some of my mates standing behind me to hide what I was doing, I took my boots off and walked slowly to the station leaving blood marks as I went along.

People stared to see me with my boots in my hand and my feet all red with blood, and like that I got into the train. In town I had to walk across the street to another station, I didn't mind the people looking at me. I was going on 14 days leave and would have time to fix my feet up, and so I at last got into the train that would take me home. I was lucky enough to have a compartment all to myself, and before I reached my station I again forced my boots on as I didn't want to walk home with them off. I won't tell what my wife said about my foolishness, but she was very angry with me for not having my feet seen to before, I ran a big risk neglecting them the way I did. However, she went to the chemist and got some stuff to bathe my feet with and soon I felt more comfortable after she had attended to them and put new bandages on. So I put in most of my leave nursing my sore feet. By the time my leave was over, they were almost well again, but I paid for my neglect as my toes have never been quite right since, of a man's folly there is no end. Although my feet were bad during my leave home, it was nice to be home where I could turn in when I liked and could sleep in as long as I liked, no watch to keep and nothing to do. But 14 days leave goes very quickly, and the time came for me to return to the ship. In spite of my bad feet I had a happy enough time at home.

Soon as I got back to the ship I found I was in a seaman gunners class, that suited me because I would be excused all upper deck work and other worrying things. That evening it was my watch on board so I didn't get home. Next day of course I was busy with the G.G. class but after supper I went home. I was expected and a good tea was waiting for me, my feet although a bit sore were not too bad. I could wear my boots all right, but just the same, I had to walk very tenderly. I couldn't complain about leave, I was taking all I could get while I had the chance and the ship was where she was. When we went to Geelong, I wouldn't be able to get home very often if at all.

Next day I was at 4.7 gun drill and as it was my watch on board I didn't worry about getting someone to stay on board in my place, so I didn't go ashore. I did a little tattooing after quarters, there was always someone that wanted something done on them, so I kept going while I felt like doing it. I did quite a lot of it in my spare time on board. Next day I was at 3<sup>pm</sup> drill, I went home that evening and found a letter from my pal in Africa waiting. Also one from Chappies wife in Sydney, so after tea I got busy reading their news, then I had a great time with the youngsters until it was their bed time. I went back on board at 7 o'clock next morning, after breakfast it was the same routine for me, 3<sup>pm</sup> drill, which lasted all the forenoon, after dinner I was at Maxim (machine gun) work. That evening I went home again, although I had to be back on board at midnight, it being Friday no all night leave was given as all hands were wanted on board early in the morning for Saturday cleaning routine. So on Saturday morning I was back working part of the ship, drill was off. All Saturday we were busy scrubbing the ship, washing paint work, etc. When

that was finished, we all went to gun cleaning quarters, the next thing was dinner, leave would be given at 1<sup>pm</sup> so I didn't bother having any of the rush up we had for dinner. I was going home and would have a good meal there at my own table, so I cleaned and was soon ready for shore.

At that time there were no trains on a Sunday morning until after 10 o'clock, and as I had to be back on board at 7<sup>am</sup> it meant I had to go back to the ship at 12 o'clock on Saturday night, do that or walk back on Sunday morning. I didn't have weekend leave, so I went on board that night about 12 o'clock, However I couldn't growl, I was getting plenty of time home, and went home again on Sunday evening after quarters. On Monday morning it was the same as before plenty of drill, the class still in full swing, at different guns during the day. That evening I was home again, went ashore in place of another chap, which was known as a turn out of watch. I would stay on board in his place somewhere else where he wished to go ashore. Its give and take in the Navy. That was how I got home so often.

Next day was the same as before plenty of gun drill etc. As it was my proper watch on board, I didn't go home that evening, but the next day I knew would be a make and mend, so I would be home early after dinner, so I went home until 7<sup>am</sup> next morning.

That night I remained on board. Next day would be pay day and I would go ashore then, it would be my watch ashore, otherwise I would not be able to get anyone to do a sub for me and stay on board in my place. Everyman that could go ashore would go on a pay day, with a months pay in his pocket he wanted a ramble. Next day at 12.30 all hands were

piped aft for payment, and we drew our soap and tobacco as well, pay day was always on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the month. Most of my pay was paid into a bank so that the wife could go in and draw it. She would get it much quicker than if I posted it to her from wherever the ship happened to be when I was paid, so she didn't have to wait for it. At 1 o'clock I landed and went home again, it was July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1905. I had a good dinner when I got home and had a good evening at home, I was back on board at 7 next morning. The gunnery class was now finished, so I was back at work in my part of the ship, with the usual ship routine, my very easy time was over, we would soon be going to sea again. The talk was that we would be going to Adelaide, but it was quite on the cards that we might go to Geelong first, there was nothing official yet.

I didn't go home for two days then I went ashore, but had to return to the ship by 11<sup>pm</sup>, as we were going to carry out some more target practice next day, leaving early. The youngsters didn't like the idea that I would soon be going way to sea again, but that could not be helped. I had all that afternoon and evening with the youngsters, until 10<sup>pm</sup> then left for the ship. We left early next morning and were gun firing most of the day, we came back at 4<sup>pm</sup> but no leave was given. As it wasn't my watch ashore, I didn't worry about staying on board. After evening quarters, we had man and arm ship, and also we had general quarters. I turned in early that night, we were to go out again next morning for more practice. So next day we were at gun practice and torpedo running, for the next few days it was the same routine, gun firing and more gun firing.

Sometimes we went back to Port Melbourne and other times we dropped anchor miles from anywhere. It wasn't

until the 11<sup>th</sup> that I got a chance to go home, we came back that day and I landed at 6.30<sup>pm</sup>, it was to say good bye to the wife and youngsters, I had to be back by 12 o'clock that night. The ship was under sailing orders and the official news was we were going to Adelaide. So I had my last good meal home and my last romp with the kids for awhile, how long I would be away I couldn't tell. I left home at 11 o'clock, I said good bye to the youngsters before they went to bed. It was good to come home, but the going away again maybe for some months was not so good, so back to the ship I went, not feeling too happy at leaving them all again.

Next morning, we steamed away but our target practice wasn't over yet, we had more firing and we didn't get to sea until 5.30 that evening. There was a heavy sea on and the night was bitter cold, with the heavy sea running our decks were pretty wet. The weather was very rough that night, as the ship tossed about. I was thinking of home and wondering what they were all doing. I guessed they were having a calmer time than I was having. The youngsters wouldn't have me home to romp with. Before morning we ran into better weather, with a more even sea, which had gone down a lot, so we were shipping less water. The wind had gone down too, so things were very much better, we had a heavy swell all the way to Largs Bay, where we arrived at 11 o'clock next morning, and went up the river to Port Adelaide and tied up just ahead of the gun boat *Protector*, by dinner time we were finished making fast.

That evening I went ashore just to have a run around the port, posted a letter home, telling of my arrival then went back on board at 8 o'clock and turned in. The next day was Saturday so we were busy cleaning ship for Sunday. I was

busy over the side (being side party) putting on the boot top, (that is the black paint between the grey paint and the water line) I was at that until after 4<sup>pm</sup>, leave was given at 12.30, but as I had to finish the job I couldn't go ashore. I would get a make and mend later, that is a afternoon off.

On Sunday afternoon we had plenty of visitors on board so I was busy showing them around. Its wonderful what questions they always ask after you had explained things to them, why does it do this, or that etc. Like the yarn of the sailor who had been showing an old lady around the *Victory* when they came to the quarter deck, on which a brass plate is fixed where Nelson fell. The sailor pointed to it and said Here Nelson fell. The old lady looked at it, then said Well I'm not surprised, I slipped on it myself when I came on board. So sometimes a chap does waste his time explaining too much to visitors. That evening after all the visitors had left the ship and we had shifted into night clothing, we prepared the ship for coaling, we would coal ship next morning. That awful dirty job came too often. So next morning we were getting the coal in as hard as we could, making an evolution of it as usual. All day we were hard at it and mighty glad we were when it was finished and the decks washed down. I was glad to go to the mess for a rest.

Next day I had plenty to do over the ships side cleaning the coal dust off the paint. That afternoon I got a letter from home so I went ashore after tea and sent a post card to let them know I had got the letter and would answer it soon, all were well so I was satisfied, having no worry, I stayed ashore until 10.30 then went on board and turned in. That was the good thing about the ship being alongside, I could go on board at any time, no waiting for a boat. In the morning I was



again over the side, cleaning ready for painting. The next day we would be painting ship. So early in the morning we started to paint and by dinner time it was almost finished. A lot of men over the side soon slap it on. As I could be spared I got the half day ashore that was due to me, so I landed at 1<sup>pm</sup> and went up to Adelaide. I had a shipmate with me and we had a good ramble around the city, had tea there then returned to the port, and soon went on board and turned in.

Next day was a make and mend day and although it was my watch ashore I promised to do a sub for a chap who had let me go ashore in his place in Melbourne, so I stayed on board and let him land in my place. All the recruits who had joined at Port Adelaide went ashore on 14 days leave. Next day was Sunday, it was nice and fine in the forenoon, but not so good after dinner, when it came over very dull, but we had a good lot of visitors on board just the same. It wasn't a good day for them as it came on to rain which spoilt their outing, but most of them made themselves at home on the mess deck out of the rain, where they had a drink of tea and something to eat. We always used basins on board to drink from, but we had cups etc. stowed away for the use of visitors we invited into the mess. Cups were no use to us as they didn't hold enough, but we couldn't offer ladies basins to drink from, we might be sailors, but we were gentlemen too. Next day after the usual routine I went ashore again up to Adelaide, in the late evening I came back to the port and stayed at the sailor's home by way of a change. I got a good bed there and was satisfied, it was a good place to stay at.

As the outside of the ship had been painted, the next day we started to paint the inside, so the next two days we were busy doing that we couldn't paint the inside as quickly as the

outside. When the painting was finished I went ashore for a ramble and came back early, and found a letter waiting from Chappie so I sat down and answered it.

Next morning, I was working ashore painting gun covers, that job lasted nearly all day. At dinner time I got a letter from home, I answered it that evening and told them I was going up to Port Pirie very soon. It would be our first visit to that town which is right up the Gulf. The next few days were very wet so I didn't go ashore much unless it was just a little way from the ship to the Jonny-all-sorts shop where you could get anything you wanted. It had been going since the days of the sailing ships, when the river was full of full rigged ships and sailors could get anything they needed, and those days the shop must have done a roaring trade. It was still going strong, although there were no sailing ships but they still had anything a sailor wanted, in the old shop. That evening I made a mistake. I washed a dickey (blue collar) and hung it up to dry. Then the Jonty<sup>22</sup> saw it and as my name was on it, I didn't have a leg to stand on, so I got a turn of leave stopped for hanging it up when it wasn't a scrub and wash day, so I couldn't go ashore next day. Rules are rules and must not be broken, but its little things like that, make you think you are back at school days. One day when we were going up the river, we were passing some cottages with the back yards facing the river, in one yard there was a small Union Jack flying on the clothes prop, it was just a kid's toy flag. The 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut. sent a boat ashore to tell the people to take the flag down as they were not allowed to fly it. I don't know if they did take it down, if they did so they were very foolish, had it

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<sup>22</sup> Another name for a master at arms.

been my home I know what I would have said about it. I guess the boats crew would have felt rather small, taking such an order ashore. That seems like a yarn, but it really happened.

I was now doing sentry duty on the aft deck working in three watches, so when not on duty I could have plenty of time ashore. It wasn't my luck to pick up such a job when the ship was in Melbourne. I went ashore that evening and came back on board at 11.30 next day, had dinner then kept the afternoon watch from 12 to 4. This sentry go suited me, it was a soft job with plenty of time off, but I didn't know just how long it would last. I guessed it wouldn't last very long anyway. When off duty I could have the mess table all to myself, so could write letters etc. in peace and comfort. I would go ashore when off duty, post my letters, have a run about the city and generally stayed at the sailor's home at night. It was comfortable and clean, life on board was rough enough with little comfort so when ashore I looked for something different, although I didn't expect feather beds.

Next morning we were leaving for Port Pirie so in my letter home I told them we were about to sail, and to send letters to that port. We were supposed to leave the river at 8<sup>am</sup>, but didn't get away until 1.30 that afternoon, then when we reached Largs Bay we put in the rest of the day firing. We left for the Gulf at 4 o'clock. The weather was fine, the sea calm so we had a good trip up the Spencer Gulf to Port Pirie, but on the way up we did some torpedo running and managed to lose one, so a diver was sent down to look for it, which delayed us for a time. The diver found it at last and we soon had it back on board. We also carried out evolutions on the way and arrived at Port Pirie at 4<sup>pm</sup> and made fast alongside the jetty, that was a Sunday. There were a good

many people on the jetty to see us come alongside. We had to time our arrival so we could go alongside at high tide. No visitors were allowed on board, it was too late for that. After tea I went ashore and had a look around the town. It wasn't a bad little town, by what I saw of it then, but I would see more of it later. I thought my sentry job wouldn't last long, for next day I was taken off it and told off for the class again for field gun drill. So I lost my stand off after doing my sentry go, I had planned to have a good look around the town, so I wasn't too pleased.

It was pretty hot up there, and to lose a soft job, to go ashore and chase around with a field gun wasn't so good, but it was all in the day's work. We went to a sports ground about half a mile away, taking a field gun with us, we put in the day dragging that gun around until the sweat rolled off us. The gun was a 12 pounder but before the day was over it seemed more like a 6 inch one to us. We were kept at it, unlimber, limber up, change gun wheels, etc. I think all the boys of the town had wagged it from school, they all seemed to be there to watch us tearing around with that gun and maybe wishing they were sailors too, no doubt they thought it fine to be running around like we were in that hot sun dragging a gun about. What the gun crew thought about it, is better left unsaid. At 4 o'clock we packed up the gun drill and returned to the ship, that evening I turned in as soon as hammocks were piped down, I was pretty tired. Next morning after divisions we dragged the gun back to the sports ground for more drill.

The day was very hot, we only had duck pants and flannels on, but that seemed to be too much, a bathing suit would have been better, but that wasn't in our kits, even if we could have

worn them. That evening after 4 o'clock I went ashore with some of the chaps to be shown around the smelting works, which was very interesting. We were shown everything, even the gold and silver, that was recovered from the ore. Quite a lot of the men had patches of blue on their faces, caused by lead poisoning. We saw how the gold and silver, copper etc. was extracted just leaving pure lead.

We saw the ground ore being pushed along, getting hotter and hotter as it went along until it became like water running out at the other end. Then it went into large round pits on the floor, two or three deep and about 6 feet across, big magnets came down into the pits of boiling lead, and extracted the gold etc. from it. The lead was then ladled into moulds and trucked away. I enjoyed being shown over the works, but wouldn't like working there for all the tea in China, I would far sooner be on board ship, where there were no fumes.

The town is on the weatherside of the smelting works, on account of the fumes. On the lea side, for miles the ground is bare of grass or shrubs, nothing will grow there. Not a thing growing right to the hills some miles away, it is just a bare plain. The town has some nice shops. I was told that about 12,000 people live there and the smelting works is what keeps the town going. Most of the homes had nice gardens, a contrast to the barren state of the ground on the other side. The people were very nice and homely and made us very welcome wherever we went.

Next morning we were at gun drill as usual, after dinner we got a make and mend, leave was given to the watch ashore. It being my watch on board I was told off to show visitors around. By 2.30 the ship was packed with visitors, I think

everyone that could get away came down to visit the ship, there was hardly room to move about. I received many invitations from people I had shown over the ship, to visit them any time I cared to. At 5<sup>pm</sup> all visitors had to leave the ship, so then we could clear up the decks and go to evening quarters. That evening I wrote home and told them all about the smelting works I reckon that would interest the youngsters quite a lot. Next afternoon the ship was open to school children, there seemed to be thousands of them, I wondered where they all came from. They wanted post cards, cap ribbons, and even our caps, or anything else they could coax out of us. I think every kid that could toddle along was there on board the ship. The schools were closed of course. They had a great time on board believe me. We got rid of all our extra stuff such as tins of meat, fish and jam. All that could sit down in the messes had afternoon tea biscuits and cake, we had no sweets on board, so they had to do without that. It was impossible to sit them all even in relays. At 5 o'clock all had to go ashore. We had a job to hunt some of them up as they got into all sorts of places and were hard to find, many of them didn't want to go ashore at all. They had the time of their young lives. When we got them all ashore, they gave us cheer after cheer, that was a long time ago and I suppose most of those kids have grown up families long ago, and many are grandparents, time marches on! but I reckon they never forgot that day on H.M.S *Katoomba*.

That same evening the Town Band came along and played for us for two hours, we enjoyed it as we had no band on board. They came again the next evening and gave us more music. I was put on sentry duty again and had the middle watch to keep 12 till 4<sup>am</sup>, so when the band packed up I turned

in. Our stay of five days at Port Pirie was over, so early next day we left the jetty, and got under way for Adelaide, that was September 18<sup>th</sup>, 1905. Very few were on the jetty to see us leave, I guess it was too early for them. I had hoped to get some letters from home before we left, but they failed to arrive.

When we had got well down the Gulf, evolutions started as a matter of course so there was plenty to do to make me forget about not getting any letters from home. We had one evolution after another until we were fed up with them, man and arm ship, out collision mat, fire stations etc. etc. They came to an end when dinner was piped. We were steaming along slowly and after dinner we did some torpedo running, and this time were lucky not to lose one. If we had we might be days looking for it, a torpedo is too valuable to lose. So this time we didn't have to waste time on our way, over a lost torpedo. They were worth then a little over £1,000, they cost much more now. Soon as the practice was over we hoisted the boats and left for Port Adelaide. The weather was splendid, so we had a nice trip down the Gulf. I had the last dog watch (6 to 8) that evening, on sentry go.

When we got out of the Gulf, it was no longer calm we ran into a heavy sea, we had a rough trip to Largs Bay, a keen wind was blowing all the while. On the third day after leaving Port Pirie we arrived at Port Adelaide and tied up in the usual place up the river, at 6<sup>pm</sup> no leave was given. Next morning I received some delayed letters from home. In the afternoon I was put back into my part of the ship so I lost my sentry go stand off again, so I was back working the usual ships routine. I also had a letter from Chappie that day, so after quarters I was busy writing letters, in answer to those I had received,

then I went ashore and posted them,

I was back on board by 8.30<sup>pm</sup>. Next morning, I was at dotter<sup>23</sup> drill. The dotter was an invention that showed where a projectile would have hit in firing a gun, with a full charge, at a target thousands of yards away. A small target was attached to the gun and the gun sights altered, so when the gun was supposed to have been fired, the machine made a dot on the target, showing where the projectile would have hit. It was a very good gun practice, I was at that drill all the morning.

After dinner there was a make and mend, so I went ashore, sent a post card to one of the youngsters, then went up to the city and had a look around. Had tea at the usual place in Rundle Street, where one could get a very good meal, later in the evening I went back to Port Adelaide and stayed the night at the Sailors Home.

Next day it was the same routine, drill and more drill, first at the dotter<sup>24</sup> then at the loader. The loader was another machine with a breach block fitted to it like a gun. It was used instead of a gun for loading drill. It taught men to load quickly a dummy charge and a real projectile being used, and by the time we had an hour at it, we were very well satisfied. Many a time I've seen men put to the loader as punishment for being slack at gun drill. Next day being Saturday we had no drill, we were busy cleaning ship for Sunday, holystoning and washing down which lasted all the forenoon. After there wasnt much to do, just the few routine jobs that always has to be done, leave was given to the watch. It was my watch on

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<sup>23</sup> Machine gun.

<sup>24</sup> An apparatus used to train gun-pointers to aim accurately at a target.



board, so I spent the evening writing letters, which is a difficult job in a mess when the hands are below, some playing cards, some singing, other skylarking. The table is never still, its no use growling about it, you just have to put up with it. Its an expert job to write a letter when the mob is in the mess.

Next day, Sunday, after divisions we marched ashore to church, and back again to dinner. It was a trip ashore anyway. After dinner the usual leave was given, we had a good many visitors on board. I was as usual showing people what there was to be seen, I seem to get that job pretty often when it was my watch on board on a Sunday. Next morning we were to go to Alberton Oval to some sports, we were to give a field gun display, but the morning turned out very wet so it didn't look too good for our run ashore to the sports. However the rain stopped before dinner time and the afternoon was fine so we went along with the gun and did our stuff, which was well received by the crowd. I suppose few of them had ever seen a field gun in action before, and that day they saw how a naval crew worked one, after that we had a tug of war, there were several teams there, and we got second place. We had a good time watching the sports, foot racing etc. The worst part of it was dragging the gun back to the ship.

Next day the Governor came on board so we fired a salute, we were all dressed in our No. 1<sup>s</sup> and fell in at divisions where the Governor inspected us and the ship. After that was over we were piped down so I had the chance to write another letter home. After tea I went ashore and posted the letter and had a walk about the port, then went to the Sailor's Home and had a yarn with the chap in charge, which I often did when staying there.

Next day, the usual drill, in the evening we got ready for coaling, that awful job was due again, and we would coal ship next morning. So early next day we were busy coaling, dust everywhere as usual, we took in 150 tons, averaged 62 tons an hour, from the lighter alongside. Next day was the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month and pay day, issue of slops (clothing) soap and tobacco, we always got tobacco in the leaf, and made it up ourselves, after pay leave was given. As it was my watch on board I was at the dotter drill, the watch on board got no make and mend, so had to work. That evening I got a post card from one of the youngsters. After cleaning ship next day, I went ashore, so I could get a nice card to send back, I also had a letter ready to post home. It being Saturday afternoon I had a walk around the market. I stayed the night at the Sailors Home. There was really no need for me to do that as I could walk on board the ship anytime as we were tied up alongside, but I liked the home with its good beds. When I got on board next morning I found we were under sailing orders, most likely going to Victoria, needless to say I was very pleased to hear that news. We were going to sea next day, would do some gun firing in the Gulf and our port of call in Victoria would be Geelong first. I sent a post home telling them that news, and I might soon be home again, that would cheer them up.

We had church on board that Sunday and during the afternoon we had the usual lot of visitors. After the visitors had gone ashore we got the ship ready for sea, which was finished by 6 o'clock, we were leaving early next morning. We were delayed awhile next morning as a big ship was coming up the river so we had to wait until she got up, it was 12 o'clock before we left being wet and squally, but we

steamed about the bay carrying out evolutions, all the day, then anchored for the night. At 3.15 next morning the port watch got up anchor, as they were at the duty watch. I turned out at 4 o'clock, and went into the chains, (heaving the lead), a very cold wind was blowing, so I didn't have a very happy time out there with no shelter, heaving the lead.

We went to Edithburg, a little place down the Gulf, where we did some torpedo running and lynch aiming, we anchored there for the night after the firing was over. It was a fine night, but no leave was given. I would have liked a run ashore to see what the place was like, but had to be content with a view from the ship. That evening we amused ourselves the best we could on the mess deck. We got up anchor early next morning and steamed across the Gulf, at one inch aiming and then big gun firing, the firing was very good all round. After the firing was over we went back to Edithburg and anchored for the night, again no leave. We expected some evolutions after pipe down but nothing took place much to our satisfaction. Maybe the Captain was pleased with the good shooting and let us off. Next morning we did some more firing while the ship was at anchor, I guess the windows ashore rattled a bit. After dinner we got up anchor and went back to Largs Bay, where we arrived at 4.30, leave was given to the port watch. I got no letters, the mail had been sent on to Edithburg, so we missed it. I was very disappointed, but I heard something which did please me and that was I had come second top in big gun firing, so I didn't do bad even if I didn't get top score. I wrote home about not getting letters for awhile and how we had just missed one, I expected to be in Victoria soon, what a difference a letter makes when one is away from home. Next day there was no letters for me, there

would be no more mail until we reached Victoria, so I wasn't feeling very gay as we got up anchor at 5<sup>pm</sup> and steamed away.

The weather was good, next day being Saturday we had the usual cleaning routine. I thought, as we were at sea, we would be piped down after dinner, but we still went on with the usual work on board. At 8.30 the next evening we passed Cape Nelson. It was such a fine clear night we could see the Cape quite clearly. Next morning it was different, a strong wind got up and by noon it was blowing a full gale, with a heavy sea running, the wind was on our quarter so we didn't ship much water, our decks were pretty dry. At 11 o'clock we passed through the heads and were in calm water, to what it was outside, it was still blowing hard. We arrived at Geelong at 2.30, so near, yet so far from home. After dinner leave was given, so I went ashore, it wasn't a nice day as it was still blowing a gale. I wrote home so they would know I had arrived at Geelong. There was no letter from home, but I expected delayed letters would arrive next day. Next morning I received a post card from home just to tell me all was well. The wind still kept up and all day I was at drill, mostly at maxim gun<sup>25</sup>. Next morning it was blowing as hard as ever, it seemed like the wind would never die down, but it was better being in port than outside anyway, with a big sea running. All day we were at drill with some gun or another. Next day I got a letter from home, I answered it during the dinner hour, also a delayed one from Largs Bay I answered that one too. I put in for a weekend leave, and got it, so on the Saturday I landed and went up by steamer and was home that evening. I found three of the youngsters sick in bed, Bryce,

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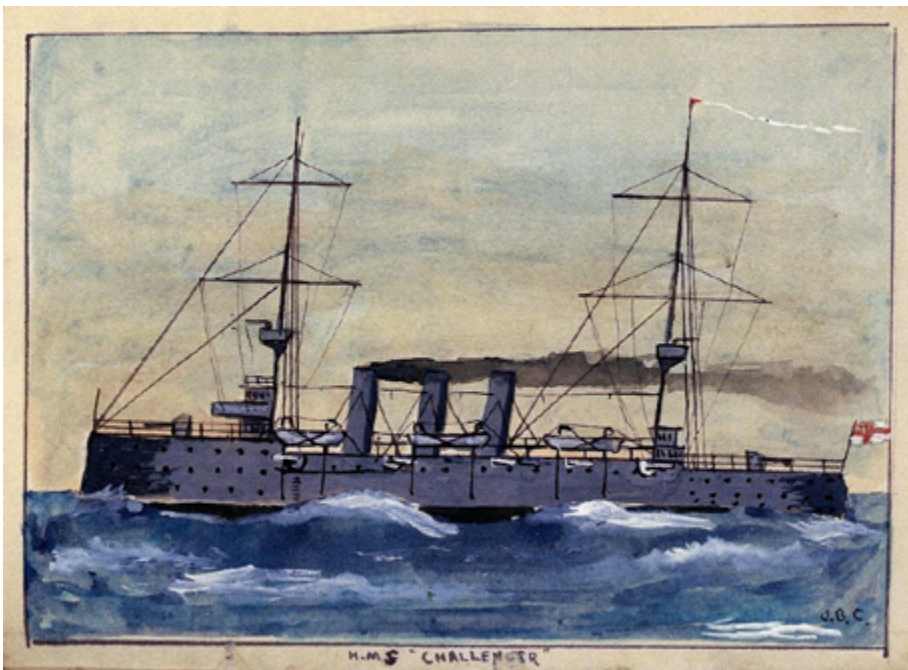
<sup>25</sup> First fully automatic machine gun.

Doris and Jim, they had colds so their mother kept them in bed. She didn't tell me in her letter they were sick, as that would have worried me she said, women think of everything. They wasn't too sick to make a fuss of me, and even wanted to get up because I was home, but there was no chance of that. As usual I had to go back on Sunday morning and that hurt a bit, I missed Sunday dinner at home. I lost a good deal of my leave travelling like that, but it was better to get home even for a few hours, than not at all, I didn't feel too happy because the youngsters were sick.

On the Monday, we had the usual evolutions, out Bower anchor, after that, away all boats, all day we were doing some evolution, by 4<sup>pm</sup> we were finished and all things snug again. Next day we painted ship, that was the main work all day. A few fleet reserve men came on board for drill. In a few days time, we went up to Port Melbourne which pleased me quite a lot, but before we did leave Geelong I had one more so called weekend at home. The day we got up to Port Melbourne I went home that evening until 7 next morning, then we coaled ship again. The same old thing, just after painting ship, after coaling we started to get under way every little while for target practice or torpedo running, so I didn't get home as often as I had hoped. At last the firing was finished and we went back alongside the pier and I was satisfied.

The new big cruiser *Challenger* was on the station and she would soon be in Melbourne, I expected to be drafted to her sooner or later, she would be far more comfortable than the *Katoomba*, her crew was 500 men, and there was plenty of room for them on board too. I told the wife and youngsters about it, and if I did go to the new ship, I wouldn't get home

so much as I would be cruising all over the place even to Singapore. I still went home as often as I could, while I had the chance, but the news about the new ship didn't tend to cheer them up at home. We remained at the pier, and I guessed we were waiting for the *Challenger* to come in. I went home whenever there was a make and mend and also all the weekends I could get, being at Port Melbourne I had the full weekend home. I had nothing much to complain about, there was plenty of drill and ship work still on all day.



So time went on, and at last one day we saw the *Challenger* come in, one chap said, there she is, look at her, the big work horse! She was a 2<sup>nd</sup> class protected cruiser of 5800 tons 12500 horse power, length 555 feet, with a beam of 56 feet, her speed was 21 knots, she was a new ship and could take in 1223 tons of coal. She was armed with 11.6 inch guns, 9 12<sup>Pds</sup> and 6.3<sup>Pds</sup>.

She also had two submerged torpedo tubes, so she was very much bigger and different to the *Katoomba* class of ship. Somehow I liked her looks, as she lay at anchor, she had 3 big funnels, and she seemed as wide as a street. It wasn't long before I got notice to pack my kit and get my hammock ready for draft to the *Challenger*.

It was November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1905 that I went on board her. She seemed huge after the cramped quarters of the *Katoomba*. Her mess deck was like a street being nearly the whole length of the main deck, with the mess tables along both sides. I soon settled down and was well satisfied with my shift. We would have a dry mess deck, as no water could get on the main deck so that was a comfort, but I had yet to find out what she was like in bad weather.

We were going to sea next day, and I was lucky enough to be watch ashore that evening, so got home on leave, to say good bye over again, we were going to Sydney, but would call at Portland first. So I told them all I knew about my new ship and that I was all right on board. I had no idea when I would be home again, that news would come later. So we left on the 30<sup>th</sup> and when we got to sea I knew she was a good ship at sea, although a big sea was running our upper deck was bone dry. We dropped anchor at Portland on December 1<sup>st</sup>, we were to stay there three days. Next day was Saturday with the usual cleaning routine, as on all ships, all bags were carried up to the Fok'sl and the mess deck scrubbed, by dinner everything was finished and the decks dried up and bags restowed. After dinner leave was given. It was my watch on board, I would land next day if it was leave. That evening I wrote a letter home.

Next day Sunday we had the usual Church service on board, after dinner leave was given so I went ashore and posted my letter, I had a walk about the town. This was my second visit to Portland but I didn't know anyone there so went on board early that evening. Our boats were busy all the afternoon taking visitors to the ship, at pipe down 10<sup>pm</sup> I turned in we were leaving for Sydney next evening.

Next morning after the decks were washed down, I was busy at cleaning quarters, at the 6 inch gun I was stationed at, which always took place before breakfast. The 6 inch gun, that I was now one of the crew, was much different from the 4.7 I had on the *Katoomba*. These guns had a range of 12 miles. The day passed with the usual work on shipboard, in the evening after tea, we hoisted all boats and secured them for sea, at 7.30 we got up anchor and left for Sydney, we had fair weather all night, and passed Wilson's Promontory at 5.30 the next evening.

The fair weather continued and next morning at 8.40 we passed Gabo Island. We arrived at Sydney on the 7<sup>th</sup> at 6.30<sup>am</sup> and tied up to a buoy in Farm Cove, that evening I went ashore and paid a visit to Chappie and his wife. They got a surprise to see me, as they didn't know I had left the *Katoomba*. I spent the evening with them, then went and stayed the night at Naval House. The next two days we were coaling ship, and the day after we coaled we started to paint ship. The Flagship *Euryalus* had left for England to pay off.

The new Flagship would be the *Powerful* which was expected to arrive soon, she was the second largest cruiser in the world, the other being her sister ship *Terrible*. I had been sent on board the *Euryalus* sometime before to pass through



turret gun and machine gun test, so I wouldn't have to do the same on the *Powerful*. As there was no hope of having Xmas home, I was hoping we would have it in Sydney. None of us knew for certain if we would be at sea or not when Xmas arrived, so the time passed, one day much the same as another. The ship was spic and span in her new coat of paint, and looked very smart, if we were still in port when the new Flagship arrived. So far no programme of our next cruise had been put on the notice board, so I couldn't tell the wife where we would be bound for next. It really looked like we would be in Sydney until after Xmas.

On December 14<sup>th</sup> the *Powerful* came in, just before dinner time, she looked just what she was, a very big ship. The largest ship of any kind to enter Sydney Harbour up to that time. She made fast to the Flagship's buoy, and soon there was a large crowd on the Domain to see the big ship. On the following Saturday my old ship the *Katoomba* came in. She looked very small lying near to us and the *Powerful*. It was now the 16<sup>th</sup> and all hands were getting busy for Xmas. There were 16 men in my mess and we decided on a leg of pork and leg of mutton, as well as fruits, sweets etc., so that was that! The mess caterer would order it all and we would foot the bill later on.

I went ashore pretty often and made sure also that I would be ashore on Xmas eve, for that night was a great night ashore in Sydney, that was before early closing came in, the shops would be open until late at night. Chappie and his wife invited me to Xmas dinner, but I had no hope of going ashore for dinner, there would be no leave until after dinner on board the ship, so I couldn't accept the invite to dinner, much to my regret.

I went ashore on Xmas eve, the streets were crowded, and everyone was out for a good time. In one shop there was a huge Xmas pudding, for 3<sup>d</sup> you could guess the weight of it, it looked to me to be about 3 cwt<sup>26</sup>, a big prize for the winner, then the pudding would be cut up and sold cheap to all the ticket holders. Another shop had a candle about 4 feet high and as thick as a mans arm, for 6<sup>d</sup> you could guess how long it would burn if kept alight. A big cash prize was for the nearest guess, all you had to do was to buy something in the shop, and they gave you a ticket free, to make your guess on. I saw plenty of fun that evening and every kid seemed to be in the streets with their parents, and did those kids have a time of it, I guess they did. It was a great night, there's not much fuss made now, about Xmas, like it was those days, all the shops were decorated with Xmas bush and flags, all the big stores had shows for the kiddies, Sydney then was like a fair. I was weary of being bumped about in the crowded streets so turned in at Naval House just after 11 o'clock, happy and satisfied, although weary.

We had a good Xmas, the big long mess deck looked very nice decorated and the tables set with good things. The Captain and the officers went the rounds as is usual, and said the mess deck looked very nice etc., what else could they say on Xmas day. We enjoyed our dinner of roast pork and mutton with plenty of vegs, that is my mess did. After dinner we could enjoy a cigar or a pipe in the mess, Xmas Day being the only day smoking was allowed below decks. It was the very best day of the year in the Navy. I've never known that rule to be broken, that is smoking on the mess deck, except

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<sup>26</sup> A hundredweight.

Xmas day. After dinner we were piped down, everyone could do what he liked, sleep or yarn, some went ashore, but at 4<sup>pm</sup> the usual routine took place, clean up decks etc. So for another year Xmas day was over for the Navy.

After the watch ashore had their 48 hours general leave, the other watch went ashore on the same leave, the day after the other watch returned to the ship. So I landed on 48 hours leave and I had a very good time ashore, visiting friends etc, that soon passed then the New Year was on us. I still went ashore as often as I could. It wouldn't be long before we went to sea again, there were rumours on board we were going here or there, but it wasn't any use taking notice of lower deck talk, none of us knew for certain where we would be going. So I couldn't tell them at home where we would be bound for next, not until we knew it official anyway.

On January 6<sup>th</sup> 1906 H.M.S. *Wallaroo* left for England to pay off, she was a sister ship to the *Katoomba*. The *Wallaroo* steamed out of the harbour with her long paying off pennant<sup>27</sup> 200 yards long flying from her main truck. Each ship's company cheered them on their way, to wish them luck, as is always done in the Navy.

Next day we got the news that we were going on a cruise with the Flagship and *Cambrian* and *Pioneer*, our first port of call would be Hobart. I went ashore and said good bye to Chappie and his wife and spent the evening with them, and stayed there that night. I also wrote home and told my news. So on the 10<sup>th</sup> we left the harbour and went to sea. The

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<sup>27</sup> It is the custom in many navies for a ship which is paying off to wear an extremely long commissioning pennant, which is normally at least the length of the ship, and the length of which reflects the length of service.

*Powerful* leading us out, by 9 o'clock that morning we were well outside at sea. The weather was fine with an even sea running, as we were with the Flagship, we expected we would have a few evolutions on the way, but strange to say we were not bothered at all, we carried on with the usual routine.

We had a fair passage to Hobart, where we arrived on the 12<sup>th</sup> just after five pm, all ships moored in the Derwent. No leave was given that night, as it was my watch on board, it didn't matter much to me, I would be able to land the next evening. There was leave next evening, so I landed and had a look around the city and booked a bed at a hotel with some of my shipmates, there was hundreds of liberty men ashore and every hotel was fully booked out. At 7 o'clock the next morning most went on board their ships, the only liberty men left ashore were watch keepers, and maybe a few who had extra leave. We were to remain in Hobart until after the end of the month, so we would be there for about three weeks. The Hobart Regatta was soon to be held so I expected we would have some boat sailing too.

The next make and mend day I went ashore again at 1.30. We always landed at a jetty near the boat sheds at the Domain side, then walked through the Domain to the city about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile. In the winter time that part would be white as snow, with the frost, which cracked under our feet as we walked, it was a cold walk at 7 o'clock in the morning, and I had that cold walk many times during winter time. As I was walking along a street that afternoon, I saw some large cherry wood pipes in a barber's shop, they were those very large ones almost as big as a tea cup with a long stem and a rubber tube attached to the mouth piece. I bought one just for fun, put some tobacco in and walked along the street with the bowl in

my hand at my side, and the stem in my mouth, blowing clouds of smoke, like a ship doing a steam trial. I soon met some of the chaps from the ship and they wanted to know where I had got the pipe, so I told them, and away they went and bought the shop out. So before long there were ten of us walking along all smoking those big pipes, to the wonder of the people in the street, sailors don't care, I started a new craze. I've still got that big pipe but don't smoke it now.

On Sunday we had a good many visitors on board, but most people went on the *Powerful*, the new Flagship, I didn't go ashore that day. Next day (Monday) was Regatta Day, there was a good breeze so it was a great day for sailing races. It was a fine sight to see all the ketches racing with everything they could carry, all newly painted for the Regatta. After dinner leave was given so I went ashore and put in most of the time with the crowd ashore watching the races. All the ships had boats about sailing all over the harbour, so all the boats large and small looked fine sailing about. The Hobart Regatta is I think the biggest sailing races in Australia and had been held for many years, and is still held every year. Hobart was also the favourite place for the fleet to hold their Regatta, which was generally held about the time Regatta week came around. It was seldom held elsewhere. After the Regatta was over, I went into the city and had a good tea. I didn't expect to be able to book a bed for the night, but I managed to get a bed alright, where I had been before. While at tea I was thinking about those on board, having to hoist all the boats, it would be a clear lower deck job, and I was well out of it.

As we were with the Flagship, we got plenty of evolutions every Monday and Thursday mornings, what evolution the Flagship carried out, all the other ships did the same. None

of us on our ship had ever seen the new Admiral. He would come aboard to inspect us sooner or later, we knew. Admiral Fawkes was his name, a very tall man and big built as well, we were to meet him sooner than we expected, it happened this way. Some of the crew of our ship on a make and mend day were ashore, they had a dray party, they were having a trip up to Mount Wellington, a large barrel of beer on the dray. Some miles along the road they stopped the dray, and put it across the road so no other could get past, they would have to stop and have a drink of beer before the dray would be shifted and the road for them made clear. After a while a big motor car came along and as it couldn't pass it had to stop. The car had two gents in it, some of the chaps asked them to have a drink, which was refused, as they were in a hurry to get along, so the driver said. The men were asked to remove the dray so the car could pass. After some talk the dray was pulled out of the way and the big car went on its way. The trouble was that none of the chaps knew that the two gents in the car was the Admiral and the Mayor of Hobart. The Admiral could see by the cap tallys<sup>28</sup> what ship the men belonged to. He came on board our ship next day.

The lower deck was cleared and everyman fell in aft on the quarter deck. The Admiral said he had come on board in order to give everyman the chance of meeting him, so they would know who he was if they met him ashore. He then went on to tell the ships company what had happened along the road the day before, when he and the Mayor of Hobart were stopped in their car. He said that kind of thing must stop, it was offensive to carry on in that way. It not only

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<sup>28</sup> Fabric bands on sailor's cap printed with the name of their ship.

disgraced the Navy, but also the ships company of their own ship. He hoped such conduct would never occur again. If it did, there would have to be punishment to those guilty. They all knew the Admiral now, so there could not be any excuse for not knowing who he was if they met him on shore, but apart from himself, they as naval men should be above being offensive to anyone, no matter who they might be. Thats all men, then he gave the order to pipe the hands down. The dray party felt rather small you can guess, and they got a lot of chat from the rest of the crew, such as who stopped the Admiral, and who asked the Admiral to have a beer. The Admiral could have stopped the leave of all hands while at Hobart, and I think he let us all off very light. There were no more dray parties from our ship after that.

I received two letters from home next day which I answered the same evening and told the wife we were leaving soon for New Zealand, that was the latest news I had heard. Twice we got underway and went to Norfolk Island to carry out gun firing. Altogether we were at Hobart for about 16 days.

On January 27<sup>th</sup>, 1906, after evening quarters we prepared the ship for sea, as we were to leave early next morning, and no leave was given that evening. At 8 o'clock next morning we all left Hobart, bound for Wellington N.Z., outside a fair sea was running, just the usual swell, so we had good weather all the way. We went straight to Wellington, no evolutions took place on the way, which pleased us very well. At 11<sup>am</sup> on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February we arrived at Wellington. All the ships moored. I landed that evening and had a good look around the city, where the wind seems to be always blowing. Windy Wellington is what the city is called and it deserves it too.

They say you can always tell anyone that comes from Wellington because they always hold their hat on when going around a corner of a street, force of habit I suppose. Wind or no wind I liked the city and always had a good time there. When we arrived, a mail was waiting for us, but no letters for me, I didn't expect any from home to N.Z. yet.

There were two brothers on board who belonged to Christchurch, I had chummed up with them, and when we got to Christchurch, I promised to go home with them and meet their people. So I would have another place to visit, which would be better than just walking about the city. Such places were called up home places. Lyttleton is the port for Christchurch, which is inland on the Canterbury Plains, known as the City of the Plains, we had very good times at Wellington.

One afternoon I was walking along a street outside the city proper just having a walk around, I knew no one there of course, but I was soon to know one kind old lady. As I walked along, I heard someone call out, I looked across the street and saw an old lady, she called out come over here I want you. So over I went, thinking something was wrong with the old lady. She asked if I was a stranger to Wellington, so I told her I was, and knew no one there. Well she said as you have no friends here, will you come and have tea with me. I told her I would be delighted, so away we went. We didn't have far to go to her home, there I met some of her grown up family, and they made me very welcome, we had afternoon tea, then I was asked to stay to tea and spend the evening with them. So I stayed and had a very pleasant evening there, I felt very grateful to them for making me feel so very much at home. Its little things like that a sailor never forgets.



We were at Wellington for seven days, and left at 11<sup>am</sup> on the 15<sup>th</sup> bound for Lyttleton, we had the coast in view all the way down it was a nice trip with good weather. We arrived at 6<sup>pm</sup> the next day. Again it was my watch ashore so I landed with my two chums and went up to Christchurch and to their home at St. Albans, where I met the rest of the family and was made welcome. I was treated like one of the family, as I always after that had a home away from home to go to when I visited Christchurch. I stayed there that night and went back on board next morning with my chums. It was bad luck for my two mates that four days after our arrival we went back to sea again just our ship with the Admiral on board, to visit Port Chalmers, the port for Dunedin, so they would miss getting home for a few days, but that little set back couldnt be helped. We left the fleet at 6<sup>pm</sup> on the 19<sup>th</sup> and reached Port Chalmers the next forenoon, where we remained for three days. I went ashore twice and had a good look around the city, the City of the South, or the Edinburgh of the South as some call it, as its full of Scotch people. Its a nice little city but very cold in winter while we were there, we had to sweep the snow off the deck before we could wash down, a pretty cold job we found it too, in our bare feet.

We left at 2<sup>pm</sup> on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and went back to Lyttleton, where we arrived at 6.30 next morning. We remained there until March 19<sup>th</sup>, 1906, so I had plenty of visits to Christchurch. On the 19<sup>th</sup> at 7<sup>am</sup>, we all left for Auckland, we anchored for the night at Barrier Island, while the other ships went on, why we anchored there I don't know. We got under way again at 6 o'clock next morning and went on to Auckland. We got there at 3.30 next afternoon, so we joined up with the *Powerful*, *Pegasus*, *Encounter* and *Prometheus*. The *Pioneer* had gone

elsewhere. Next day I went ashore and stayed the night at the Thames Hotel in Queen Street, after having a good look around the city I turned in, hundreds of the men were ashore from the ships, so the city was pretty full of blue jackets and marines. The fourth day after our arrival we went out of harbour with the *Pegasus* and *Encounter* to do some target practice, but bad weather came on late the next afternoon, so we returned to Auckland, and although the weather was still bad, I went ashore that evening. Next day the weather was still too bad for target work, so we remained in harbour.

The next day the Flagship left for Sydney at 4.30<sup>pm</sup>, that was March 29<sup>th</sup>, we were glad to see her go. We were to leave on April 2<sup>nd</sup> to mark for gun layers tests to be carried out by the *Pegasus* and *Encounter*, after that we were to search for two small anchors lost by the *Powerful*, when she was out firing. So we went out and marked for the test firing, then we recovered the lost anchors and went back to Auckland. One of our chaps was very ill, so soon as we anchored he was sent ashore to hospital, no leave was given that night, as we were to leave for Sydney early next morning.

I received a letter from home, but I didn't answer it as we were leaving, I could post a letter in Sydney and it would get home sooner than if I posted it in Auckland, we would be in Sydney before the mail left Auckland, all were well at home. We got up anchor at 5.30 next morning and left for Sydney, no other ship left with us, that was April 5<sup>th</sup>. It was good weather at sea, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day out we fired Lyddite shell<sup>29</sup> at Saul rock, which rises out of the sea like a tower. This rock was often used by the ships as a target but very little damage

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<sup>29</sup> A type of explosive artillery shell that was used by the British Army during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

to it was noticed. We had good weather all the way to Sydney where we arrived on the 10<sup>th</sup>. We made fast to the buoy at 10.45<sup>am</sup>, so we were back in Sydney once more, I didn't go ashore that evening it being my watch on board.

We had a good ships company band on the *Challenger*, which had been got together since I joined her. Only Flagships have an Admiralty band, other ships have to get one up at their own cost, we bought all we required out of canteen funds, and also every pay day we threw in what we could spare. A young chap who joined up in N.Z. had a cornet, that's how we started a band he offered to teach the others, and before very long we had a fine band, which played a few evenings through the week, we also had sing songs on the lower deck, so stopping on board was no hardship. There was always plenty of fun on board, even buck dancing<sup>30</sup> while the band played, and when we had a lower deck concert, the officers always sat in one of the after messes. I was never very far away, there was one officer who now and then would give me a certain sign, then I would go over and take his order for drinks, to the wine steward, of course there would be one for me as well, so I always did very well when we held a lower deck concert. All those officers on the *Challenger* at that time, were all lost when the 1914 war broke out, only one came out of it alive. Most of the men that formed the crew lost their lives later on in the war. I lost a lot of former shipmates.

The day after our arrival we coaled ship, we took in 855 tons, we went at it as hard as we could to get the filthy job over, of course, it was an evolution to try and beat other ships,

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<sup>30</sup> Buck dancing is similar to tap dancing.

but the sooner we got it done, the better it was for us. Before dark all the coal was in the bunkers and the decks washed down, so we were ready for sea again. The next thing was to paint ship, which was finished in 3 days. I went ashore every second evening sometimes on a visit to Chappie and his wife, at other times just a ramble around the city, seldom going to see a show or such like, as a rule I stayed the night at Naval House.

One day I heard that we were going to Melbourne, to tow a battle practice target there, this target was 90 feet long and 40 feet high, that is in the frame work, when the target was used canvas covered the frame work. The *Pioneer* was going with us and later on the fleet would arrive in Port Phillip and carry out their battle practice, so I sent this news home telling them I expected to be home soon, but I didn't know how long we would be in Port Phillip or how often I would be able to get home. All I knew was we were taking the target there and we might not stay long, all I could do was to hope we would remain there for awhile anyway.

On April 23<sup>rd</sup> at 7<sup>am</sup> we left Sydney with the big target in tow. The weather wasn't bad and at 4.30 that afternoon we passed Jervis Bay, so we were making very good progress towing a big battle practice target. At 9.30 next morning we passed Gabo Island, all that day the weather seemed to be changing and that night became very bad. By the morning it was worse and a big sea had got up, two hands were kept at the stern ready to cast off the tow lines if necessary. It was very rough all day and at noon we passed the Promontory and entered the Heads at 1<sup>pm</sup> on the 26<sup>th</sup>. So in spite of the bad weather we didn't do too bad, towing the target, in less than 3 days from Sydney. We went up the Bay and anchored

off of St Leonards, at 4<sup>pm</sup>, we remained there with the target anchored near us. It was hard lines to be there and not get a chance of going home to see them all, we remained there for five days.

Then on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, we went up to Port Melbourne. The target was taken over to the dockyard at Williamstown. I went ashore, and got home at last. It was grand to get home and see them all again, all were well. I had a good evening home, we were to go back to Sydney on the 5<sup>th</sup>. I also managed to get home on the 4<sup>th</sup>, so I didn't do badly. At 10<sup>am</sup> on the 5<sup>th</sup> we left for Sydney. It was a different going back we had fair weather and made good headway. We passed Wilsons Promontory at 6.15 that afternoon.

We arrived at Sydney at 7<sup>am</sup> on the 6<sup>th</sup>, that was very good steaming. I went ashore that night. We carried on the usual routine until the 10<sup>th</sup>, then we went into dry dock, for painting and overhaul, we remained there until the 18<sup>th</sup>.

While we were in dock I didn't go ashore much, I didn't care much about the ferry trip to the city, so I was content with a walk about the dockyard, during our eight days in dock I went to the city about three times, I think. After leaving the dock we went to our usual buoy at Farm Cove, five days afterwards three Japanese cruisers came in and anchored off Farm Cove, they fired a salute, which was returned by the Flagship. They were to stay for seven days. We heard news that we were soon to go to Singapore, but there was nothing official about it yet. Time passed and the Japanese cruisers left for sea on the 28<sup>th</sup>, we manned ship to cheer them on their way, as is usual, we were told to call out Banzai!

Banzai!<sup>31</sup> the Jap cheer, but most of the chaps yelled out Birdseye! Birdseye! which was near enough they reckoned. So, the Japs went to sea and we were glad to see the last of them. Banzai!

The news that we were going to Singapore was correct, so I wrote home and gave that bit of news and that we expected to call at Melbourne on the way, if we did, I would have another chance of getting home and seeing them. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of June, 1906 at 9.45<sup>am</sup> we left Sydney we had a lot of men that were to pay off and they would meet a troop ship at Singapore that was bringing others out to take their place, which we would bring back with us. We had a fair trip around to Melbourne where we arrived on the 10<sup>th</sup> at 11<sup>am</sup>, it being a Sunday, leave was given after dinner, so my luck was in. As it was my watch ashore, I went home and got a great welcome, they didn't expect me in the afternoon, so all got a big surprise. I had to be on board again at 7<sup>am</sup> next morning, I would have gone ashore again that evening, but I couldn't get someone to stay on board and keep my watch so I didn't get home. But I went home the next two evenings so I didn't do too badly, that was the end of my going home as we were to leave for Fremantle the next day, which was Thursday.

So, on the Wednesday I said good bye again for a while, with the hope of seeing them again on our return from Singapore. We left at 8.30 and cleared the heads at 1 o'clock. The weather was pretty good so we made good headway to Fremantle, where we arrived at 3.30<sup>pm</sup> on the 20<sup>th</sup>. The talk on the lower deck was that we would be there for 14 days, why, none of us could guess. It would have suited me better

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<sup>31</sup> Used as a Japanese battle cry.

had we put in all that time at Melbourne, but that wasn't my luck. I had a few trips up to Perth and about the port. We remained there until July 5<sup>th</sup>, then we went to sea bound direct to Singapore, at 9<sup>am</sup>, outside we found a big sea running and worse for us it was a head sea. So we had a rather rough trip nearly all the way to Singapore, we reached there at 10.40<sup>am</sup> on the 13<sup>th</sup>, so we took 8 days doing the trip.

The port was very busy, as it always was, huge lighters<sup>32</sup> going about the harbour with goods to or from the ships anchored there. There was a great many ships in port, all the cargo being unloaded into lighters, the big lighters are sculled by coolies<sup>33</sup> who use a long sweep, sometimes one coolie does the job, but with a very heavy load two coolies man the sweep, and propel the big lighter from place to place, and its wonderful what a Chinese coolie can do with such a big craft. No tugs are ever used to shift the big lighters about the harbour, the coolie does the job, and does it well too.

The city is anything but a clean place at least it was then, but its improved a lot during the past years, but at the time I'm writing about, it was a very smelly city, very much so. The streets crowded with different types of people, Chinese, Malays, Hindu etc. When ashore I had plenty of rides in rickshaws pulled by a coolie and they trot along at a good pace. What little cash they get they earn it sure enough. South Bridge Road is the best street and the most busy. There was no place where we could stay for the night, except one of the few hotels, and it was a hard job to get a bed there, other places were unsafe, the hotels didn't want sailors at any price,

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<sup>32</sup> A type of flat-bottomed barge used to transfer goods and passengers to and from moored ships.

<sup>33</sup> An unskilled native labourer in India, China, and some other Asian countries.

so we camped on the Jetty. The nights were hot, so we didn't worry, there was a good waiting shed there so we were all right.

The most famous place was Madness Bob's, there you could get your money changed, into straits settlement money, and you could get a meal of steak and eggs. It was kept by a Hindu, and it was always Madness Bob's no matter who run it, or how often it changed hands. It had been Madness Bob's for many years, and was known to sailors all over the seven seas. Hundreds of coolies slept in the streets, they just coiled up on the path and you had to step over them, nothing seemed to disturb them until sunrise, quite a lot would sleep on their backs with their legs straight up against a wall or post, how they could sleep like that had me beat, that was in 1906 but its very different now. We remained there for two weeks. The ratings that were paying off went on board the Troop ship and we gave them a cheer as they left for sea. They had been on the Australian station for over two years, so it was time they went home. We left on the 27<sup>th</sup> bound for Fremantle, it was 9<sup>am</sup>.

When we got clear of the harbour, we had a very fair trip all the way to Fremantle, and arrived there on the 30<sup>th</sup> at 3.30 in the afternoon. So we were back in Australia where it wasn't so smelly. We stopped there four days and I only went ashore once. We left on August 2<sup>nd</sup> for Albany at 9<sup>am</sup> and the good weather was still with us all the trip. We arrived there next day at 3<sup>pm</sup> we stayed there for 5 days, I went ashore two or three times to have a walk around. We had a good many visitors on board and our band playing every evening made the little port a bit more lively than usual. On the 8<sup>th</sup>, at 4.30<sup>pm</sup> we went to sea again, bound for Adelaide. I was getting nearer



home and was well content again. We had a splendid trip, and the band playing every evening made the time pass very well. We reached Port Adelaide at 5<sup>pm</sup> on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Leave was given and a good many went ashore. I stayed on board writing letters. I didn't get any mail at Fremantle or Albany, so I had no news from home since we left Singapore. I had one letter at Singapore the day after we arrived there. The day after our arrival at Port Adelaide the Flagship arrived at Largs Bay, she of course was too big to come up the river, she was better where she was, out of sight of us. I had a good many runs up to Adelaide and mostly stopped the night at the Sailors Home in the port, it was near the ship so I didn't have far to travel early in the morning going on board.

The latest news was that we were to go to N.Z. with the Flagship, so I wrote home and told them it was possible we were going to New Zealand, so they were disappointed, the same as I was. I expected to get home soon, but going to N.Z. again would spoil that. I posted my letter and at 3<sup>pm</sup> that day we went to sea bound for Wellington N.Z. The Flagship didn't leave with us, so the talk that we were leaving together was up to putty, anyway we shed no tears we would be far better off without her company, Flagships are just a bother to others. All the way to Wellington we had fair weather, just perfect. We arrived at 7<sup>am</sup> on the 10<sup>th</sup> as usual there was a nice wind blowing, that evening I went ashore and had a good night in the city. It wasn't bad being at Wellington when no other ships of the fleet were there, there was nothing to bother us at all.

So we went on with the usual ship routine, with no worry. None of us on the lower deck could guess why we were going to N.Z. again, but it turned out to be a great event for us. We

had a fair weather trip all the way and arrived at Wellington at 7.30<sup>am</sup> on the 10<sup>th</sup>, as usual there was a good wind blowing. I went ashore that evening and had a walk about the city. I liked going ashore at Wellington, there were some very nice parts where I could have a good walk about out of the city proper.

On Sunday we had the usual crowd of visitors on board, so time went on one day much the same as another until two weeks had passed, then we went to sea again at 9.30<sup>am</sup> on October 5<sup>th</sup> we were to do a steam trial of 24 hours. These trials were generally made along a course past Poverty Bay, where weather conditions were nearly always fair. Any ships of the fleet that happened to be over N.Z. way, always did their steam trials there, but we didn't come all the way to N.Z. just to do a steam trial, but none of us really knew why we really came, at that time, there was some other reason for our visit.

We steamed along the coast until we came to the starting point, for the trial then we went ahead at full speed. The speed trials were made in order to see what a ship could do on a war footing. After the trial was over, we went into Poverty Bay and anchored, that was October 6<sup>th</sup> at 11.30<sup>am</sup>. That evening we heard why we had come to N.Z. The town of Gisborne was on the shore of Poverty Bay, just opposite to where we had dropped anchor. It was here that Captain Cook first landed in N.Z. and a memorial had been put up on the shore where he was supposed to have landed. This was a large granite monument, which was very imposing. It was to be unveiled by the Mayor of Gisborne on the 8<sup>th</sup>, so that was why we were there to take part in the affair and form a guard of honour. There would be a landing party next day, for the

ceremony. Our Captain would land to represent Captain Cook landing, no leave was given the day we arrived.

Next day the 8<sup>th</sup>, we landed and formed a guard at the monument. A very large crowd was there, and a great many Maoris waiting to receive the Captain. There was also a large body of troops so we formed up on one side and the troops on the other. The Maoris all dressed up in their native way. Our Captain came ashore in a boat same as Captain Cook must have done. The Maoris made him welcome. The Captain received many presents of rugs, mats, green stone etc. After the welcome by the Maoris our Captain joined the Mayor, and other important people at the monument, and the ceremony took place. Where I was standing in the guard, I heard the Mayor ask the Captain to allow the guard to march back to Gisborne with the troops, and have some refreshments. The Captain said he was sorry that the ship was under sailing orders and would be leaving as soon as possible, but after a bit more talk the Captain agreed to allow us to march to the town which was about a mile inland. The Mayor made his speech, the memorial was unveiled, we presented arms, the band played. Then the Maoris gave their war dance called a haka and that was the end of ceremony. So we started to march to the town. First went some horsemen to lead the way, then we followed with our band leading, after us came the troops with more horsemen behind them, with buggies, carts etc., and I think every kid from miles around was there too. So away we went, our band playing Wagon Hill, our marching tune, hundreds of people marching along the road with us.

It was a great day for Gisborne, there was 200 of us from the ship for the guard. The town had never seen such a sight

as 200 blue jackets marching along with fixed bayonets, and they made the most of it. When we reached the town, flags were flying everywhere and people cheering us along, everyone from miles around must have been there, for the town was filled with people. We halted in the main street opposite a large hall, the Mayor made a little speech and told us we would find refreshments inside the hall. We expected to find some sandwiches and tea, but when we got inside, we found tables set something like a Lord Mayors banquet. The tables were loaded with good eats even poultry was there, and waiters to attend to us, it was a grand turn out.

While we were doing our best with the good things on the tables, the Mayor came in and told us that the Captain had granted leave until 12 o'clock that night, which was very good news to us, as we had no wish to go on board for a while. The Mayor also told us that in the small room behind the hall we would find plenty of beer and it was there for us to get rid of.

There was also sports etc. for us if we cared to attend them, we would also find a good tea later on in the evening. There was no doubt Gisborne was doing us grand, they were making a gala day of it, so were we.

After the dinner was over, we went into the other place where several barrels of beer was waiting so we had a few drinks before going out to have a look around. It was a great day, Gisborne had treated us in a wonderful way. I think it was the best affair I had ever been to. After a walk around I and three others decided we would go horse riding, and have a look around the district, so having been told where we could hire horses, we got horses at a small cost for the afternoon, they were not bad hacks. So we started along the

road, all of us could ride, so we didn't mount on the wrong side or sit back to front, we knew just what we were doing and how to do it. It wasn't long before we were some miles out of town, the riding would do us good, and maybe shake the big dinner down that we had had. The towns people who perhaps they would see a funny sight of sailors on horseback, were disappointed I guess, we sat on our nags like troopers and made no mistakes.

After awhile we came to a lonely wayside pub, two horses were tied up at the post, the other chaps wanted to stop for a drink, I wanted to keep going on, but as the odds was 3 to 1, I had to agree. As we tied up our horses and went inside where we found two Maoris who were the owners of the two horses outside. The Maoris around Gisborne are all horse dealers and breeders, all are well to do. They dress well when out riding, but seldom wear boots just put their bare feet in the stirrups, and they can ride believe me. The two Maoris wouldn't allow us to pay for a drink, they paid for what we wanted. When they found we were just having a look around the country, they decided to go along with us and show us around, so we all set off together, now six of us.

A few more miles along the road and we came to another wayside pub. It was strange that these pubs seemed to be on their own, no homes in sight, nor any sign of a township, not even a store in sight, I suppose if there was a township it was back off the road somewhere. In the pub we went again, the Maoris wouldn't let us pay, they were the hosts again. The publican also treated us with drinks all around, we set off again after a while, along another road and soon we saw farms here and there, one place near the road had many glass frames, like cucumber frames which were pretty thick all

over the place. The gate was open and as we cantered along, the horse of one of my mates took it into his head to go through the open gate, and when he got onto the glass frames, he didn't seem to like it, so played up a bit, and of course smashed others. You can imagine the noise the breaking glass made. The owner came out of the house waving his arms and yelling something, we didn't stop to find out what he was yelling to us, my mate got his horse out and followed us down the road. What was growing in the frames, I don't know, or what damage was done, we should have stopped and made it good I said, but the Maoris only laughed and took the affair as a joke. They said it would be alright, but I wasn't very pleased about it. I expected a claim would be made for damage to the ship, and we would be in trouble. Anyway, we heard nothing about it, maybe the Maoris knew the owner and fixed the matter up.

We went on for a few more miles and turned into a nice straight road. We could see for about a mile before it turned. All pulled up and nothing would suit them but a race along the nice straight road. I was against racing, but was out voted, so I told the others they could have it on their own, I was quite content to just canter along. Anyway they went and it wasn't long before I saw them turn around the corner. I still cantered on, each side of the road was short green grass and I was on that, off the metal road and it was a good thing for me that I was where I was, so I continued to canter on the grass. When I was getting near to where the road turned, my cap fell off so I turned the horse about and went back for it. While I was getting off the horse he played up, perhaps my white cap lying there frightened him, I fell with my foot caught in the stirrup, and the horse started to canter along dragging me by

one foot, why I didn't get kicked is more than I can say. The horse kept on the grass. If he had gone on the metal road, I wouldn't have had much chance of escaping injury. Around the bend of the road came a jinker with two chaps in it. They saw me being dragged along so whipped up their horse and were soon up to me, one went and held the horse while the other went to my aid. So my foot was soon out of the stirrup, I wasn't even scratched, my uniform collar was under my head. Even if it hadn't been, I couldn't have got hurt on the grass, the big risk I ran was being kicked by the horse. I was very lucky anyway.

When the two chaps saw I wasn't hurt, only shook up a bit they felt easier. They thought at first I was hurt, not knowing how far the horse had dragged me. They told me they had passed my mates who were still racing along the road. They also told me there was a pub further along that road, and they might be waiting there for me, I guessed they would. So I got on my horse and after thanking the chaps for helping me I went on my way. About half a mile around the bend I found the pub and my mates waiting for me. I roared them up for racing like they did and told them what had happened to myself. I said I might have been killed for all they knew, so all agreed to keep together. As it was getting on towards evening, I said we had better be getting back to town, as we were supposed to return the horses by sunset, and I didn't know how many miles we were from Gisborne, and we had to be back for tea as well. I think it was the mention about tea that decided it, all voted to return at once.

The two Maoris told us we were a good many miles from the town but they would take us a short cut to the main road leading into town, So we started on the homeward journey.

On the way back we come to another little pub, and of course all wanted another drink, the beer was very good and didn't seem to affect any of us, all were quite sober. I soon got them going again, and after some miles we came to cross roads, with a few houses nearby, but no pub, for which I was pleased, I didn't want any more delays. Our two Maori friends told us to keep right on ahead and we would come right into Gisborne, we shook hands and parted after thanking them for giving us such a good outing, I've never forgotten them, they were grand chaps. So we went one way and they went the other, I suppose to their homes. In half an hour we were back in Gisborne. We returned the horses to where they belonged, the owner was satisfied the horses had been treated well, he had no complaints. The horse that ran over the glass frames didn't get a scratch, much to our wonder, so all was well.

It was after six o'clock when we got back and when we went along for some tea we found our chaps already enjoying it, so we soon made a start too, we felt rather hungry after our outing. After tea we had a concert in the hall, and finished all the beer that had been left, it was a wonderful turn out. They had given us a great time, we were not likely to forget Gisborne.

That night after 11 o'clock we all went down to a small steam boat like a tug which was to take us off to the ship, the ship was anchored a good way out on account of shoal water. All were happy, officers and men had all had a splendid time. The officers of course had been the guests of the Mayor and leading people of the town and no doubt had a good time as we did.



On the way out to the ship, songs were sung and I'm afraid a lot were half seas over if you know what I mean. How we all crowded on that little tug boat, I can't understand, but we did, and all got on board the ship without mishap bar one or two rifles being lost overboard during the trip, but we heard nothing more about that! Everyone had such a wonderful time, it was just as well to forget about one or two rifles being lost, no fuss was made about them. As it was after 12 o'clock when we got on board. It wasn't very long before we were all turned in and asleep. Good old Gisborne! Its a great little town. At 12.30 next day we left for Auckland, that was the 9<sup>th</sup>. It was a good trip and we arrived at Auckland at 3.30 the next afternoon.

I wrote home that evening and told them about the great time we had at Gisborne, but I didn't say a word about my adventure with the horse, that would have only worried them, but sometime afterwards when I went home and took a shipmate with me, he spilt the beans, by telling my wife all about it, so I got a lecture right enough about it. We remained at Auckland for two weeks and I had plenty of runs ashore. I like Auckland, and stayed at the Thames Hotel in Queen Street, which was a favourite place to stay for the men of the fleet, and it was the nearest to where the ships anchored.

On October 24<sup>th</sup> at 3<sup>pm</sup> we left Auckland for Lyttleton, we were going there to take part in the opening of the Christchurch Exhibition. It was being built when we were there before, and one night during a gale it was blown down, that is the main part of it was, so the delay of rebuilding it had altered the opening date, now all was ready. We arrived at Lyttleton at 10<sup>am</sup> on the 27<sup>th</sup>, the Exhibition was to be opened on November 1<sup>st</sup> and we were to remain until after the

opening: On the 30<sup>th</sup> we landed a Guard of Honour to receive Lord Plunkett, who arrived from Wellington by steamer to open the Exhibition. He was the Governor General of New Zealand at that time. The Guard from the *Challenger* consisted of 100 men, the G.G. inspected the guard then left by train for Christchurch. We marched back to the ship. November 1<sup>st</sup> was the great day for the opening, so we landed again, and formed a guard, we were lined up on both sides of the main hall, where the opening ceremony took place. After that was over we were free to walk through the Exhibition and see all we could. It was very large and one couldn't see it all in one day. It was a wonderful show, I visited it several times before I was satisfied I had seen it all. We of the Navy went in free, and we had a very good time.

I always stayed with my two mates at their home when on leave where I was treated like one of the family., they were grand people, I was always sorry when we had to leave Lyttleton. Lyttleton is at the base of a big mountain, soon as the train leaves the station it enters a tunnel right through the mountain, it took 10 years to make. On the other side is the Canterbury Plains as flat as a table top, all the way to Christchurch, it is sheep country. Its a fine trip by train up to the city. We didn't leave Lyttleton until November 10<sup>th</sup>. So I left what was for me, the best place in N.Z. because I had there a home away from home. Good old Christchurch! We reached Auckland on the 12<sup>th</sup> and dropped anchor at 4<sup>pm</sup> just as supper was piped, we were going out next day to do some firing, so I didn't go ashore that night.

We left early next morning for a place named Waiwera, where we did some firing. We went back to Auckland on the 15<sup>th</sup> at 2<sup>pm</sup>, before we left for Auckland we carried out a gun

layers test, so that bit of firing was over for a while. I went ashore that night because it was my last chance of a run there, we were leaving for Sydney next day, just after dinner on the 16<sup>th</sup> we left for Sydney. It was very good weather when we got to sea and we had good weather all the way. We arrived at Sydney at 6.45<sup>am</sup> on the 21<sup>st</sup>. I went ashore that evening and wrote home at Naval House telling of my arrival back in Sydney, and expected to soon be going onto Fremantle, which was the latest news we had heard about our movements. We went into dry dock on the 23<sup>rd</sup> for cleaning and painting, so once again I had to go by ferry to the city if I went ashore, I went ashore every second evening just the same.

We were in dock for seven days, then we went back to our old place at Farm Cove, then I found we were not going to sea as soon as I expected. I had hoped we would be over Melbourne way for Xmas, but that hope was in vain. We remained there, so once again I was to have Xmas in Sydney. It seemed that I was never to have the luck to get home for Xmas. So Xmas passed off much the same as usual, we had a pretty good time, but I would have had a better one had I been home.

We had coaled ship when we came out of dock, so we wouldn't have that job again for awhile. We had Xmas Day in Sydney, that was all, for the next day the 26<sup>th</sup>, we went to sea. It was hard luck going to sea, the day after Xmas, but the ship had to go and we had to go with her. Outside we found a very heavy sea running, but otherwise the weather was fair all the way. We didn't call at Melbourne, much to my regret, we went right on to Fremantle and had New Year's Day at sea, not that it made any difference to us. The usual routine was

carried out all the time, we were seven days on the trip, we arrived at Fremantle on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1907. In harbour we found the Flagship *Powerful*, *Encounter* and *Cambrian*, and we found that we were all going to Singapore, we were to leave on the 8<sup>th</sup>, so I wrote home and gave that bit of news, goodness knew when I would be home again. I couldn't tell them anything about that. I went ashore as often as I could, sometimes up to Perth and sometimes I didn't get out of the port.

At 1<sup>pm</sup> on the 8<sup>th</sup> we went to sea, with the other ships, we followed the Flagship out. The *Cambrian* followed the *Encounter*. The next day we ran into very heavy weather, and as we pitched and rolled along, with our decks dry as a bone, the *Challenger* was a fine ship at sea. The other ships seemed to us to be making very heavy weather of it, tossing the spray over their Fok'sl. The *Cambrian* was the only ship I ever seen in a seaway riding a sea on her stern. As she rode a big sea, you could see right under her keel, from the bow to her stern, which was the only part of her in the water, then she would plunge into the next sea and come out the other side riding on her stern as before. The *Powerful* big as she was, rolled and pitched as bad as a small craft would have done in such a heavy sea. I suppose, to those on the other ships watching us, we would appear to be knocking about quite a lot. But I thought our ship a very steady one, she was a splendid sea boat, and I have been in some very rough weather in her, and knew all about her. I would never wish for a better ship in bad weather, and heavy seas.

We had rough weather nearly all the way to Singapore. The day before we arrived there, we ran into calmer water, we anchored at 11<sup>am</sup> on the 15<sup>th</sup>, H.M.S. *King Alfred*, *Monmouth*,

*Astoria* and *Clio* were in harbour waiting for us. An Admirals conference was to be held, that's why all the ships were there from other stations, East Indies and China stations, to meet our Admiral. The *Astrea* was our chummy ship so ship visits were always going on between the two ships company. I had plenty of shore trips during our stay of seven days. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> at 10<sup>am</sup> we left for Fremantle. It was no use my writing home while there as we would be back in Australia before the letter, So I waited until we got back to Fremantle, we had a fair trip, not rough like it was when coming to Singapore.

So we arrived at Fremantle at 11<sup>am</sup> on the 31<sup>st</sup>. As we were only staying one day I didn't go ashore, but I wrote home. We and the other ships left at 9 next morning for Albany, that was February 1<sup>st</sup> 1907, we reached Albany at 5.30<sup>pm</sup> on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, after a fair trip. There were no letters for me, they were following the ship no doubt and reached a port just after we had left which was often the case. I went ashore that evening, there was no place where the men could get beds, so most of them who were ashore put in the night up at the fort on top of the hill above the town.

That night the liberty men drunk the only pub bone dry and I think they almost finished the beer at the canteen in the fort. The beer at the that time in the west, wasn't too good, so there was a lot of sore heads in the fleet next morning, maybe the Admiral thought he would give all hands a good shake up, and we got it.

A general signal was made to land every available man, also field guns, so all ships landed field guns and every man that could be spared. The idea was to take the top of the mountain by assault, where an enemy battery was supposed to be

ashore, we all fell in and marched to the foot of the mountain, which is not a small one. We fixed bayonets, then came the order to charge, and away we went, there was no stopping until the top was reached. The field guns had to be dragged up as well over rocks, scrub, etc. It was heavy going sure enough. One of our chaps fell back onto the bayonet of the chap following him, and got stabbed in the stern, first aid crew carried him down again, he wasn't hurt much but it was all practice for the first aid crew. The wounded man was luckier than we were for we had to charge right up to the top, while he was carried back in comfort, by the time we reached the top we were about done and needed the stand easy we got. If it had been the real thing I reckon we couldn't have done much to the Battery, we were all pretty well winded.

The Admiral made a little speech and said we had charged up to the top in record time and had done very well indeed, but most of us were not feeling too well after the night before, I guess it took it out of us charging up that big mountain slope. After a spell and smoko of twenty minutes, we fell in again and marched down to the road, there was about 1200 of us from the ships. We expected we would all go back on board the ships, but it wasn't all over yet. We marched along the road which went right around the base of the mountain back into the town, about 6 miles around. It was a very hot day, were we happy? I don't think! Instead of marching, after charging up the mountain, we felt more like having a good rest, but the Admiral thought otherwise.

After we had marched a few miles we came to a farm house alongside the road. There was a woman standing alongside the road with a bucket and a large mug. I suppose the bucket contained water or maybe milk, and she thought some of us

would like a drink, we would! but couldn't fall out to get it, we needed a drink, but dare not fall out of the ranks. The woman seeing we couldn't stop to drink, she called out to us to come and have a drink. That kind soul didn't know the Navy, but we did, and marched on, one or two did leave the ranks for a drink, but they got roared back again, and later on punished for falling out of the march.

So we went on until we reached the jetty, then into the boats and back on board the ships, very tired and very thirsty, and very much fed up. But the Admiral directed the beer out of all hands I guess. Few wanted to go ashore for a day or two, they had had enough of shore for awhile. We stayed there for nine days. There was little to see and only one pub so the place wasn't much in favour with the men of the ships, perhaps that's why the Admiral kept us there so long.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> we left with the *Powerful* and *Encounter* for Hobart. The *Cambrian* had gone elsewhere. It was 5 o'clock in the morning when we left, and we had a pretty fair trip across the strait to Hobart, where we arrived on the 18<sup>th</sup> at 8.30<sup>am</sup>. That evening I landed and posted a letter home. I heard that all men due for leave from our ship, whose home port was Melbourne would be sent on leave by the *Psyche* which was then in Hobart. I was expecting long leave, so hoped the rumour was true. It really seemed too good to be true, but true it was, for on March 4<sup>th</sup>, we were sent on leave, about 20 of us went on board the *Psyche* for passage to Melbourne. On the way over, Jimmy the one (the 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant of the *Psyche*) told us all off to work part of the ship same as the ships crew, with the usual routine of the ship while we were on board her. But we pointed out that we were on leave, and were on board the *Psyche* for passage only, also that we were in No 1

uniforms and had no working clothes with us, so after some talk, we were left alone. Of course, he could have forced us to turn to and work part of the ship, but maybe thought it best to leave us alone and save bother.

It as a novelty for me to be on a man-of-war, as a passenger, we had a nice trip over, and I was home again at long last. So there I was for 14 days leave, glad to be home and I seldom went anywhere, being content to stay at home as much as I could. I brought a few things from Singapore which pleased them all, so all were happy, so was I.

The 14 days soon passed, all too soon I reckoned, and the time came for me to go back to the *Psyche*, she came back to take us to Hobart, we got back at 6<sup>am</sup> on the 18<sup>th</sup> and before dinner we were all back on board the *Challenger*. We remained there until the 25<sup>th</sup>, then we left for Norfolk Bay to carry out gun layers test, we left at 3<sup>pm</sup> and got there at 6<sup>pm</sup> and anchored for the night, early next morning we got under way and started to carry out the test.

We got back to Hobart at 11<sup>am</sup> on the 27<sup>th</sup>, picked up our mail, and left for Sydney at midnight, we had very good weather for the trip and arrived at Sydney on the 30<sup>th</sup> at 9<sup>am</sup> and made fast at our usual buoy in Farm Cove. We were to remain in Sydney for some time, by the talk on the lower deck, but talk couldn't be depended upon. I went ashore pretty often and as our band played every evening almost, it wasn't too bad being on board if I couldn't get ashore and sometimes we had a sing song on the lower deck, so the evenings passed off very well. So we went on until May 27<sup>th</sup>, when we went into dock for overhaul and painting, we came out of dock on the 31<sup>st</sup> and went back to Farm Cove, our ship



looked very smart, cleaned and newly painted.

On June 7<sup>th</sup> the *Powerful* came into harbour from her New Zealand cruise, where she had gone from Hobart. We were having a long stay in port this time, so the yarn that we would be in Sydney some time turned out to be correct. There was nothing much taking place and our stay there seemed a very long time to me, so we went on with the usual routine, day after day, now and then we would have a landing party and march around Sydney for a couple of hours, that was the only break. It was a change from the usual work on board.

I was getting letters pretty often while we were in Sydney, so I was well content being able to write home and get answers so often. On the 20<sup>th</sup> at 9<sup>am</sup> our long stay in port was broken. We left for Jervis Bay, which we reached at 4<sup>pm</sup> the same day and anchored for the night. No leave was given, as we were miles away from Huskisson, the township on the other end of the bay. The band played and we had a buck dance on the upper deck. It was a fine night and we all enjoyed ourselves, dancing until pipe down went.

Next morning we were busy running torpedos and doing linch aiming for the 6 inch guns of the starboard battery. When we left Sydney I had no idea where we were going from Jervis Bay. So I got a surprise when I heard that we were going to Melbourne, that was good news and would suit me down to the ground. It was little use writing from Jervis Bay to let them know at home because we would be in Melbourne before the letter got there, so I let it go.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> at 7.30<sup>am</sup> we left for Melbourne, it was grand to be going home again. The weather was good, so we steamed along at a good rate, we reached Port Phillip Heads at 9.15<sup>am</sup>

on the 25<sup>th</sup>. We did some more 1 inch aiming in the bay, before going up and anchoring off the Breakwater Pier at Williamstown. It was 4<sup>pm</sup> when we anchored and a dock yard party was sent ashore to rig the battle practice target that wasn't so good. It looked like that was coming in for battle practice and my chances of getting home was small, but I was crossing a bridge before I came to it, as they gave leave that evening and I got ashore. I had to go by train from Williamstown all the way around to the city which was a delay, but I was on my way home and was happy.

So I arrived home and found all well, no one expected me, they didnt even know that my ship was in, so it was a nice surprise for them. As I had to be back at Williamstown early next morning, I decided to go back that night and stay at the Naval Depot until the liberty boat came in, at 7<sup>am</sup>. I didnt know when I would be able to get home again, if battle practice was to take place, or how many ships were to take part, so I told them to expect me when they saw me, thats all I could tell them at home.

That day we went down the bay and did more 1 inch aiming, and remained down there all night, so near, yet so far away from home. The next day we did our quarterly practice, that was the 28<sup>th</sup>. After gun firing, we went back to Williamstown and anchored as before, off the Breakwater Pier. Next morning, we towed the battle target down the bay, moored it and anchored for the night near the target. Next day the *Powerful*, *Pioneer* and *Psyche* did their battle practice, they came into the bay the night before. We remained a few hundred yards off the target to watch the firing and after each ship had fired, we had to examine the target and do any repairing needed, also put new canvas up ready for the next

ship.

The used targets were sent to England to be examined, each marked with the ships name that had used it. The practice is done as follows, two mark buoys are placed 400 yards apart. The target is placed thousands of yards away, and although it is 90 feet long and 40 feet high, looking at it from the gun sights, it seems to be just as big as a match box. The ship to do the firing steams along, at full speed, as if at a battle. The target is supposed to be the midship part of an enemy ship. As soon as the first mark buoy is reached, the ship opens fire with all the guns on that side of the ship, facing the target, each gun layer firing as many rounds as he can, before the other mark buoy is reached, when the firing must cease. Then the ship turns and comes back firing all the guns on the other side, then her battle practice is finished and another ship takes her place, when a new canvas has been placed on the target. When the firing was finished for the day, the *Psyche* and *Pioneer* left for Port Melbourne.

The *Powerful* and our ship anchored for the night, near the target. Next day the *Encounter* came in and did her firing, in the forenoon, after dinner we did our firing, all the firing was good. When we had finished we anchored for the night with the target astern. The *Encounter* also anchored near us, the *Powerful* went up and anchored off Williamstown.

Next day the *Psyche* and *Pioneer* went to sea homeward bound to pay off at Singapore, where they would pick up their new crews, we went up to Port Melbourne and tied up to buoys between the two piers. The target was taken back to the dock yard at Williamstown.

Next day I went on long leave, so I was home after all. Next

day the *Challenger* coaled ship, it was strange that long leave was given to anyone before coaling ship, so I was lucky to miss that job. I found all well at home, then a very strange thing happened. Before the *Challenger* had finished coaling ship she got sailing orders and went to sea, full speed, leaving those on leave behind, so it was pretty urgent. She went direct to Adelaide, we never knew for certain why she had gone to sea in such a hurry but we had some idea of it, anyway it was a service secret. However, she never went past Adelaide.

The men she had left behind received orders to join the ship at Adelaide. We had to go to the Railway Dept. and get passes by train to Adelaide. As I was the senior hand I had to see that all hands reached the ship, that's what I was supposed to do, but I had a job to do it. We all got on board the train all right, and as usual a lot of them had a fair issue of beer before getting the train, as well as a good supply of bottles with them, so some of them were pretty merry before the train started. And the trouble was that at every station where the train stopped and more beer could be got, they got it, not only bottles of beer, but whisky as well. Sailors don't care, at least some of them don't, so we journeyed on many of them pretty drunk by this time.

In spite of all I could do to prevent it, every chance I got, I dropped a bottle out of the window, trying to land it on its base so it wouldn't break. Maybe the men working on the line found them and they would need it far more than the drunks on the train, they could well spare it. I was trying to keep the chaps as sober as I could, but although I dropped a few bottles from the train, more was got whenever the train stopped and there was a bar. I was very glad when at last we reached Adelaide, we were supposed to go straight to the ship and

report, but now I struck trouble, some decided to break leave and remain in the city. So I went on to Port Adelaide with the rest and reported on board the ship. The leave breakers were away two days, when they came on board of course they got punished with stoppage of leave and loss of pay, which kept them on board for some time. I went ashore that evening for a ramble around the city, but went back on board just after 10 o'clock, I decided not to stay ashore that night, we remained in Adelaide for a week after I rejoined the ship.

We left at 2.15<sup>pm</sup> on the 27<sup>th</sup> and anchored at Largs Bay, waiting for our mail. The sudden rush of our ship from Melbourne while I was on leave, was out of our regular programme, so now that little fuss was over, we were going back to Sydney direct. So we went to sea on the 29<sup>th</sup> at 5.30<sup>pm</sup>. Next day we went in closer to the coast and fired Lyddite shell at some rocks. Next day we went into Twofold Bay and did some more firing. After the firing was finished we went to sea again and on to Sydney. It was a good trip all the way, nothing out of the common happened, we reached Sydney on July 31<sup>st</sup> at 7.30<sup>am</sup> then we got ready to coal ship.

Next day we were under sailing orders, and were going to Brisbane as soon as the coaling was finished. We took in 500 tons of coal and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of the month we left for Brisbane at 4<sup>pm</sup>. We were supposed to have cases of measles on board, that's why no leave had been given since we arrived in Sydney. Several sick men were landed before we left, we had also left three sick men in Adelaide. We never knew what the sickness was it may have been measles or anything else. Anyway we had no more very sick cases on board after we went to sea. We arrived at Moreton Bay on the 4<sup>th</sup> at 5.30<sup>pm</sup> and anchored there for the night. The trip from Sydney was

good. Next morning we went up the river and expected to remain there about 12 days. We made fast to buoys near the Naval Depot, which meant plenty of boating to and from.

The banks of the river are pretty high there, houses on top with their gardens coming down to the river, people there could look down on the ship lying in the river. One afternoon in one of the gardens some girls were having afternoon tea, they held out cups of tea to us on board, as if to say, come and get it, but all we could do was to wave to them, they were too far away to speak to. Every afternoon they were there, one day the ship was making a lot of smoke, and the girls in the garden were getting it all, so they brought out a big blackboard and wrote on it with chalk more "band and less smoke please". The band used to play every afternoon. Maybe it was a Ladies school and the girls were teachers, anyway the engine room staff took notice of their appeal and after that there was less smoke for the rest of our stay. The girls used to be there regular at 3 o'clock, waving to us and skylarking about, but we got no nearer to them, as we always landed on the other side of the river, so none of the chaps made dates. I've no doubt they were on board the ship, when visitors came onboard, but if they were we wouldn't have known them, and of course they wouldn't let on they were the girls that waved to us, from the garden opposite.

One make and mend day when I was ashore I saw a funny sight, one of the chaps, pretty full of beer, pinched a pair of ladies pants from a line at a pub. He put them on over his uniform pants and walked along the street, in a zig zag way. He looked a queer sight and caused quite a lot of amusement until he came across a policeman who made him take them off and return them to the pub. He was very lucky not to be

charged with pinching them. However the pants were returned and nothing more said about it. But I guess whoever owned them wouldn't be very pleased if she knew a drunken sailor had them on in the street, sailors don't care!

We had a very good time in Brisbane and were sorry when the time came for us to leave, but all things come to an end, so we left the river on the 19<sup>th</sup> at 4.30<sup>pm</sup>. The girls in the garden gave us a send off. We were going to Sydney, a big wager had been made ashore about our ship getting to Sydney before the express train. This wager was mentioned in the paper, I forget how much money was laid, but it was a fair amount. We didn't leave Moreton Bay until after the train had left Brisbane, but we were in Farm Cove, Sydney before the train reached Sydney, we beat the train by over an hour. We had a very calm trip all the way, and the ship made good headway, that's why we got to Sydney first.

The *Challenger* held the steaming record of all the fleet. The record from Melbourne to Sydney was held for some time by a P & O mail ship, then the Flagship *Euryalus* beat that record, which she held until the *Challenger* beat her. This is what the *Challenger* did on a steam trial from Melbourne to Sydney one time. We left Port Melbourne one Saturday at 4<sup>pm</sup>, she had 45 miles to go before reaching the Heads, outside of which the steam trial started. The weather was very calm, the sea like a sheet of glass, away we went at full speed, the upper deck was covered with cinders from the funnels with the false draught going. At 4<sup>pm</sup> next day we made fast to our usual buoy in Farm Cove, Sydney. That was some steaming for a ship at that time, that's how the *Challenger* beat the record from Melbourne to Sydney, but much faster ships than her have been on the station since then, so I expect her

record has been beaten long ago.

When we beat the train from Brisbane, we left Moreton Bay at 8<sup>am</sup> and was in Sydney next morning at 10.30, so it was good going. The men we had landed sick, before going to Brisbane came on board quite well, we had no more sickness on board. We were soon to go to New Zealand again. I answered all my letters from home and gave them that news, but I couldnt say when we would be back, or where we would go from New Zealand.

I went ashore as often as I could, and did a lot of visiting here and there. I had done very well on the *Challenger* as I had many what was called square numbers, good jobs at sea, such as sentry go, life buoy sentry and pumping party, which was to keep the cooks galley supplied with water and also drinking water tank. In harbour I was a side party a lot of the time. So having these square jobs at sea, I didn't have to do a trick at the wheel, or go into the chains with a lead line coming in, or going out of the harbour and that meant quite a lot, especially if the weather was bad.

At the end of the month the *Cambrian* left for Colombo to pay off. She steamed down the harbour with her paying off pennant flying many yards from her main truck. As she passed each ship of the fleet the harbour rang with the cheers, her crew were going home, so they got a good send off as is usual.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of the new month the *Powerful* left for Jervis Bay, to do some firing, she was also bound for Colombo. At 10.30 next morning we also left Jervis Bay, to mark for the *Powerful*, we arrived there next morning and remained for four days, while the *Powerful* did her practice. On Sept 10<sup>th</sup> the *Powerful*



left for Colombo and we left at the same time for New Zealand, it was 4<sup>pm</sup> when we left and outside we found a very heavy sea running, as it was a beam sea,<sup>34</sup> we did some heavy rolling but our decks were as dry as a duck.

Next day in our mess we had a bit of fun, over a very funny sight. At the end of the mess table was the rack on the ships side, in which we kept our plates, basins, etc. On each side of the rack was a place for large tins of flour, etc., and on the other side was a large tin of mustard, a 7 lb tin. Suddenly the ship gave a big roll and down came the tins out of the rack, one on each side of the mess table, the two chaps sitting at that end of the table got the contents all over them, one being covered in flour and the other with mustard. Of course we all laughed, but the two chaps couldn't see the joke at all, but we did. Worse things than that happen at sea and you just have to laugh it off if you are wise, and this yellow and white picture was something we could laugh at.

We had a very rough trip that time we passed the Three Kings on the 13<sup>th</sup> at 9.30 in the morning. At 2.30 that afternoon we passed North Cape, so we were doing well although it was so rough, but a beam sea didn't hold us back much, we passed Barrier Island at 3<sup>am</sup> on the 14<sup>th</sup> and at 7<sup>am</sup> we arrived at Auckland. So I was back in New Zealand again. As it was my watch on board I couldn't go ashore, not that it mattered much I would go next evening. So next night I landed and stayed as before at the Thames Hotel in Queen Street, as often as I've stayed there, I never got the same bed twice. Once when the fleet was in I couldn't get a bed at all, they were all booked out early, long before I had a try. My

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<sup>34</sup> A sea striking the vessel at right angles to its keel.

chum and I were offered a bed made up on one of the billiard tables. He accepted it, but I didn't like the idea of sleeping on a billiard table, although I had slept on many a worse place. I suppose it would have been made comfortable enough, but I didn't like the idea.

There was only one place where I could get a bed, all the hotels were booked out, that place was the Coffee Palace, a very tiny place. They really didn't want to let me have a bed, I was told that one time that they had given beds to sailors and they lost towels, soap and pillow slips, so they didn't like sailors staying there. At last, I managed to convince them that I at least was honest, and their gear would be quite safe. So I turned in and had a very nice and comfortable bed, much better than a billiard table. It cost me more than a bed at the hotel, but I didn't mind that so long as I was comfortable. They found everything in my room ok next morning when I left, so maybe they thought all sailors were not alike.

Next morning soon after all the liberty men had got on board we left for Wiawera Bay, to carry out 12<sup>pds</sup> gun firing. The bay is only about 30 miles from Auckland and we got there before 9<sup>am</sup> and did 12<sup>pds</sup> and 3<sup>pds</sup> firing. Next day we did our prize firing and the shooting was very good. After that was finished we went back to Auckland and anchored at 6<sup>pm</sup>. It was too late to bother about cleaning to go ashore by the time we had finished with the routine work. The band played on the upper deck and we made merry in the usual way. I went ashore the next evening, because it would be my last chance there for awhile as the ship was under sailing orders, and would be going to sea at any time, so I had a good evening not knowing when we would be back in Auckland again.

We left for Wellington on the 21<sup>st</sup> at 9.30<sup>am</sup>, it was a fair trip down the coast to Wellington where we arrived on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, just after 9<sup>am</sup>. Soon after our arrival the weather changed, it came on to blow hard, with heavy rain as well. It didn't look too good for us at all, because we were landing a guard of honour next day when Lord Plunkett would proclaim New Zealand a Dominion. We landed and although the day wasn't perfect, the rain kept off during the ceremony, so all was well, New Zealand was now a Dominion. I had now been in the guard of three great affairs in New Zealand, first the memorial to Captain Cook, then the greatest Exhibition ever held south of the line, and third when the Dominion was declared. Next day we landed again and went to a Review held at Newton Park, a very large crowd was there to see the show. We marched past in review order, the papers said we marched splendidly, I've no doubt we did look well as we passed, cocking a chest. After we had returned to the ship I went ashore again at 5 o'clock until next morning. The city was crowded that night, it had been a Gala Day, and people were in from the country, I had a very good time that night.

The yarn was that we were stopping there for some time, but that wasn't official. We took in 800 tons of coal four days after our arrival and it was hard to guess how much coal dust we all swallowed while coaling. I didn't go ashore that night, felt more like turning in by the time we had scrubbed the ship and ourselves.

Next morning one of the chaps went to the sick bay and complained of a pain in his ear, when the doctor saw him, he told the chap that it was hardened wax in his ear, and nothing to make a fuss about. The sick bay steward syringed his ear and he was sent back to duty, a little later the pain got worse,

so back he went to the sick bay. He was told that he was only pretending the pain was so bad, so he was sent back to his work again.

As he worked about the ship he was in agony, and we all knew he was suffering pretty badly. At last he couldn't carry on, and went back to the sick bay and said he couldn't stand the pain any longer. We knew he was really ill, but the doctor thought otherwise, so once again he was sent back to work. Later on in the afternoon he went right out to it, then there was a fuss, they began to think that there was something the matter with him, beside hardened wax in his ear, there must be something more serious so they sent him ashore to hospital. We heard later that he wasn't in the hospital 10 minutes before the doctors there knew what was wrong. The trouble was an abscess on the brain, but it had gone too far and the poor chap died early next morning. It was strange that our doctor didn't think it might be an abscess on the brain that was troubling the chap. We buried him in a little cemetery a few miles out of Wellington. Later on we decided to place a headstone on the grave to cost £18, the money to come out of canteen funds.

The day after the funeral about 100 of us went ashore to a place named Trentham, where there was a rifle range. This place was about 20 miles out of the city, army bell tents were supplied for us to live in, while we were there for a week to do our rifle firing. As it was raining most of the time we were there we didn't have much of a holiday. The ground too was very rocky so we couldn't trench the tents in a proper manner, so water came running through the tents. We had water proof sheets, but the sheets prevented our bedding from getting wet, so we made the best we could of it. The

range was rather pretty being just a clearing in the bush, surrounded with tall trees and scrub with ferns and wild flowers underneath. The tall trees were covered with wild white clematis, which was creeping all over them, which made the trees look as if they were covered with snow, it was a very pretty sight. We did our weeks musketry course, our dinner each day was what we called spud shandy, meat cut up and boiled with spuds, no other vegetables and boiled and boiled until the spuds were all pulp, and the meat boiled to rags, that was spud shandy, what little meat there was would be at the bottom of the copper.

When cooks to messes was sounded and a chap from each tent went to get the dinner with their mess kettles, so many ladles of the spud shandy would be put in the kettle, it depended how many men was in that mess at the tent. Sometimes the ladle would go in deep and bring up some meat, the mess that got a deep ladle full was very lucky, as a rule we just got the shandy water with spuds boiled to pulp, so we didn't live high there.

When the week was up, we returned to the ship and another batch of men left to do their musketry course. They were lucky as the rain stopped and they had nice weather for their week in camp, but like us they got spud shandy for dinner. Not long after I had returned from the camp news came to my chum that his mother had passed away, so he got leave to go home to Christchurch, so I lost a good friend who was like a mother to me, and always made me so welcome whenever I was in Christchurch, I felt pretty blue for awhile over her death.

It was on the 20<sup>th</sup> when we returned from the rifle range,

and the talk on the lower deck was that we would soon be going to Suva. It was strange how news like that got around, known as a buzz, sometimes the yarns were true, but mostly false, anyway I didn't take much notice of this last rumour. On the 24<sup>th</sup>, windy Wellington started to pipe again, and before dinner time it was blowing a stiff gale, so much so, that we had to drop the other anchor, so the ship wouldn't drag. I reckon the folks ashore couldn't have milk in their tea, the wind would have blown it out, soon as they put it in. The weather wasn't good enough for me to venture ashore, so I stayed on board that evening. I reckon it would be more comfortable on the mess deck than in the city streets. There was more talk that we were surely going to Suva soon, in fact on the 7<sup>th</sup> of next month, and that we would be back in Wellington in December, calling at Sydney first, but as this rumour wasn't official, I didn't take much notice of it, but I did mention it in my letter home, just in case it turned out to be true.

When the weather got good again, we started to do some torpedo running in the harbour and managed to lose one, next day a diver was sent down and after hunting around for some time he found it. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November we left for Suva sure enough, but before we sailed I sent a few lines home and told that news, so they would know we had really left. We arrived at Auckland on the 4<sup>th</sup> at 11.30<sup>am</sup> and took in more coal for our trip to Suva, we took in 510 tons. I had a few runs ashore while we were there, always staying at the Thames Hotel as before. One of our chaps became very ill and as he didn't improve, he was sent ashore to the hospital. He died two days afterwards, so we had another naval funeral. We buried him at Devonport, none of us knew what

was wrong with him, we ordered a headstone for his grave before we left for Suva.

We left on the 17<sup>th</sup> and had a very rough trip all the way to Suva, where we arrived on the 21<sup>st</sup> at 6.15<sup>pm</sup> and the next day we were busy coaling ship again. The old lighter *Hancow* came alongside and we took in 475 tons. The day after coaling we got a make and mend, so I went ashore to have a look around the town. I was with a few of the chaps and after looking around for awhile we reckoned we wanted some eats. The little pub near the landing place couldn't give us a meal, all they could do was some biscuits and cheese but that wasn't much use to hungry sailors, so the others reckoned they would go to the Pacific Hotel, a big place for tourists. In the little pub the barrel of beer stood on the counter, not even a wet bag over it, as it is very hot in Suva, the beer was luke warm. There was no ice or cooling arrangements in Suva at that time. I wasn't in favour of going to the tourist hotel, as I told the others, they wouldn't want sailors there, and the chances was we would not get anything to eat at all, in such a tory place, but I couldn't talk them out of going along.

The place was up near Government House, it was a very posh place believe me, so in we went and sat down at one of the small marble tables, a girl came along and told us we were much too early to get a meal, but she could let us have some salmon, and some ox tongue. Some said ox tongue and some said salmon, so away went the girl to attend to our orders, she had already brought in a dish of cut bread and some butter. So eight of us sat down and waited, all very hungry. She soon returned with two dinner plates, in the centre of each plate was a small cone of salmon, about the size of half a crown, it was tinned salmon, and when we saw it, those who had asked

for tongue, were glad they hadn't asked for fish. Then the plates came in with ox tongue, just a very thin wafer in the centre of the plate, like the salmon, it was put on a little bit of bread and went down in one bite, just one mouthful that's all. Then we finished all the bread and butter, we were charged 2/6 each, so we departed from that grand place for tourists, very much wiser and sadder. On the way along I cheered them up by saying what a banquet we had at Gisborne, put that alongside the one we've just had, that made them feel more hungry and didn't tend to make them feel very happy. We had to make the best of it, we would get nothing to eat until we got back on board the ship, and then we wouldn't get much, our canteen was pretty empty by then.

Suva has altered since those days, now you can get a good meal there if you need one. No all night leave was given in the islands, all hands had to be on board at sunset, this was because of fever. White men would get it ashore at night time, so it was said. So to make sure, no leave was given at nights. Suva then had one street of shops, mostly kept by Chinese and Hindus. A Fijian native policeman with his woolly hair like a huge mop and wearing a white kilt would beat the native drum, which was a hollow log, hollowed out with just a narrow slit along the top. When this drum was beat it could be heard all over Suva. Instead of a town hall clock, the drum kept the time. The High Commissioner for the Pacific who lived at Government House, was going with us to visit several islands. We left on the 28<sup>th</sup> and also took with us two native police who were going to form a native police force at Vila. They were fine, big chaps and could talk English very well. We had a nice calm trip to Vila and arrived there on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November at 2.30<sup>pm</sup>.



We met a French man-of-war there and both ships fired salutes. The British and French both had interests in those islands. The High Commissioner and the French Captain and our Captain went ashore to see about something, and after that, had a conference on board our ship. Later on, all the seaman gunners on the ship were piped aft. They were told that the two native police were to form a native police force at Vila, they would train natives for the work. A maxim machine gun would be landed and a seaman gunner was wanted to take charge and teach them the use of the gun etc. He would have food and quarters free, and a native to wait on him and look after him. The pay was good, but no leave would be given until he had been there 18 months, when he would get two months leave to Australia. That was the position, but a man couldn't take a wife and family there, and it was quite on the cards he would get the fever (Malaria) sooner or later. The man willing to take charge would receive his discharge from the Navy, but no one would take it on. I don't know if the French ship landed anyone, but I think it not likely as the two native police couldn't speak French, as far as our ship was concerned the job went begging.

Vila was just a native village on the coast, at the foot of the mountains, there was a French trading station and a school in charge of Nuns, also French. The rest was just native huts. In the hills the natives were wild head hunters from time to time they would make a raid on the village on the coast, kill as many as they could and of course take the heads back to the hills with them. That was why the Government was starting a native police force there, to check the raids, with a maxim gun, and keep the head hunters in order, and more peaceful, the natives on the coast were peaceful enough and never

caused any trouble. I visited the trading station, where almost anything could be had, all French of course. I went there with some of the chaps, we had a few French drinks, which was served by a native woman who must have weighed about 17 stone, she was very fat, and large. It seemed funny so large a person could serve such small drinks, but we had to take what was offered or go without.

Vila was a pretty place, in the harbour was a small island, shaped like a shoe, it looked very fine with its trees and shrubs. It was a beautiful little island. One day, it must have been a trading or market day, canoes came from all directions, loaded with fruit, pigs and many other things, all making for the village, all business seemed to be done at the trading station. The native children are very interesting and were as fat as butter, also very shy, with sailors anyway, I really enjoyed our short stay at Vila, although I couldn't speak French, and none there could speak English. We left for Suva on December 11<sup>th</sup> at 7.30<sup>am</sup>, the sea very calm all the way.

We didn't live very high in the Navy at that time, we had fresh meat if we were just going short trips from port to port, not too far between, but on a longer trip we had salt horse one day and salt pork and pea soup the next. Each day one of the mess was cook of the mess, each man took his turn. He would draw the men for the mess, and prepare the meal, then after the meal he had to wash up and clear the mess. There were 16 of us in my mess, and out of the lot, only about four would go to any trouble to make a meal. Nothing much could be done with the salt horse or salt pork, but when we did have fresh meat, as a rule it was just flung into a dish with a few spuds to keep it company, rushed to the galley and the ships cook would do the rest, this was called a rush up, or burnt

offering, or a sacrifice. If the few spuds were peeled and came back nicely roasted it was known as a royal roast. It was common when a mess was getting a burnt offering, for all the mess to fall in behind the cook of the mess when he went to the galley to get the dinner, and march along the mess deck with him, one of them playing the Dead March on a mouth organ, or perhaps a tin whistle. The mess that had what was known as the pot mess, had the best dinner, it was a kind of a stew made out of shin of beef. If that mess had any left over, any one was always welcome to a basin of it. A few of us in our mess would always make a decent feed when we were cook of the rook (mess) such as a meat pie, or a steam pie, we would do that for our own sakes, so we would have a decent dinner.

It was the 13<sup>th</sup> when we arrived at Suva, we were to stay for two days only. That evening one of the chaps fishing from one of the gun ports, caught a queer looking fish, about 6 lbs in weight, no one on board had ever seen such a queer fish before, it looked awful, and made you think it couldn't be good to eat. One of the officers was a sort of naturalist, and always collecting specimens, came along and looked at the fish, but he didn't know what kind it was and said we better throw it over the side, as it might be poisonous. It was as if it was anyway. There were a few natives on board, and when they saw the fish, they made a great fuss about it, and asked if they could have it to take ashore, we were only too glad to give it to them, so they took it ashore with great rejoicing. We found out later that it was a sacred and rare fish, and when one was caught, it was taken to the Chief and a great feast held, the natives were all delighted with the catch.

We left for Auckland on December 15<sup>th</sup>, had a very fair trip

over and anchored there on the 19<sup>th</sup> at 11<sup>am</sup>. The Flagship and the *Pegasus* were in the harbour, next day the *Prometheus* arrived from Sydney. I went ashore every second night, so I had good runs in the city while we were there. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> we went over to Devonport and went into dry dock. We had our Xmas in dry dock which was the same as other Xmas's on board, we had a good time. Near the dock there is an extinct volcano, it has a path winding around it right up to the top, with seats here and there along the track where one can rest if tired. Its a favourite walk for people on Sundays, a splendid view can be seen from the top, I often took that walk instead of going across the harbour to the city. It was a nice little place I thought was Devonport. In Wellington there is another large extinct volcano which has been made into lovely gardens high above the city.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> the *Powerful*, *Pegasus* and the *Prometheus* left for Wellington, we remained in dock until January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1908. The Flagship had left an ordinary seaman in hospital when she left for Wellington. He died and as the *Challenger* was the only ship of the fleet in harbour, it was our job to bury him, so we landed a gun carriage and firing party. After the funeral, although I was tired, I went ashore again that night. On the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, we coaled ship again, after that job was finished and the ship clean again, I still went ashore as often as I could go, I liked Auckland. On the 16<sup>th</sup> at 9<sup>am</sup> we left for Wellington, and arrived there next day just after 6<sup>pm</sup>, we had a good trip down. Ships of the fleet in harbour were the *Powerful*, *Pegasus*, *Pioneer* and *Prometheus*. The usual routine was carried out and leave given every evening, so again I went ashore pretty often. On the 31<sup>st</sup> the Flagship sailed for Sydney and we were glad to see her leave the harbour.

We took in more coal that same morning, we finished at 10.30, after taking all the coal we needed. On February 1<sup>st</sup> we left for Golden Bay, and got there the same afternoon after 6 o'clock, and we anchored for the night, at 4.40 the next morning we got up anchor and steamed towards Australia. We were to carry out wireless tests with the Flagship, we had the best wireless outfit of any ship on the station at that time. The Flagship was well away at sea somewhere ahead of us. After going a few hundred miles, we turned back again, and went to Nelson, reaching there at 5<sup>am</sup> on the 6<sup>th</sup>, stopped there for two days and then left for Picton at 8<sup>am</sup>. We arrived at Picton just after 2 pm next day, no leave was given at these places.

Next morning at 6.15 we left Picton bound for Wellington, where we arrived at 10.30 the same morning. I had a run ashore that evening. Next day we were busy running torpedos. I had one more run ashore there, we seemed to be always on the move now, here and there. On the 11<sup>th</sup> we were at sea again, bound for Hobart, we were getting nearer home which suited me. The *Pegasus* left for Hobart before we did, we arrived on the 15<sup>th</sup> in the evening. We were there until March 3<sup>rd</sup>, when we left for Norfolk Bay, to do firing and run torpedos. We were there until the 6<sup>th</sup>, no shore leave was given, there was no where to go even if leave had been given. Early in the afternoon of the 6<sup>th</sup>, we were back in Hobart, time went on and several of the ships came in, and on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> the Hobart Regatta was held. The ships of the fleet always took part, with boat races and sailing races.

On the second day of the Regatta, we had a make and mend, and our Fok'sl was packed with men watching a service boat race (cutters) dozens of men were standing on

the lower ridge rope to get a better view. I was one of the crowd leaning on the ridge rope with dozens standing above me, suddenly I felt that the ridge rope was going to break, that feeling was strong within me. I left the rope telling the others that the rope was going to break, no sooner had I said this, than the rope broke, and dozens of men went overboard into the harbour, then more dived overboard to help those in the water, there was no panic because most men in the service can swim, but one that fell overboard, a stoker named Richards, couldn't swim.

Most swam to the boats tied up at the boom, lines were thrown to others, all got back on board except Richards, who sank before he could be saved. One chap had hold of him three times by the hair and had to let him go, there was too many in the water at the time. When the man was lost a signal was made and all the races called off. The affair caused a gloom all over the ship, he was married with a small family, some days later his body was washed ashore at Sandy Bay, on the other side of the harbour. Not long after this sad affair, I heard that we were going to Melbourne and that bit of news cheered me up, I was longing to get home and see them all.

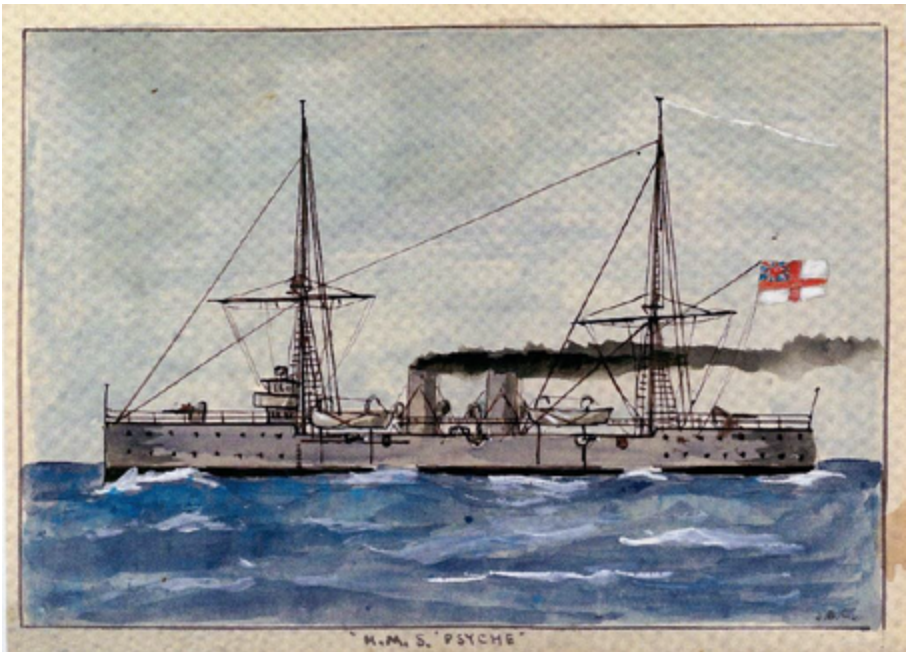
On the 18<sup>th</sup> at 4<sup>pm</sup> we left for Melbourne, we had good weather all the way across. It was a good trip, we arrived at 6<sup>pm</sup> on the 20<sup>th</sup>. The next day I went ashore and home, what a welcome I got. It seemed to me I had been a long time away, and I guess the wife and kiddies thought the same. It was grand to be home having a good meal at my own table. The youngsters were up later that night because of my being home. I went back on board at 7 next morning, I went home again on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. I told them we were taking the big target down for battle practice and I didn't expect to get home again

until all that was finished. Next day we took the target in tow and went down the bay, to where the practice would take place, we moored the target and anchored close by.

Next day the fleet came in and we were steaming about, marking for the other ships. No time was lost, and after the others had finished firing, it was our turn to do ours. It was not until April 2<sup>nd</sup>, that all the battle practice was finished, then we towed the target back to the dockyard, and went over to Port Melbourne. I got a weekend leave, so I had dinner home on Sunday at last. When I got back to the ship on the Monday morning, I found I was on draft to the *Psyche*. The Bosun told me I need not go if I didn't want to, he would sooner I stayed on the *Challenger*, but I found that the *Psyche* would be staying in Melbourne for a few weeks and that decided me. I would get home more often and not going on a long cruise like I would be in the *Challenger*, so on April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1908 at 12.30 I changed over to H.M.S. *Psyche*. Twenty other ratings went to her as well, after we had stowed our hammocks and were told off our part of the ship, the *Psyche* went alongside the Town pier. I went home that evening and told them the news, I was on the *Psyche* and would be home more often, they were very pleased to hear that.

The *Psyche* was one of the P class light cruises, all ships of her class had names that started with the letter P. She was 305 feet in length, 36 and a half feet beam, 2135 tons, 7000 horse power and a speed of 20 knots. Her crew was 235, she was armed with 8 inch guns and had two torpedo tubes, she was completed for sea in 1899. The day after I went to the *Psyche*, the *Challenger* went to sea, so I saw my old ship go. I had been happy enough on her and in a way was sorry to leave her, but home and the wife and kiddies called first. Later that evening

I thought of my old ship and if I had still been on board her, I would have been miles away at sea instead of being home, so I shed no tears. The *Psyche* was small and not so comfortable as the *Challenger*, but I could put up with that, as long as I could get home more often. I had now only a little over 12 months to serve then I could take my discharge and remain home for good, the time would soon pass.



We still remained at the pier and I went home as often as I could. I would soon be going on long leave again and I was well satisfied with my new ship. I would know when we got to sea what she was like in rough weather. We had no band of course and didn't have the space that the *Challenger* had, but I soon settled down and was o.k. Then May 28<sup>th</sup> came along and I went home for 14 days leave, so I was home again, and could do what I liked, could sleep in as long as I liked, and come home when I liked, there was nothing to worry me at



all for 14 whole days. The youngsters were growing bigger and we had great times together during my leave at home.

On June 11<sup>th</sup> I went back to the ship, my leave was over and the next few days I had plenty to do one way and another. I went home a few times before the 16<sup>th</sup>, then we went down to Geelong, arriving there at 3<sup>pm</sup> that day. We were at Geelong for 10 days, and during that time I was often ashore and visited several friends I knew there. I managed to get one week end home while we were there, so I didn't do too bad. Since I joined the *Psyche* I was put in charge of the after flats, another square job. I had a good easy time of it all I had to do was to see that all was kept o.k.

The *Psyche* was built like the *Katoomba* class, a long Fok'sl and poop, the mess deck was in the Fok'sl, same as in the *Katoomba*, with another mess deck below that. The usual upper deck routine didn't worry me. I was on my own mostly so had no worries. Our visit to Geelong came to an end on the 26<sup>th</sup> when we went back to Port Melbourne and next day we coaled ship. Although coaling on the *Psyche* was nothing to what it was on the big ship I had left. Still it was bad enough, a job everyone hated. After coaling I had a lot of work cleaning up the flats, which was my job, while the rest of the ship was being cleaned as usual. Next day I went home and told the news that we were going to sea in two days time bound for Adelaide and I didn't expect to get home again before we left. So I said good bye to all, in case I didn't get ashore again, but I did manage to get home the night before we left, I was lucky, so again I said good bye.

At 9.15<sup>am</sup> on the 29<sup>th</sup> we sailed for Adelaide, we got through the heads at 12 o'clock and out to sea. A heavy sea was

running, I found that the *Psyche* behaved very well in a sea way, very little water coming on board, so she wasn't what sailors call, a wet ship.

At 4<sup>pm</sup> we passed Cape Otway, and next morning we passed Cape Nelson at 10 o'clock. Although the sea was still very heavy we were making good progress, and arrived at Port Adelaide at 2.15<sup>pm</sup> on the 31<sup>st</sup>. I was satisfied the *Psyche* wasn't a bad ship at sea. We made fast at the usual place for warships up the river. As it was a Sunday, we had plenty of visitors on board, as it was my watch on board I had the job of showing them over the ship.

Next day we had a Naval Funeral, and took a field gun ashore for that purpose. He was a young chap named Sims who had fallen from aloft on the *Challenger* last time we were in Adelaide. He had been in hospital ever since, and died the day we arrived in port. We buried him in the Terrace Cemetery, we had no band so marched without one.

I went ashore often, at that time naval men went free in trains so it cost me nothing to go up to the city from the port. Maybe that's why I went so often as a rule sailors didn't have too much cash to spend on travelling about, pay day was only once a month.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> June we went down to Largs Bay. We had the Governor of South Australia on board. He wanted to see some torpedo running, so we were going to run some in Largs Bay, but when we got there bad weather came up so we gave the torpedo running a miss and went alongside at Outer Harbour. Next day as the weather was better we got underway and carried out the torpedo running. The Governor was very interested with it and all went well. The

torpedos did what was wanted of them, none failed to come up, so we had no worry hunting for lost ones. We did some evolutions also which was for the Governor's benefit, we did man and arm ship, out collision mat, and fire stations. I hope the Governor was satisfied, I know we were, evolutions must be carried out but they are not loved by the hands. Then we went back to Port Adelaide and landed the Governor, we remained up the river until the 15<sup>th</sup>, when again we went down to Largs Bay with the Governor on board, carried out some 3<sup>rd</sup> gun firing and returned up the river in the afternoon. We were left in peace and quietness until the 29<sup>th</sup> when we went to Largs Bay again.

The Governor came on board down there and we did some torpedo running. After that was over we returned to Largs Bay and anchored for the night, no leave was given. Next morning we got underway and did some 1 inch aiming. We went up the river at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, I went ashore that evening and went up to Adelaide. Next day we left for Port Lincoln at 2.30<sup>pm</sup>, we didn't hurry just steamed about doing evolutions, so didn't get to Port Lincoln until 5<sup>pm</sup>, when we anchored off Wedge Island for the night. We were hanging around Port Lincoln until the 13<sup>th</sup>, then we went down the Gulf to do some target practice, then came back to Port Lincoln on the 15<sup>th</sup>. I had a few runs ashore. Its only a small place and not very busy. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> at 9.30<sup>am</sup> we left for Adelaide, but at 1<sup>pm</sup> we anchored off Wedge Island again, why we did that none of us knew. We remained there until 8.30 that evening when we got underway again, there were many small places along the Gulf at which we called and sometimes I had a run ashore, they were just small townships in farming districts, there wasn't much to see, only the usual

general store, blacksmiths shop and a pub.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> we went back to Port Adelaide, I was glad to be back and able to see a bit of city life again. After we had been back about a week, I was ashore and in the city. I was standing in King William Street, waiting for a mate, I noticed an old couple standing near having an eyeful of me, at last the old chap came over to me and said, excuse me, my old girl and me have had an argument about that name on your cap. How do you pronounce it? I told him Si,Ke, *Psyche*, blowed if we aren't both wrong, he said, we thought it was anything but that, well we live and learn, he wasn't the first one puzzled by that name.

Time passed and on August 6<sup>th</sup> we left for Wallaroo, the Governor went with us, he seemed to like our ship. He came on board pretty often and when we were under way, he would take a trick at the wheel, he could steer alright too. So whoever happened to be at the wheel didn't mind at all if the Governor wanted to steer for awhile, he just stood by to see that the Governor didn't go wrong, but he never made any mistakes, I suppose he had been a yachtsman before. It would have been alright if the seaman whose trick it was, could have gone away for a smoke while the Governor steered, but that couldn't be done.

It was 3.30 when we left Port Adelaide and we had to go down the Gulf and around into the other Gulf. The sea was like a sheet of glass so we went along like a yacht on a pleasure trip, we arrived at Wallaroo at 2.30 the next afternoon, that was August 7<sup>th</sup>. The little town of Wallaroo is nearly a mile from the jetty where we landed, it consists of one street of shops, and all the shops are on one side of the street, the

opposite side is just vacant land. The Shire Hall stood by itself, along another road, no other building being near it, nearly 1/2 mile from the shops and business centre, that's what it was like in 1908, it may be different now, in 1948. It's a wheat growing district, a large amount of wheat is shipped from there, we were there five days.

The first time we went ashore, about ten of us went into one of the few pubs there. The bar was empty except for the Landlady, who sat behind the counter knitting, she said she was glad to see us sailors, and we could make ourselves welcome. She told us to help ourselves to what drinks we wanted, so a Bos'uns mate hopped over the counter and pulled the beer for us, we were very much surprised to get the freedom of the house thrust upon us like that, we had travelled about quite a lot, but never before had we been treated like that at any pub anywhere.

She was a nice homely woman and kept talking to us about ourselves and if we were married what families we had etc. We went on having drinks and she wouldn't allow us to pay for them. She told us very little business was done during the day time but in the evening when the men knocked off work and came into the town it was pretty busy. We noticed that hardly anyone was about. She kept telling us to go ahead and help ourselves, she was glad to see us she said.

No doubt, she was a good sort, to give a free bar to sailors, so while we were having the drinks I was keeping tally of what we had. We didn't intend to impose on her good nature all the time. At last I told her what the tally was of how many drinks we had, she said she didn't want to know how many we had, they were free to us, we offered to pay for half of

them, but she wouldn't have that, she was only too glad to welcome us she said. We were there for some time, then thanking her for her kindness we went out. She asked us to come along anytime and see her again.

When we got outside we had a muster of funds, and decided we would buy her a present, as she wouldn't take any money for the drinks. So we went on a hunt along the shops to see what we could buy, some wanted one thing and some another. At last we got her a nice little tea set, or a breakfast set I think it was, anyway it was very nice.

So after a walk around we went along and gave her our present, she was delighted and thanked us very much, but she said she didn't expect any present, or wished us to give her anything. So again we had to have some more free drinks, we all thought the world of her. Its people like that old lady, that makes this old world a better place, sailors who travel around far from home, think a lot of a little bit of kindness. I'll never forget that grand old lady of Wallaroo.

Small as the town was we had a good time there, and I wished our stay was longer. Before the ship left they gave us a concert in the Shire Hall, which was very good and after the concert there was a dance until 1<sup>am</sup>. So we were treated very well at Wallaroo. Had we been there longer than five days we would have given them a concert by way of return, and maybe a dance as well.

We said good bye to the grand little town and sailed for Port Pirie at 6.45<sup>am</sup> on the 12<sup>th</sup>. We reached Port Pirie the same day at 12.30. I went ashore and posted a letter home. I had seen all over the smelting works some time before, when I visited the port in the *Katoomba*, so there wasn't much that

was new for me to see, so I put in the time having a walk about the town.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> we left for Port Augusta, which is at the top of the Gulf. We got there at dinner time that day and went alongside the jetty. That afternoon I was on the poop cleaning a gun, a shore boat passed close to our stern, a girl was steering it, as the boat passed, she looked up and smiled and waved to me, I of course waved back, went on with my work and thought no more about the boat or the girl.

The next afternoon I went ashore and after a walk around, went into the Victoria Hotel, which was the leading one there and of course the most important one in the town, where the tourists stayed, but a common sailor was as welcome as anyone else. When I went inside, I was surprised to see the same girl, that had waved to me in the boat the day before, she was standing at a door in the passage. She gave me another smile, so I went over and spoke to her, and found that she worked there, not in the bar. She wanted picture post cards. At that time everybody collected such cards, she would like me to send her a card from ports I called at. I told her that would be easy enough, I had a few on the ship I would also let her have.

During our talk she told me she only did house work there and never served in the bar. She was off duty, so we had quite a talk just as if I had known her for some time. She told me she came from Adelaide a few weeks before, she had never been away from home before and was really a bit home sick. She had a few words with her mother she said and left home, saw the ad about the job in Port Augusta and took it, now she was sorry, but wouldn't tell her mother so and would not go

home.

Somehow I believed the girl was sincere and had told me just the truth, I talked to her like a sea Dad, told her just what she should do, that her people would be very much worried not knowing where she was. I got her to promise she would give up the job at the pub and return home, and all would be well. She said she would take my advice and go home the following week. I made her feel more home sick, I think, and had her weeping. She was a nice girl and I could tell she had never roughed it, she had not written home since she had left.

I told her that the hotel was no fit place for her, so she told me she would go home and I didn't doubt her word at all. I had travelled far enough to be able to tell a good girl from a bad one. I saw her again later on and she had given notice and was going back home sure enough.

We only stayed in Port Augusta for a few days, before we left, I said good bye to the girl, she gave me a photo of herself which I still have, I wished her the best of luck and a happy return home. She went back home as she promised me she would, because later on I received a letter from her people thanking me for what I had done, all were happy again. I answered that letter and told them I was very glad she had gone home, and glad too that I had been able to persuade her to return home.

Later on again, I received an invitation to her younger sisters 21<sup>st</sup> birthday party, but I could not accept it as the ship was under sailing orders, and I would be well at sea when the party took place, we were back in Adelaide when I received that invitation. It was much to my regret I couldn't go to that party and meet her people.



I destroyed those letters and so lost the address, which I could not remember again. I never saw that girl again, and I guess her people were very nice too, and maybe they wondered why I never wrote again to them, but I could never remember that address. I had the satisfaction of knowing I had done them all a good turn, by getting that girl to go back home, I had their word for that. Maybe she got married and had a grown up family years ago, many years have passed since those days at Port Augusta.

Now to get back to those days, we had a nice down the Gulf to Port Adelaide, we called at Port Lincoln on the way, we stopped there two days. On reaching Port Adelaide we went to our usual place up the river. I sat down and wrote a long letter home and told the youngsters about the camel teams I had seen arriving at Port Augusta with their huge loads from the far north. I guessed they would be thrilled to bits about it. We seemed to be always on the move. We stayed in Port Adelaide only four days. I went ashore a few times and it was just before we left there, that I received the letter about the girl I mentioned before.

So on August 25<sup>th</sup>, we sailed for Melbourne, and I was very pleased we were homeward bound again, at sea the weather was pretty good, just an even sea running, we passed Cape Nelson at 4<sup>pm</sup> the next day. The weather kept good and we made very good headway, and reached Port Melbourne at 12.30 on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

My luck was in, as it was my watch ashore, so I landed and was home again that evening, all were well, so I sat down to tea with a nice clean cloth on the table and felt happy and comfortable after roughing it on board ship. We were to

remain in Port Melbourne until September 5<sup>th</sup>, so I was told, so I would have plenty of home leave if that was so. As we were going to Sydney next trip, I went home every chance I could get. I wasn't sure what our programme would be after we got to Sydney, that news would come later but I hoped we would be going west again. The time soon went past, and the 5<sup>th</sup> came along. I was home the evening before and said good bye to all, we went to sea at 11.15<sup>am</sup> and I didn't know just how long it would be before I was home again.

Our luck was still good we had good weather at sea, so we steamed along making good headway, with an even sea all the way, and at 3<sup>pm</sup> on the 7<sup>th</sup> we entered Sydney Harbour and made fast in Farm Cove. Next day we coaled ship and got that bad job over, then the usual job of cleaning ship, we were to paint ship the next day. I went ashore that night for a run. After breakfast next day we were busy painting ship and drawing stores from Garden Island, we were kept pretty busy one way and another. I went ashore pretty often, glad to get away from the ship for awhile, I visited many friends I knew in turn, and had some very good evenings. We had a good spell in Sydney that time.

I heard that we would be going back to Melbourne when we left Sydney, but I wasn't sure about that, so far it wasn't official. Just the same when I wrote home, I told that news for what it was worth, and said it might be true and I might soon be home again, a little later I heard for certain we would be going to Melbourne next trip. But time passed and we were still in the harbour, carrying out the usual routine, for 54 days we were there, the longest stay in Sydney Harbour I ever had. It couldn't have been my luck to have a long stay like that in Melbourne.

The end of October came and at 8.45 in the evening we went to sea. Not a nice time to be going to sea, but we would get to Melbourne all the sooner, that was the best way to look at it. Again, when we got to sea, we struck good weather, what little wind and sea was with us, helping us along. We were a fair weather ship sure enough, getting good weather every time we went to sea, good weather seemed to follow us about. And so we came in sight of the Heads. As I looked at the shore, I thought if I had a quid for every time I have passed through there, I would have a very good pay day. It was the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November, my eldest son's birthday, so I was getting home at a good time, that was if we got leave, but it would be late when we got up to Port Melbourne. We arrived at 6.30<sup>pm</sup> so no leave was given that evening, I didn't expect there would, so I wasn't disappointed at all.

In my letter from Sydney, I told them I wouldn't be home if we got in late so I knew they wouldn't expect me until they saw me. Next evening I was ready for shore at four o'clock, but didn't land until 5<sup>pm</sup> and it didn't take me long to get home. The boys birthday was kept up that evening, as I wasn't home the one before, we all had a good time, nothing flash, but a good party just the same, with a homemade cake, which was all the better for that, so we had a real good evening.

Next morning at 7 o'clock I was back on board, we remained at Port Melbourne for two weeks and during that time I went home as often as I could get leave. Our next move was to Geelong to pick up some reserve men so they could do their drill, etc. I was now side party again so had plenty to do over the ships side keeping it clean and in order. When I was on the *Challenger*, I had written a skit about side parties, something like a one bell yarn.

Here it is –

*“Facts about the Side Party”*

*If there is any part of a ship's company that has my sympathy more than any other, it is the side party. They are the outsiders, the do anything in all weathers gang. They get the abuse of everybody and its only because of the very hard life they live, and the bad weather to which they are exposed to, that makes them so hardy, and at the same time, quite indifferent to the slurs that are, from time to time, cast upon them. Just fancy, hanging on to the paint on a ships side like flies on a wall, in order to wash off the stains of cocoa-de-wash, which some spiteful matlow<sup>35</sup> had dumped out of a port hole, maybe thinking the said port hole was the shoot. Yet you never hear any of the side party moan (not half) as some spiteful matlow's say they do, but that statement is as false and as unreliable as a George Street Camel, and if you know that animal, you know just what I mean. No! they never moan about it, they only explain things, and that takes up quite a lot of their spare time.*

*In order that those who may not be, in anyway connected to the Navy, may understand what a side party really is, I will endeavour to explain. First it must be understood that the outside of a man-of-war, is the best side, therefore it stands to reason, that being so great pains are taken to keep the outside of a ship in first class order and as clean as a new pin. As the outside of a ship is the part that the General Public see the most of. That is why so much care is taken to keep the outside clean and this duty falls to the side party so to do. The work is hard and very trying (so the*

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<sup>35</sup> Slang word for a sailor.

side party says).

The men told off for this important work, are usually picked men (proper birds), men who can hang on to the water line and not get wet, or who can do 10<sup>A</sup> for birding (sleeping). They have to turn out very early indeed, and after having their issue of cocoa-de-wash they are ready for any weather that comes along, and as soon as it is light enough for them to see their hard work, they make a start. If the officer of the watch happens to be looking that way, should it be blowing very hard, and also very cold and wet, two nervelettes<sup>36</sup> are served out to each man, in order to keep their strength up. These nervelettes are always kept in the side pantry locker which is a very mysterious kind of glory box kept up on the flying deck, or such like out of the way place, near the booms. It contains many wonderful and strange things. Its really wonderful what curious things find a resting place in the side pantry locker, which fact, no one has yet been able to satisfactorily explain, and which is also the cause of the terrible fear that is always with the side party.

The terrible fear that someday in the future years, when the Captain goes the rounds, he may not want to look inside the locker. Should that awful thing ever happen, then each, and every one of the side party would die fatally dead, with the shock. As for the Captain, well words fail me.

The Nervelettes, before referred to, steady the nerves and save that tired feeling which one often has, don't one? So its quite unnecessary to put on a green coat and button it up to keep warm. They are perhaps the best thing which the

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<sup>36</sup> Colonial biscuits.

*Lords of the Admiralty have issued to long suffering matlows (excepting your blank of course). I remember a man whose duty it was, to do 10<sup>A</sup> every evening on the quarter deck, from 8 to 10, was unable to do it on account of being so tired, he took from the side pantry locker, two nervelettes, and was able to do 10<sup>A</sup> for 14 more days. This will show you how powerful they are, which is the secret why the party are so hardy in spite of the exposed position of their work.*

*The side party's worse enemy is the Captain of the Heads, who sits in his den like a spider, always on the lookout, for the copper punt, which is the Flagship of the side party. They use this vessel when going around the ship to touch up the water line, and if the Captain of the Head gets notice from one of his spies, that the copper punt is passing, he at once pulls a lever which fires a salute, then the side party cheer ship with a flow of language never beaten on the lower deck, and the Captain of the Head would look out of a port and say how sorry he was, his offsider had fired at the wrong time, which don't console the side party very much, truly they have a lot to contend with. They have my sympathy always, because I've been one of them and should know what they have to put up with.*

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*I'm afraid it would be only those who have served in the Navy that would understand the full gist of the above.*

We left for Geelong on November 14<sup>th</sup> just after 9<sup>am</sup> and reached there at 2.30<sup>pm</sup>. I went ashore that evening to visit some friends at North Geelong, I had a very good evening, I was back on board about 11 o'clock. Four days after our

arrival at Geelong we went back to Port Melbourne for the Governor who came on board the next morning. I got home again that evening when we arrived. In the morning the 19<sup>th</sup>, with the Governor on board we got under way again for Geelong. Got back there at noon, and did some torpedo running during the day. On the 21<sup>st</sup>, I left for home on seven days leave, they knew I was coming home on leave on the 21<sup>st</sup>. I caught the steamer to Melbourne and arrived home before tea time. So I had seven days home and had a good time, so did the youngsters, but seven days soon passes and my leave was over, so back to Geelong I went to join the ship.

While I was home on leave some firing had been carried out while the Governor was on board, so I missed that! The Governor had gone back to Melbourne long before I got back. It was the 28<sup>th</sup> when I got back and found we were going up to Melbourne to coal ship, so we went up and got that job over. After we had cleaned the ship, I got leave again and went home. I guessed when we coaled ship we would soon be going to sea, coaling was always a good sign we would soon leave, and sure enough I found we were to leave for Devonport, Tasmania next day. I was lucky to get home that night to say good bye, I couldn't say when I would be back again. I was back on board at 7<sup>am</sup> next day, and not long after that we left for Tasmania. We did 1 inch aiming while going down the bay, and spent all the day doing that and some evolutions, just steaming about here and there, then we dropped anchor at Queenscliff. I expected we would remain there all night but we got up anchor at 11.30 and went to sea.

We had a nice trip across and arrived at Devonport at 12.30 next day and we stopped there for seven days. I had many

trips ashore and enjoyed the walks around, its a nice little place, so I had a good few rambles around. Its only a small township with houses scattered around, with orchards mostly, a very pretty little place. I was quite content because I had Xmas home before we left Melbourne, the first one home for years, so I was feeling quite happy. I had Xmas home with the wife and youngsters so was satisfied. On January 7<sup>th</sup> we left Devonport and anchored at the entrance, until next morning, while we were anchored we did some fishing over the ships side, and caught a nice lot of red cod, so we had a good feed of fish for our breakfast, which was something new. It was seldom we were allowed to fish over the side.

After nine o'clock next morning we left for Launceston which wasn't very far away, and got there at 1.30 that day. The Tamar is a very fine river and I always liked going up it to Launceston, and I liked the city too, far better than Hobart. It was now early in January and I had a very good time while we were there. The weather was very nice all the time, we didn't leave until the 19<sup>th</sup> when we left for Hobart. We had a good trip down the coast and reached Hobart at 2 pm next day, we anchored in the Derwent opposite the Domain, our usual place, although I thought Hobart was a very quiet city. The streets were always busy and full of people, I always had a very good time there, and this time of our visit the weather was beautiful with plenty of sunshine, not like I've seen it in the winter when the ground was white with frost.

At that time there was one hotel in Hobart famous for the free fights that took place there. It was a sister ship to another hotel in Ratcliff Highway in London, both were low class, and had a dance room attached. I've known the hotel in Hobart



to be closed by the police once or twice a week when the fleet was in and fights common. It wouldn't take much to start a row and soon all hands would be in it, ship against ship. 2<sup>d</sup> a pound girls would be there after the sailors, and it was over them mostly that fights started. Sailors would use their knife lanyards, with the jack knife attached, as a sling shot, while marines used their heavy belts. At last sailors were not allowed to take knives ashore, or marines take their belts. The dance room was filled with the worse type of girls and that mixed with beer soon caused fights. It was the worse hotel I had ever seen, I had seen the other one in London, but I reckon it wasn't a patch to this one in Hobart for fights etc.

That Hobart pub has long ceased to exist and Hobart is all the better for it, so are the men of the fleet. I often wondered why this place was not put out of bounds by the Navy, but as far as I know it never was. It was the most infamous pub in Australia, which says a lot, there were many pretty bad pubs about in most cities, one could always dodge them if one wanted to do so, which I did and kept clear of riots etc.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> the *Challenger* came in and anchored near to where we were, so I expected to meet some of my former shipmates ashore, and the next few days I met many of them and we had a good time together swapping news. On the 28<sup>th</sup> we left for Norfolk Bay to do some firing, and we remained away until 4<sup>th</sup> of February, and were glad to get back to Hobart, because while we were away firing there was no leave given and sailors don't like that. Anyway at Norfolk Bay there was no worthwhile place to go if leave had been given, so we were all very glad to get back again.

That evening quite a lot went ashore, all wanted the chance

of getting a good feed. Our cutter's crew had challenged the boat crew of the *Challenger*. It would take place in a few days after we had coaled ship, our boats crew were taking something on as the *Challenger's* cutter had never been beaten. While we were hard at it coaling ship, we were thinking of nothing much but the coming boat race, and wondering how much cash we could get together to back our cutter. A naval cutter race is a big affair with the Fleet. The backing is always even money, no odds are allowed in the service. When I was in the *Challenger*, we generally raised £500 to back our boat and the amount always came back double. The *Challenger's* cutter crew had never been beaten, whatever cash a ship put up to back their boat the other ship had to cover, everyman giving what he could afford.

On the *Psyche* we had several ratings who had pulled in the *Challenger's* boat when they were on board that ship, but still we were taking on a big thing when we challenged the *Challenger's* boat. As we were a small ship, we didn't expect to be able to put up as much cash as the *Challenger*, she had four times as many men as we had for a crew, but whatever it was we put up, they would have to cover. Our wager would have to go on board the *Challenger* and if they beat our boat, the cash would stop there, it would be our loss, and that was that! Of course, there were many side wagers as well, which was not supposed to happen, but such things was very hard to prevent, so it was just winked at. It would be like trying to stop the tide, to try and prevent side wagers taking place.

Each day our cutter crew and also the *Challenger's* crew, were out in the cutters pulling about the harbour, every day there was a practice pull, our best hope was that the *Challenger* didn't have the same picked crew they had before. This was

quite possible as many of her men had been sent on draft to other ships from time to time, but at the same time we knew that a ship would try and keep a good cutter crew together if possible. New ratings were always coming and going, so we just hoped for the best and backed our boat.

After we had coaled and then cleaned the ship we were busy putting up all the cash we could get together, every officer and man put up what he could. We were a small ship yet we put up £200 which was taken to the *Challenger* and covered by them, we had done pretty well for a small ship. It had not yet been decided what day the race would take place, and on the 18<sup>th</sup> we left again for Norfolk Bay, to do more firing, so the race could not take place until we got back, that didn't worry us, as it would give our crew more time for practice, so while we were away at the Bay our cutter was out pulling every evening after quarters.

Before a cutter race, the boat is cleaned and scaped and made as light as possible, sometimes the bottom is black leaded to make it faster in the water, all this is allowed, as a cutter race is not on service conditions, that is with all the boats, gear, masts sails etc. on board. All gear is taken out for racing, even bottom boards are removed, only the stretchers being left in, so our boat went out for a practice every day. It would be something to talk about if we beat the big ship, and we had plenty on board that were cock sure our boat would win, I was hoping they were right.

At 6<sup>pm</sup> on the 25<sup>th</sup> we returned to Hobart, and it was decided that the race would take place on the 27<sup>th</sup>, in two days time. So the talk on shore and on the ships was nothing but the coming boat race, each boats crew felt sure of winning,

and each crew looked perfect. It was hard to pick between them. The great day arrived and the race was for 3 o'clock in the afternoon. The course was five miles and the finish would be a buoy between our ship and the *Challenger*.

After dinner we got a make and mend to watch the race, on the Domain there was a large crowd gathered long before the start of the race. There had been much talk about the race in Hobart so plenty of people came along to watch it take place, and I suppose there was some betting there too. I could guess how the money would be laid as they knew the crew of the *Challenger* had never been beaten.

As our boat crew pulled away from the ship, to go down to the starting place, they looked as good a boats crew one could wish to see. They wore only duck pants and flannels but when the race started off would come the flannels, they would pull in pants only. As they left the ship our Fok'sl was packed with men and the cutter got a great send off, every man jack of our side was on the Fok'sl to watch the race.

The starting place was too far away from us to see the boats start, they were just dots on the water. Bunting tossers<sup>37</sup> were up on the bridge with glasses, to tell us when the race was on. Then they were off, the race had started, so those watching it with glasses could tell us which boat was leading etc. As the boats got nearer there was a roar from both ships, urging their own boat on, as the boats came nearer and nearer, the cheering and yelling got louder. It was pretty to watch, as the cutters came on, each boat pulling twelve oars, the crews bending their naked backs, and sending the boats through the

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<sup>37</sup> Bunting tosser or 'Bunts' is an informal term used in the Royal Navy to describe the sailors who hoist signal flags.

water like things of life. The Derwent was like a sheet of glass, it was a perfect day for a cutter race. When they were about a mile away we could see that our cutter was slightly ahead and were those men pulling, we were dancing up and down on the deck yelling like madmen. Come on you beauties! The men on the *Challenger* were making more noise than we were, they had more men, the roar was pretty good believe me. Nearer the boats came and our boat was still leading and increased the lead as they came near to the finish, talk about cheering from our ship, and from the Domain as well, it must have been heard all over Hobart. On they came with our boat still leading and dashed past the mark buoy and beat the other boat by 17 strokes, what a race, and what a win.

It was a big surprise for the *Challenger*, the first time they had ever been beaten. It was also a surprise for us, although we knew we had a good cutter crew, and to beat them by 17 strokes was a wonderful thing.

So our money came back double, quid for quid, that night ashore there was some celebrating, and did the *Psyche* men swank. They had something to swank about, to beat the *Challenger's* cutter was a great thing. Many other ships had tried and failed, no wonder we were proud about the win. Next day we got another make and mend in honour of our cutter crew. Now that we had a good cutter's crew, it would make other ships of the fleet sit up and take notice, and no doubt it wouldn't be long before we would get challenged by other ships who would want to take it out of us, we would be very willing to oblige them any old time.

To add to the excitement of our great win, I received news from home, that there was a new arrival, born on the 13<sup>th</sup>. It

was a girl and was to be named Alice, and all was well. That baby girl has grown up and has six sons of her own. Time marches on. It was her that started me writing these notes, so many years after her arrival in my home. At the time I received the news of her arrival I went ashore to celebrate the event. I had now a family of six, three boys and three girls. I would soon have a cutters crew if I went along like that, it was even running anyway, another son and daughter arrived later on after I had left the service, and that made an even eight, a nice little family. And so I had a good time in Hobart my shipmates didn't let me forget the fact that I was another dad. I was very proud and very happy because I knew everything was right and all was well.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of March the weather wasn't so good. It was a wet day, and cold too, snow was thick on Mt. Wellington, a stiff breeze was blowing and we were going to sea. Just after 7<sup>am</sup> we got up anchor and left for George Town on the Tamar, the river leading to Launceston. It was just my bad luck to have a trick in the chains, going out of harbour, heaving the lead, it was a cold miserable job standing there in the wind and rain taking soundings, as we went out to sea, but it wasn't the first time I had that job on a bad day. When we got out of the harbour, the order came, that will do the chains, and I was mighty glad to get inboard out of the cold, wind and rain. I expected a rough trip up the coast but it wasn't bad at all, right up to George Town. We arrived there on the 11<sup>th</sup> just before dinner, we only stopped until 4<sup>pm</sup> then went back down the river and anchored at the entrance, it was then after five o'clock. I expected we would be there all night, but no! we got up anchor at 1.30 in the morning and got under way and went to Barren Island, we arrived there at 8.30 the same morning

and dropped anchor again. Just after midnight it was up anchor again and we went back to George Town. We were getting fed up getting up anchor early morning or just after midnight, going here and there and none of us knew why. No sooner was the hook down, then we had to get it up again, not staying long at any place, I suppose there was some reason for it all.

At 7.45<sup>am</sup> we were back at George Town, then at eleven o'clock we got up anchor again, and left for Melbourne, which was a bit better from my point of view. It was much better than just going here and there and dropping anchor, wearing the cable out. We knew where we were going now and more content, at least I was anyway. The chances was we would be in Melbourne for awhile and I would get home often, I was longing to see my new daughter. At 9.15<sup>am</sup> on the 14<sup>th</sup> we arrived in Melbourne, we had a very good trip over from Tassy, but we found the Flagship and *Encounter* and *Promeatheus* in harbour, and I guessed they were there for battle practice, so getting home often looked pretty blue. The day we arrived was a Sunday, leave was given after dinner until 7<sup>am</sup> next morning, so I soon got ready and went ashore. I wasn't expected, as they didn't know the *Psyche* was in port, so they got a surprise and were delighted, so was I, to see my new daughter for the first time. I don't really know who made the biggest fuss of that baby, the other youngsters or myself.

That was a very long while ago, but its nice to look back to it. Every time I came home the youngsters wanted to know, was I going to stay home for good, and not going back to sea, and of course this time the same old question came up. I suppose they missed me just as much as I missed them and this time I was able to tell them that it wouldn't be very long

before I was really home for good and wouldn't be going to sea anymore, and they were satisfied. I couldn't tell them when I would be ashore again as the fleet was going to do battle practice. I didn't know just when that would take place, but it wouldn't be long and they were to expect me when they saw me, as we would be with other ships most of the time at target practice and battle practice. In any case I didn't expect to get home much if the battle firing was on, and there was also the chance that as soon as the firing was over, we might go straight to sea, that was quite on the cards. They knew I would be home as soon as I could and had to be content with that.

The morning I returned to the ship, we got under way and went down the bay to do firing, we were at target practice most of the day. That evening we went back to Port Melbourne but there was no leave for me. I knew they wouldn't expect me home, so I didn't worry, all next day we remained at Port Melbourne until 4<sup>pm</sup> then we left. It was a rotten time to leave, as for me it spoilt all chances of getting home, as I had hoped I would, had we stayed there that night.

Away we went to mind the target which was anchored miles away down the bay. Two of the ships were anchored there too. The Flagship was still up off Williamstown, coaling ship and almost finished when we left. They were lucky as they would get leave that evening. We hadn't been long down there when the *Challenger* came in and anchored near us. That night we had evolutions, man and arm ship etc. Early next morning the *Challenger* went up to coal ship. The day passed with us still anchored near the target, carrying out the usual ships routine. That night the *Encounter* did some night firing, which made it a bit lively down there. We could watch



the target getting more or less knocked about, it would be a job for our chippy chaps<sup>38</sup> to repair the target in the morning. During the night we lay quietly at anchor, nothing happened to disturb us.

In the morning our carpenters repaired the target, then we got underway and went up to Port Melbourne much to my surprise, I didn't expect we would be going back so soon, that was the 18<sup>th</sup> and we were at Port Melbourne before dinner. A make and mend was piped which suited me, as it was watch ashore, so as soon as I had dinner I cleaned for shore, leave was from 1<sup>pm</sup> until 7 o'clock next morning, and it wasn't long before I was home again. The eldest youngsters were still at school when I got home, so they would get a big surprise when they came home and found me there. We had a good evening together and I went aboard at the usual time next morning. Then I found that the watch on board had got everything ready for coaling and that was why we had come back to Port Melbourne. I had not thought about coaling ship, I was glad because it gave me another night home, coaling was a job that had to be done, and the sooner it was done, the better for everyone on board. So we coaled ship, it was a Friday and as soon as we had all the coal on board and the ship washed down, and ourselves cleaned as well, I somehow didn't feel sorry it was my watch on board, I wouldn't be going ashore and I felt pretty tired, I turned in early. I had been home the evening before so I couldn't growl.

Next morning, Saturday, back we went to the target, we were also taking provisions down for the other ships. At noon we came back to Williamstown with the mails which we left

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<sup>38</sup> Navy slang for carpenters.

at the dockyard, we remained there until 5 o'clock then went back to the target, and anchored so it was good bye to any chance of getting the week end home, or even the Sunday afternoon. As soon as we arrived at the target the *Powerful* and *Challenger* went up to Williamstown where they remained until Monday morning, so their men had leave while we were anchored miles down the bay. Later on before midnight, the *Encounter* also went up to Williamstown and we were left on our own. It was our unlucky day sure enough, we spent Sunday in the usual way.

Early on Monday morning the other ships came down to do battle practice, the *Challenger* got ready to start first, but for some reason didn't start until well after dinner time. When she made a start, steaming at full speed she came along, then there was a burst of flame as her port battery opened fire. The roar of her 6 inch guns coming down to us, anchored near the target, like claps of thunder each gun firing as many rounds as possible in the time, as a rule 10 rounds was fired from each gun before the cease fire buoy was reached. Then back she came firing the starboard battery, then she was finished and the gun crews would get busy washing out and cleaning the guns, glad it was all over. Our job then as target ship, was to remove the canvas target from the frame work and replace it with a new one for the next ship to fire, and also repair any damage done to the woodwork of the target, so there was a bit of boating to do between the ship and the target.

No other ship fired that day and we were left in peace for the night, no night firing was done, it was a fine clear night and I didn't turn in until pipe down went at 10<sup>pm</sup>. Next day we were busy again, the *Encounter* was the first to do her battle

firing. She was a sister ship to the *Challenger* and of course armed the same, and again we had the roar of her guns in our ears. When she was finished it was our turn to fire, and see what we could do with our four inch guns. The *Prometheus* took our place at the target and away we steamed to make a start, we turned and at full speed we raced towards the first mark buoy, soon as we reached it, we would open fire, each gun manned and at the ready. We had to get as many rounds off as quickly as we could before the ship reached the other mark buoy, and with the ship going at full speed, that don't take long just a few seconds, not minutes. Our guns didnt make the roar that the bigger guns did, but they made a big noise just the same. Our firing was good, so we did not disgrace ourselves, we did very well, which pleased the Captain and everyone else, all were well pleased.

After we had done our firing, we went up to Port Melbourne and I got home that evening. They told me that the gun firing had rattled the crockery. I said that was nothing, what about ours on board, while your cups were rattling ours were jumping all over the place. I had another good evening home, I told them that was my last battle practice, there would be only a bit of night firing to do and that would soon be over.

Next day we went back to where the target was, and that night we did defence firing. Night firing is a very fine sight. The search light shows up the target, then you see the flash of the guns, then seconds after the flashes, you get the roar of the guns. Its a good show for the ship watching the target. Night firing was carried out the next night too, and next day we were relieved at the target and we went back to Port Melbourne, so I got home again that evening.

Next day the end of the month, we went alongside the Town Pier, a draft of ratings came on board from the *Challenger*. The battle practice was all finished, and our ship was like a new pin again.

It was the 1<sup>st</sup> of April, All Fools Day next day, but I received good news we were not going to sea as soon as I thought we were, and I was going ashore on 7 days leave, that was great news for me. Next day I went home and when I told them I was home for 7 days leave there was some cheering ship. I had a very happy time home, but as usual the 7 days leave seemed to go all too quickly, and I soon found it was time to go back on board. I said I might get home a few times again before we left but we might go to sea any day, and I might not get home, so I said good bye just in case. I only had about 8 weeks to serve.

It was the 9<sup>th</sup> when I returned to the ship, and my luck was in because on the 11<sup>th</sup> I went home again on three days Easter leave and that was something I didn't expect, and it would be my last leave home as we were going to sea. So once again I said good bye to all at home, the talk on board was that we were going to sea just after Easter. When I got back on board we got under way and did some more firing. I had thought we had finished for awhile but I was wrong, we carried on firing for two days then we went to sea bound for Sydney.

Outside the weather was good, with an even sea running, we passed Gabo Island at 1.30<sup>pm</sup> on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and Green Cape at 4<sup>pm</sup> the same day, so we were getting along pretty well. The good weather held all the way, and we got to Sydney at 2<sup>pm</sup> on the 24<sup>th</sup>, we anchored at Neutral Bay, instead of our usual place in Farm Cove. I went ashore that evening and visited

some friends and had a good evening, and stayed the night at Naval House, going on board at 7 o'clock next morning.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> we went alongside at Garden Island and that little trip was my last one in the *Psyche* or any other war ship. The ship was in dockyard hands to get refitted etc., so it would be some time before she went to sea again, but that didn't matter much to me, as I was soon to get my discharge, and when she went to sea it would be without me. I would be well at home with no more ship routine to bother me. Although we were in dockyard hands we still carried out most of the usual ship routine but there was not as much washing down or washing paint work done, as the saying in the Navy is, when in dockyard hands, we were happy and chatty.

I was asked to reengage as I would be finishing soon, but I said no! I was finished as far as sea going was concerned and that was final. It was up to me to go home and stay with my wife and family. I should be there to look after them, this knocking about all over the place wasn't fair to them. The wife had had her share of looking after the youngsters while I was away at sea, now it was up to me. I knew if I decided to soldier on, she would never complain to me about it, but she wouldn't like it just the same, so back home I would go and stay there.

I kept going ashore as often as I could visiting friends and having a final fly around about Sydney, because I guessed it would be some time, if ever, I was back in Sydney again. I spent a good deal of my shore leave at Chappie's place and often stopped there the night instead of going to the Naval House.

In the letters I got from home, they were very keen on my

coming home soon for good, so that made me still more anxious for the day to come when I would be starting my homeward journey.

One day I was sent for and had to go aft, again I was asked to take on again, they wanted me to go to England, to Whale Island and go through a Gunnery Course and come back a G.I. (Gunnery Instructor) but again I had to refuse. I wasn't going to disappoint those at home, I had been away from them too much as it was. So the Navy got my final answer and didn't bother me any more about rejoining. There was also jobs going (shore jobs) on Garden Island and I could have got into something there, but when I thought it out, that I would have to shift the wife and youngsters to Sydney I gave up the idea and thought no more about it.

When a man leaves the service for good, he as a rule gives most of his kit away to his mess mates, mess mates come before shipmates. I had a good kit and plenty were after what I was willing to give, so it wasn't long before most of my kit was promised to different mess mates, my best go ashore rig I kept to go home in, but a kit is just a kit, and if I had twice as much, I wouldn't have had enough to go around. My ditty box with all my little odds and ends I of course kept and still have it, my last link with the service.

At last the 1<sup>st</sup> of June arrived and I was finished. I was sailing for home that day, it was a Saturday, so I wrote home telling them when I was leaving, and I would arrive home on the Monday morning. The service had to send me back to my Home Port, but they wouldn't send me by train, it was quicker for me, but by boat it was cheaper for them. Just after dinner I said good bye to my mess mates and all my

shipmates that were about, and so I left the *Psyche*. They pulled me away in the cutter to the *Wodonga* which was to take me to Melbourne. A crusher<sup>39</sup> was sent with me to see me safe on board, then the service had no more responsibility, once on board I could do as I liked, sit down or just walk about, I was a free man and could do just what I liked. It was 4 o'clock that afternoon when we got under way and went out of harbour. As we passed Garden Island, I looked over to the dock yard and had my last look at the *Psyche* lying alongside, that was the last I ever saw of her.

Later on, she was sunk in the First World War 1914-1918. As we passed the island I was too far off to make out who was who of my former shipmates, but I waved a final farewell in case any of them could see me. They could have picked me out standing there in naval uniform anyway.

So I passed out to sea homeward bound at last, just a passenger on board ship. It was a novelty to me watching the crew going about their different jobs about the ship, while all I had to do was walk about the deck, or sit in a deck chair, smoke or maybe read, and if I felt like having a drink, there was a bar quite handy. So I had nothing to worry about, no trick at the wheel, no watch to keep, and best of all, I had all night in, that is I could turn in and stay there all night. No wonder that I felt like a fish out of water. It all was like a dream and didn't seem real at all. It was good weather and as we steamed along, every hour bringing me nearer home, I settled down and enjoyed myself long before we came in sight of Port Phillip Heads.

At last we entered the heads and steamed up the bay, that

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<sup>39</sup> The Regulating Petty Officer in charge of administration and discipline.

trip of 45 miles up to the wharf seemed to me a very long and slow trip. The nearer we seemed to get to the wharf, the slower the ship seemed to go. That was only my fancy of course, I was eager to get home. At last we were at the wharf and tied up, then it didn't take me long to go ashore. There was no one there to meet me, I didn't expect there would be. I saw no tram in the street that would take me to the station, so I didn't wait for one, I just walked along and was soon at the station and in the train, and I was happy as the train rattled along. Twenty minutes afterwards I was home and what a welcome I got, everyone was delighted I was home for good, no more going to sea, so all were happy.

I took on some jobs here and there, taking on whatever came in my way, until the Royal Australian Naval College started at North Geelong. I was offered the job of study corporal there. So once again fate, or whatever you care to call it, drifted me back to the Navy. Not to go to sea again, I was finished with all that, but in a shore job at the college, so I was appointed study corporal. The first one ever appointed to a Naval establishment in Australia.

I shifted my family down to North Geelong and thought I was set, but I didn't know then that the college was only temporary there, for they were building a college at Jervis Bay, N.S.W. and when it was finished all would be removed from North Geelong. I knew Jervis Bay and what an isolated place it was far away from the nearest town, and didn't feel too happy about shifting so far away to such a place, but they wanted me to go and did all they could to encourage me. They told me that a five roomed house was being built for me and after talking it over with my wife we decided to take it on, so that was that!



As time passed different officers who went over to N.S.W. to visit the new college, told me what a nice house I was getting etc. so I took it all for granted that we would be comfortable enough when we settled down in our new home. Then came the time when everything at the college had to be packed up ready for removal, so I was very busy packing all the study books and gear, as well as my own goods etc. I listed all the cases and contents, numbered them, and marked each case where it had to go etc. At last everything was packed and the removal started, that was in January 1915.

The great war had started the year before, and every man Jack<sup>40</sup> at the college wanted to go on active service, but we were informed that no man at the college would be allowed to go, so two of the ships company deserted and joined the Army. There was a Lieutenant Commander attached to the college. He was a fine officer, one day he came to me and told me that the Government was thinking about arming a fast turbine steamer with 4.7 guns, and he was going in command of the ship. As he knew that I had done good shooting with 4.7 guns he asked me if he got command would I be willing to go with him as one of the gun layers, I told him I would.

I never said a word about this idea to the wife, I just waited to see what would occur, then a little while afterwards he told me that this idea of arming the ship was a wash out, so that was the end of it.

In a little while he and a chief gunner was sent away with the troops that went to New Guinea to capture German New Guinea from the Germans. They were the only two that were allowed to go from the college. The Lieutenant Commander

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<sup>40</sup> Each and every person.

was shot as soon as they landed. He was the first naval officer killed in the first world war. He was a very fine man and I was very sorry to know of his loss.

A small steamer did the shifting of the college to Jervis Bay. She made three trips, she was so small it seemed almost impossible that all the goods that had to be removed would be taken by her with only three trips, but is wonderful what a lot of gear a small vessel can stow away. On her last trip all the ships company, their wives and families were taken on board, so the little ship was very crowded. As I watched it depart I was very glad that my wife and youngsters were not going with her, we were all going by train later on, for which I was very thankful. On the way to Jervis Bay they struck bad weather and twice had to shelter for a day or two. They were very glad when they reached the bay and could leave the ship, it was a very miserable trip for them all.

I was left at the college for two more weeks, why I was kept there, I couldn't guess. We were sleeping in the seamans quarters while we waited for orders.

At last, I received a wire from Jervis Bay, telling me to leave at once, so we left by train for Sydney that evening. We put up in Sydney the next night, and went on to Nowra the next morning. When we reached Nowra it was raining hard, had been raining off and on for a fortnight. We still had 25 miles to go before we would reach the college. It was nearly dark when we left Nowra, there was a small spider trap with some kind of wood, a very rickety affair and how fifteen men and women as well as children packed into that affair as well as luggage I can't understand even now. It would have been bad enough if myself, wife and youngsters were the only ones to

travel by this turn out to the college but there were others going to the college as well as I've already stated 15 grownups without the children.

It still kept on raining and we started, we had fifteen miles to go on one of the worse roads I ever saw, full of bogs, slush and water, so bad was it that the horses could only drag the trap along at a slow walking pace. At last after going the 15 miles of that bad road, we came to the new road leading to the college, it was 10 miles long and was a gravel road and being new was in good condition, so the horses went along at a trot. It had never stopped raining since we had left the town.

All that trip I sat jammed up at the back with my knees up to my chin and couldn't move one way or the other. After nearly four hours journey along that 25 miles we reached the college, then we didn't know where we had to go for the night, that is myself and family. After awhile we were told to go to one of the officers houses where two other families were living for the time being. Some beds had been set up for us and mighty glad we was to turn in. When we arrived at the college I was so cramped after the trip from Nowra that I couldn't walk for a few minutes, I'm not likely to ever forget that ride in the rain.

The Commander informed me on arrival that there was no house for me as the one built for me had been given over to one of the officers and I would have to live in a tent until other arrangements could be made. That bit of news didn't tend to cheer me up at all, so much for promises made, we live and we learn.

The rain still kept on, and day and night I was busy sorting

out gear. The index book I had sent over had been lost so no one knew where the gear had to go. Some I found at the hospital instead of the Captain's house, gear that belonged to the study block was in the cadet's quarters etc. There was no electric light then, so I was working late at night with a hurricane lamp sorting out gear, and it kept on raining all the while. We remained living in the officer's house for a few weeks until it was wanted for the officer, so we shifted into a canvas hut that had been one of the workers home when the college was being built. It had three small rooms, and we sat on our beds to eat our meals and the wife cooked in the same room while the chimney smoked most vile. As three rooms was not enough for us, we were given another little hut a few yards away so we had to make ourselves as comfortable as we could with that. That's what I had to put up with instead of the nice five roomed house that had been promised me, if I would only go to Jervis Bay.

When I remember it all and look back to that time, I think I made a very great mistake when I went to Jervis Bay. It was about 10 years before they built me a decent house to live in, until then, we still lived in slum huts. We had just got nicely settled in our house when it was decided to shift the college back again to Victoria, as it was too costly at Jervis Bay, that was in 1930.

So the college was shifted to Flinders Naval Depot, and later on a new college was built there which I think was the best lot of buildings the college ever had before, but the new college was not finished when the time came for me to retire. I left in 1937 after serving with the college for 24 years. I left without regret, glad to get away from it all, those 24 years had been quite enough.

Youngsters in their thirteen year came to the college as cadets and grew up to be high ranking officers after leaving the college as cadet midshipmen. Some are now Admirals, some Commodores, and some are Captains and Commanders. They were all boys when I was at the college, the first few years of their training. Some of those cadets I knew lost their lives during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War and a great many distinguished themselves during the war and won high rank.

The years have passed, many of them, but to me it only seems a dog watch or two since I was the study corporal at the college and those high ranking officers of today were small kids with the future before them and a rough road to travel. The college still goes on and new boys enter it every year who no doubt will in future years do the same as others have done and reach high rank. That's the hope of every cadet that enters the Navy. Some will succeed and some will fail, and those who succeed will know what a hard and difficult road they had to travel before they reached the top of the ladder of success.

*A Maritime Life – James Conder’s Story  
1872-1954*

**Robert Murphy**

*This booklet is dedicated to Alice (Conder) Murphy,  
an inspiring and caring person.*

*This genealogical booklet has been developed by  
Robert Murphy for the many family members  
descended from James Conder.*

*Life*

James Conder

*The future is hid from us like a screen*

*We know all before it, beyond is never seen.*

*Sometimes we regret the past, for memory has its pain,*

*We would gladly go back and begin our life again.*

*So as we journey onwards, we often sit and dream*

*of what was, what is and what might have been.*

*Suppose we could raise the curtain*

*would we be happier to see*

*Not what was or is, but what is to be.*

## *Introduction*

James Bryce Conder was a second generation Australian. His forebears were of Irish and English stock but he was as Australian as one could be in those colonial times.

His story is that of an ordinary Australian who contributed to the development of Australia. He was born 28 years before Federation and when he died in 1954 the pioneering days of the Australian colonies were becoming a distant memory.

The magic of his story is that in time, the contribution of James Conder has been appreciated and recognised, primarily through his unique written material, art, poetry and his life long association with the sea and maritime activities.

In particular James Conder's service in the Australian merchant fleet, the Victoria Navy, the Royal Navy Squadron in Australia and the Royal Australian Navy straddle a wealth of naval and Australian history.

### *Early Life*

James Bryce Conder was born on 15 June, 1872 at Hawthorn in the colony of Victoria, the son of Pryor Conder and Elizabeth Blair. Pryor Conder was a native of Barrington in Cambridgeshire in England. Pryor Conder had left England with his two cousins Samuel and John in 1854. They moved to the Hawthorn area in Melbourne where an aunt, Ann Conder, had settled. They had left the village where the family had lived for several hundred years. This was as a result of the impact of agricultural reforms that lessened the need for labourers. At the birth of James Conder, the

Registrar is informed that Pryor Conder is aged 38 years, a gardener and has two children, Henry Pryor four years old and William two years and Elizabeth Conder his wife. The informant is Elizabeth Conder.

Elizabeth Blair, Pryor's wife was born in Longford Tasmania the daughter of Robert Blair and Ann Dixon. The story of Robin and Ann is also a fascinating one. Robert born in Ireland had served in 11<sup>th</sup> Foot Regiment and came to Australia in 1827. He met and married Ann Dixon in Tasmania.

James was the third son in the family of six. The family lived in the Melbourne suburbs around Hawthorn. There is a Conder Street in Hawthorn named for Ann and Allan Conder, who were the aunt and uncle of Pryor. They were extensive property owners in the Hawthorn area, including the house where Elizabeth Conder lived.

### *Family*

James married Victoria Agnes Nihill on 17<sup>th</sup> March 1897. She was a first generation Australian of Irish Catholic descent. They had nine children Vera and Marguerite twins, Pryor, Doris, James, Bryce, Alice, Elizabeth and Barrington.

Victoria Agnes Conder died of cancer in 1936, aged 61, after a long illness just before James retired from the Navy. She was clearly a very capable lady raising a family of nine children whilst James came and went to his various naval postings. His love and affection for his wife clearly shows through in his writing. As well as she was clearly a long time pal.

James lived most of his remaining life with daughter Doris



and family at various locations in Melbourne. He remained an old salt to the end. He loved his pipe and the love of a pint. He was very proud to be a Conder and he started working on the family tree. He still kept in touch with Condors in England, writing regular letters. He would be pleased to know that his children and grandchildren and great grandchildren have maintained those links to this day.

He died at 164 Kerferd Road Albert Park Melbourne on 3 August 1954. He was aged 82 years and had enjoyed a reasonable quality of life right up to his death. James Conder had never been a patient in hospital.

James Conder did not leave much money. He never really had much. He owned neither a car or a house. Whilst his mother lived, James sent her £2 each week of whatever wage he earned. He did leave much in the way of art, poetry and a rich heritage of the sea for his descendants. He also left an extensive family who shares many of his interests and contribute to the development of Australia in many fields.

### *Naval Life*

In his first journal *Notes from a Sailor's Log: Under Canvas* James describes his life as a young man in the Merchant Navy, in particular his voyage on the *Ellora* from Melbourne to London via the Horn without touching land. The return trip on the *Avenger* is also described.

In October 1889 James Conder signed up on the *Ellora*, a large barque of 1727 tons, lying alongside the Port Melbourne Town Pier. He was 17 years old and his father Pryor had died six years earlier, following an accident driving his cart home from the market. The *Ellora* was loaded with bales of wool. The ship carried 13 passengers but one died from a heart

attack before departure, causing delay until an inquest was held.

The *Ellora* followed the roaring 40s across to South America being driven by the winds down into packs of enormous icebergs including some ice islands and cathedral bergs. After rounding Cape Horn the ship arrived in London in March-April 1890.

In May 1890 James joined the *Avenger* that had a very eventful voyage to Australia being considered by some of the crew to be an unlucky ship. Happenings on the way included being sideswiped by a steamer in the English Channel, the death by poisoning of one crew member, the near death of another and the death of the Captain, the succession to Acting Captain of an alcoholic first mate and the loss overboard of Jamies' friend, Peter. James also fell off the rigging but was able to grab a hold while slipping down the sail. The *Avenger* eventually arrived in Melbourne after 112 days at sea. In both voyages, land was not touched until voyage end. James Conder signed off the *Avenger* in September, 1890 aged 18 years.

James was keen to sign up with the Victoria Navy but there were no vacancies at that time. After service on boats in Port Phillip Bay, he signed up for a short six month's service in June 1891, with the Royal Navy's Australian station. At the end of this, he had the opportunity to sign up for twelve years. His first ship was the *Orlando* that undertook many cruises around the Australian coast, primarily from its Sydney Harbour base. This is described in his second journal Notes from a Sailor's Log: Under Steam - The Naval Part of it.

At the end of six months he decided not to sign up for 12

years and on discharge from the Royal Navy he returned to Melbourne. His objective was achieved when, early in 1892, there was a vacancy and he was posted to Her Majesty's turret ship *Cerberus* that was principally a gun ship provided for the defence of Port Phillip. As part of this duty, he was also drafted to the *Nelson*. The figurehead of this ship is now in the Australian National Maritime Museum. He was also drafted to the *Albert*. A painting of this ship by James Conder is in the museum. The ships on which James Conder served are beautifully painted in watercolours in his journals.

James Conder left the Victoria Navy in January 1896 as the Navy was planning to cut back. An opportunity emerged and with his impending marriage, a shore job seemed appropriate. He joined the Victoria Police immediately as a constable but returned to naval life as a member of the newly created Royal Australian Navy in 1904. model of which is, with other ships, in the museum.

His first ship was HMAS *Katoomba*, a builder's model of which is, with other ships, in the museum. Other ships on which he served included the *Challenger* and the *Psyche*. He left the RAN in June 1909 and had many assorted shore civilian jobs over the next four years.

In 1913 he was asked to join the Naval College in Geelong as a Study Corporal and later transferred with the College to Jervis Bay in 1915. He served there until the middle of 1930 when his services were no longer required with the move of the College to HMAS *Cerberus* in Victoria.

Later that year he was called back from retirement to again fill this role, following the untimely death of his son-in-law, Syd Cooper, who also was a Study Corporal.

James Conder continued at the Naval College until June 1937 when at age 65 he had to retire. The History of the Royal Naval College notes:

*“Study Corporal Conder, ex-naval rating, ex-policeman, all together handy man, one who as a true sailor was never without a moan of some sort, which of course means nothing and assured of his being happy, and who was always ready to be useful in a hundred and one different ways”.*

After twenty three years with the Naval College, in all of its three locations, James Conder concluded his naval service that had begun 48 years earlier.

### *Police Roles*

James Conder served in the Victoria police and as an auxiliary policeman during the Second World War, attached to the Caulfield Police Station on general duties.

When he joined the Victorian Police on the 28.1.96 he was aged 23 years, 5'9 3/4, weight 10 stone 9 lbs, hazel eyes, hazel eyes, fair complexion, religion - Church of England and from the calling of seaman. He was single at the time of marrying on the 17.3.1897.

In April, 1896 he transferred from the Police Depot to Russell Street, Melbourne District to fill a vacancy. Reports on his conduct and efficiency in 1896, 1902 and 1904 noted that he was well conducted.

He served as a constable until he resigned on 31.5.1904 after eight years of service. His conduct was noted as good. He left the Victoria Navy to join the police and now he was returning to the Navy - that was to become the RAN.

Constable Conder, Register Number 4587 did not record much of his life in the police. One small undated newspaper clipping from the time of his Camberwell duty, records Constable Conder in court after apprehending a youth in a store. The youth was cautioned by the Bench.

Constable Conder's wooden police baton remains in the possession of the family.

### *Art*

James Conder painted in many forms - watercolour sketches, oil paintings, pen and ink and even scene painting at the Royal Australian Navy College when he was a Study Corporal.

The history of the Naval College notes that:

*“at concerts he was well known as a reciter, but his great forte was scene painting and for a great many years he was scene-painter-in-chief of the Naval College.”*

He was always interested in art and lived during development of the Heidelberg School that included Charles Conder. Charles Conder is not closely, if at all linked with the Barrington branch of the Conders, but could have been an inspiration to James Conder. It is said that James got to know Frederick McCubbin through his interest in the Heidelberg School. One of James' paintings of particular note is the maritime scene, Missing at Lloyd's. This was entered into an exhibition and was highly commended. His two journals are hand illustrated with detailed representations of ships that he served on.

Other forms of art James practised were woodcarving and ship modelling. A very good example of his talents is a half-

ship in a glass case which is in the possession of a great grandson. In his early service James Conder earned some extra money tattooing fellow crew members. He also painted small cards that he sold to crew members at six pence each. This supplemented his naval income, the bulk of which was paid direct via the bank to his wife. James Conder also wrote poetry and some of this is retained in his own writing in exercise books of the day.

James' artistic interests and talents have been fundamental to the wealth of historical material that he has left.

### *Australian National Maritime Museum*

When the Australian National Maritime Museum opened in 1991 there was amongst the large number of exhibits, one permanent exhibit featuring the naval life of James Conder. The Australian newspaper chose to include details of James Conder in its weekend colour magazine as an example of the material in the museum at the time of this opening.

This followed the donation to the museum of the copy of his naval journals made for Alice (Conder) Murphy along with his Victoria Navy bayonet, wooden handle knife, and framed portrait of the *Albert*. This donation was made by Robert Murphy on behalf of the Murphy Family. Elizabeth Cromb donated some historical photographs and Mary Weekes donated a *Cerberus* tally band. Both are granddaughters of James Conder.

The Museum's interest in James Conder relates to the breadth of his naval experience – in the merchant service, Royal Navy (Australian Station), Victoria Navy and Royal Australian Navy, particularly as a Study Corporal at Osborne House, Jervis Bay and at Crib Point. James Conder is

mentioned in the history of the Royal Australian Naval College.

The fact that James wrote down his experiences, illustrated them and also collected memorabilia adds to the importance of his contribution.

### *Finale*

James Conder leaves an important contribution to Australian Maritime history. He is representative of many who sailed in those times. His many talents have left much for future historians to make reference to seamen in various areas of navel service.

When he was born Australia had only 84 years of European settlement. When he died Australia had moved from a collection of disparate colonies to a nation with recognition on the world stage. The importance of navies for travel, communication and commerce was however on the wane. James Conder and thousands like him contributed greatly to Australia's maritime heritage.

### *From A History of the Royal Australian Naval College*

The writer (F.B. Eldridge) well remembers his first meeting with Conder on the occasion of his preliminary visit to the College, then at North Geelong, when Conder carried his suitcase from the College to the railway station and quite respectfully, but quite firmly, refused any return for the kindness he was doing, for we were both members of staff of the Royal Australian Naval College.

These comments typify James Conder's life of service and his naval life.

## *The Diary of James Brown*

### *Introduction*

*The document reproduced here was donated to PMH&PS by one of our members, Barbara Gardiner in 2005. She had obtained it from a descendant of James Brown. Unfortunately attempts to locate the original diary have not been successful.*

*James and his shipboard friend Gregor McGregor both settled in Victoria at some time after 1910.*

*Paddle steamer excursions on Port Phillip Bay were a popular outing from the 1870s to the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.*

*Three of the best remembered vessels were the Ozone, Hygeia and Weeroona. The Weeroona was the last, ceasing operation in 1942.*



Courtesy State Library of Victoria



*James Brown left Clyde, Scotland  
on 22 September, 1910  
on the Maiden Voyage of the 'Weeroona',  
and arrived in Melbourne, Australia  
on 28 November, 1910*

**NEW BAY STEAMER.**

**THE WEEROONA LAUNCHED.**

At Glasgow on Wednesday the new excursion steamer which is being built for the Port Phillip Bay summer trade was successfully launched.

The Weeroona, as the new vessel has been named, will, when completed, be one of the finest excursion boats afloat. She will be a paddle steamer, 310 feet long, 36 feet wide, and when loaded will have a draught of 7 feet 6 inches. Her extreme breadth from sponson to sponson will be 70 feet.

In external appearance she will follow on the lines of the Hygeia and the Ozone. She will be propelled by three cylinder surface-condensing, diagonal engines, working on three cranks, which will reduce vibration to a minimum; is to have a speed of from 18 to 20 knots an hour, and should cover the distance between Port Melbourne and Queenscliff in one hour 45 minutes. Messrs. A. and J. Inglis, of Glasgow, are the builders.

The new boat will run in conjunction with the Hygeia and Ozone. It is expected that the Weeroona will be ready to leave Glasgow towards the end of August, in which case she should reach Melbourne in November next. Mr. John Adam, chief engineer of the Ozone, left for England recently to take charge of the machinery department of the Weeroona.

Geelong Advertiser, Vic.  
Weeroona Launched 10-Jun-1910

*This is a short outline of each day's progress  
after leaving Glasgow.*

***Friday 23rd September 1910***

Left Clyde with the new P.S. Weeroona built by A. & J. Inglis Point for Huddart Patrick Company Melbourne Australia, in rather dull weather, but changed after getting outside for the better. Passed around the Mull of Galloway within a fit of a sea about the 6 o'clock on Saturday morning.

***Saturday 24<sup>th</sup>***

Had a beautiful run down the coast had land all the way until after we're done the usual day's work and all had good lunch.



P.S. Weeroona – Courtesy poiaustralia.com.au  
ClydeShips.

*Sunday 25<sup>th</sup>*

Well into the Bay of Biscay when we got up the morning and getting rather rough but had to turn back owing to a break in one of the engine rooms. We ran down on the French coast and lay in a bay a little off the entrance to Brest, is very rugged coast but nice white sand all along. A great place for farming if a fairly good class as far as we could make out with the glasses, also a great many lighthouses and fortresses all along as far as the eye could reach.

*Monday 26<sup>th</sup>*

We lay at anchor until repairs were finished and made another attempt at the Bay and so along fairly well out, inclined to pitch and toss very much.

*Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup>*

Just the usual routine work making steady headway but out of the track of traffic.

*Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup>*

Beautiful weather but pulling pretty much in a grand swell. All day passing down the Portuguese coast and getting a glimpse of passing steamers and an occasional view of the small towns on the coastline.

*Thursday 29<sup>th</sup>*

Still going ahead in a heavy groundswell getting light of coal which tells pretty much in the ship rolling getting an occasional view up the Spanish coast but inclined to be hazy.

*Friday 30<sup>th</sup>*

Arrived at Gibraltar for coal - it is really a meeting to hear, the

row that is going on in the union over overtime work. They are a dirty lot, having a grand view of the Portuguese; it is a powerful stronghold and a great sight for strangers. In the early part of the night we had a severe storm of lightning and heavy sheets of rain, about two in the morning a hurricane arose and all to, to make the ship secure.

### *Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> October*

We left Gibraltar eight in the morning and having a glance all up the Mediterranean, just our usual routine of work.

### *Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup>*

The usual time to rise – six in the morning and again contact with passing ships.

### *Monday 3<sup>rd</sup>*

Morning dull but cleared away a nice warm sunshine having a calm sea and a fine view of North Africa hill passing a few steamers on our way - sail hands in good cheer.

### *Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup>*

Having beautiful weather - everything going well - always kept busy. Today the sea was like a millpond, all keeping close in shore.

### *Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup>*

Lovely morning, passed the Island of Goya, a Spanish settlement, saw the little villages in as many miles then we came abreast of Malta, but did not put in - had plenty of coal to carry on to Port Said – another beautiful night.

### *Thursday 6<sup>th</sup>*

Passing along in lovely fine weather, very warm, have brown

on my commit drawers and socks, seen a flying fish for the first, also a quail was killed, also with a very fine little bird, all well, passed not too spectacular. (sic)

### *Friday 7<sup>th</sup>*

Having a great heat today but cooling down at night - it was fine sitting out on deck eyeing more traffic move down the coast to Port Said.

### *Saturday 8<sup>th</sup>*

Morning a bit of a breeze this morning but falling back as the day advances, getting sight of more passing ships - passed a mail boat tonight at eight, all in good health.

### *Sunday 9<sup>th</sup>*

Arrived at Port Said, shortly after six in the morning, got coaled by adding 200 tons, quick work but the service was something awful - very dirty class of people to look at. Bought some little presents for the family to go again at half past five at night going down to Suez by searchlight had those and prepared from home.

### *Monday 10<sup>th</sup>*

Reached Suez at eight in the morning that in the end of the Canal all the way down is a vast desert of land on both sides then we entered the Red Sea had a long view of the shore of Egypt on one side and Asia Minor on the other. About seven at night we passed over where the Bilmore was lost in the Gulf of Suez. Been warm all day but nice and cool at night.

### *Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup>*

Lovely morning very warm all day right in the track of steamers just the usual day's visitors.

*Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup>*

Second day of heat - everyone just to melting point which is very tiring really as it is a very clammy heat as well.

*Thursday 13<sup>th</sup>*

Another working day and hot, the poor little swallows they were following the ships - five of them have dropped dead on the way and for ourselves, we are in a dreadful sweat working out of us. Just the usual routine meeting with an occasional mail boat.

*Friday 14<sup>th</sup>*

Much cooler in the morning, but back to heat in the afternoon.

*Saturday 15<sup>th</sup>*

Another day of heat, arrived at Aden at five in the afternoon. It is well composed in song as it is the back to Aden. The people are very lazy at working, provision is very scarce and very dear and everyone is tired and tried to rest for the night.

*Sunday 16<sup>th</sup>*

Left Aden at eight in the morning - fine, cool and fresh after entering the Indian ocean meeting a few ships on the way home.

*Monday 17<sup>th</sup>*

The usual routine on deck – all in fairly good spirits – the day was nice and cool, with a fresh breeze, it was different from the stifling heat on the Red Sea.

*Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup>*

Lovely day of heat with some fresh breeze, very quiet, no

passing traffic, all well.

*Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup>*

The usual pleasant day and routine of daily work, no passing traffic, all going well.

*Thursday 20<sup>th</sup>*

Heavy head surge and making little headway - no sight of land.

*Friday 21<sup>st</sup>*

Making better speed - all well, but long to see the end of the journey, good weather today.

*Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup>*

Expect to be in Colombo about Tuesday morning - nice breeze with the ship making more headway - all well.

*Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup>*

Very close and sultry day - a job of killing a sheep - this is my second attempt.

*Monday 24<sup>th</sup>*

Another close and sultry day - no passing traffic - evening threatening to rain, but keeping passing by.

*Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup>*

Arrived at Colombo at six in the morning - very busy Harbour. Seen a new torpedo boat the first of the Australian navy on their way out, got coaled and off at ten at night - all hands tired out - received home letters and papers.

*Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup>*

Usual routine having it busy - very little traffic, an occasional steamer.

*Thursday 27<sup>th</sup>*

Very heavy rain today, but it cooled down the air - no traffic whole day - all well.

*Friday 28<sup>th</sup>*

All in the usual health, never getting any sign of land or passing traffic, still heavy rain.

*Saturday 29<sup>th</sup>*

We are rolling pretty heavy these few days, also we have to have our boat drill but it being dangerous to launch the boats owing to the heavy swell, we might lose someone overboard, so it has been postponed. All well.

*Sunday 30<sup>th</sup>*

All in the usual good health, but wearied, usual routine of work.

*Monday 31<sup>st</sup>*

Still going along with the usual quietness - no traffic today - heavy rain in the evening. All well.

*Tuesday November 1<sup>st</sup>*

All going along quietly, seeing an occasional ship and the usual sometimes work.

*Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup>*

Slipping along the coast of Sumatra an island of one thousand miles in length - no passing traffic, expect to be in Batavia<sup>1</sup> by tomorrow.

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<sup>1</sup> Batavia, modern day Jakarta



*Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup>*

Arrived in Batavia at two in the morning - pretty busy Harbour - a good many of the different liners and mail boats at the wharfs made fast for coaling.

*Friday 4<sup>th</sup>*

Had to shift in the morning to be closer to coal - this is the first port we have managed to stretch our legs ashore - the town is on the opposite side of the river - they are another class of dirty natives.

*Saturday 5<sup>th</sup>*

Managed to get coal and off at twelve noon and no-one sorry as the smell of the place is dreadful.

*Sunday 6<sup>th</sup>*

All going along as usual very warm. We are seeing some of the burning mountains on our way down the coast.

*Monday 7<sup>th</sup>*

Arrived at Souralaya<sup>2</sup> for more coal in the early morning, but the people are so slow we did not get a start until about seven at night.

*Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup>*

Coal all aboard in the early morning - all under way by seven, slipping quietly down the coast - plenty of little islands to be seen on our way, also a great many little fishing ships. We had a dozen hens on board from Batavia, today seven of them flew overboard.

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<sup>2</sup> Souralaya, now known as Surabaya is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest city in Indonesia

*Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup>*

More passing traffic today, usual routine of work.

*Thursday 10<sup>th</sup>*

All well, losing sight of land - very warm during the day and heavy rain at night.

*Friday 11<sup>th</sup>*

Lost sight of land – very warm and sea smooth.

*Saturday 12<sup>th</sup>*

All in usual health - bell sounding half past four - boat drill - first since leaving Clyde. Strong wind blowing - all passed off successful.

*Sunday 13<sup>th</sup>*

Very quiet day of rest in the evening the Captain passed round a dram to all hands on board, seen a few whales spouting.

*Monday 14<sup>th</sup>*

Expecting to be in Thursday Island about ten in the morning, - rolling pretty heavy.

*Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup>*

Arrived in Thursday Island at ten in the morning and found we could neither get coal or water as Government holds all up - that was our first experience of an Australian Port, so we had to anchor up and make for a small port called Townsville in Queensland.

*Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup>*

Making good way down the North Queensland Coast - we have a pilot aboard to take us down through the coral sea to

get a grand view of the coast - some places very barren and other places very rich - trees growing on top of very high hills.

### *Thursday 17<sup>th</sup>*

All aboard pretty strong track wind blowing from the north-east right on our head, no passing traffic, still among small islands and the coral reef.

### *Friday 18<sup>th</sup>*

All getting along in the usual way, arrived at Townsville after passing the afternoon and prepared to coal and take in water, it is a quiet little place, very much scattered pretty a mile from the wharf the streets are very rough and sandy but everybody seems to be of a better class, some grand shops and things reasonable.

### *Saturday 19<sup>th</sup>*

Still getting coaled very warm, pretty busy shopping place, all going along smooth.

### *Sunday 20<sup>th</sup>*

Steam up at six in the morning put off, but grounded on a sand bank for two hours, got off at eight, and steamed away down the coast, fine cool and fresh air.

### *Monday 21<sup>st</sup>*

Further off land than usual, but can distinguish sloppy little places scattered along the coast.

### *Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup>*

Still slipping down the coast, passed Brisbane today, expect to be in Sydney on Thursday.

*Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup>*

Our cook has been more or less troubled with a bad leg for some time and seems to be getting worse at times he has to lie up and now and again and it gives us extra work.

*Thursday 24<sup>th</sup>*

Arrived Sydney at midday. It is a beautiful place with natural Harbours to such a great extent. We lay anchored alongside one of the hulks for coal at night. A sand storm rose up suddenly, it comes with a fearful gust and it continued for some time.

*Friday 25<sup>th</sup>*

Left Sydney in the morning, shortly after midnight - very rough sea running and tossing the ship very much - as much as she could stand. The Captain turned ill during the night and



Down the Bay on a Paddle Steamer  
Courtesy State Library of Victoria

continued to bed.

***Saturday 26th***

Still a bit rough, also the Bosun turned ill - a chill caught as the weather has been very cold.

***Sunday 27th***

All going along in the usual quiet way, as we are creeping close into Port Phillip heads on our way into the bay then we arrived off Williamstown, and right up the river to the wharf at five in the morning in lovely weather and everybody feels glad after the strain on all hands, with our sixty-five days at sea, we got a grand reception as we made fast and now feel the pleasure of it all then we did when we get stretching our legs ashore in comfort.

*Living in Port Melbourne*  
*Reminiscences of a Childhood*  
*Lived in Poolman Street, Port Melbourne*  
*and its Environs*  
*1938 – 1951*

**Shirley Videion (nee Lobb)**

*Introduction*

*Shirley Videion has a keen interest in the history of Port Melbourne and is the author of two books: 'Fire in the Borough: the first Sandridge fire brigade and the fires they fought' and 'Law on Water: water police of Port Phillip 1838-1900'.*

*This document has been included in this publication with her kind permission.*

My childhood memories of growing up in Poolman Street (the original Garden City) in the 1930s and 1940s are recorded purely as a matter of interest, in the event that at some future date someone is curious about that particular period of a small segment of Port Melbourne. I don't claim it to be a typical childhood for I know others were less fortunate.



A sketch of 37 Poolman Street, Frank Gordon Real

My first recollection of Poolman Street was as a three-year old sitting on a concrete gutter by a small palm tree while my parents moved into our house

at number 37. My brother was born not long after we moved in. Growing up in our section of Poolman Street (between Crichton Avenue and Clark Street) and other environs was the most exciting childhood experience and has left many treasured memories.

The earliest memories are of my mother pushing my brother in a pram while I walked beside her down to the end of a swamp at The Bend, which later became developed as the Garden City Housing Commission Homes (later known as Baghdad), but was then a few tin shacks. The occupant of one of the shacks sold fresh eggs – a passion of my mother's. My mother, pushing the pram, also frequently walked me to the South Melbourne market.



Children in Poolman Street 1940s, PMHPS

Back row l-r: Graeme McKenzie, Mac Caton, Kevin Ireton, Roger Gould.  
Second row: Elma Dimoline, Norma Ireton, Norma Barnett, Judith McKenzie,  
Aileen Barnett, Diane Caton, Julie Ann Curtin  
Front row: ?, Ian Gould, ?, ?, Jim Power

We lived opposite two large families, Family Orr with five children and Family Twomey with six children, and with two other Twomey cousins at the end of the street we were never without playmates.

We gathered immediately after school for casual play, games of rounders, hopscotch or cricket on the road, games also played all through the school holidays. The boys couldn't make use of the football field at the Graham Street State School in fear of the caretaker, who lived on the premises and did not allow any access to the school grounds.

Car ownership was rare. There were only two car owners in our particular block, my father, and the Twomey's. There was virtually no through traffic hence it was safe to play on the road, except for the time a motor bike came through our game of hopscotch and skittled me. I wasn't badly hurt but my shoe was not found until months later in Twomey's hedge.

Immediately after tea boys and girls played hidey and chasey in the dark until we were forced to come in.

In our block the majority of home owners (I think we were the only ones renting) worked locally.

Of the occupations of the families, I knew of down to Clark Street, there was one lady who helped 'girls in trouble', there were two train drivers, a wharf labourer, two windmill mechanics who naturally had to travel away, a worker at Kitchens, my father a worker at Commonwealth Aircraft Factory, and Mr Twomey, a furniture removalist.

Mr Twomey at one stage was the only person connected to the telephone. My father, who was trying to establish himself as a musician drummer, was receiving messages via the Twomey phone until he was able to get us connected to the



phone. We were the first two houses in this section with the telephone connected, which became a mixed blessing. The boyfriend courting a girl two doors from us used to ring every night about 6p.m. and ask if he could speak to her. This meant me leaving the dinner table and getting her every evening and ushering her into our lounge room for her nightly telephone conversation. I was glad when they married. We also took messages for about six other neighbours.

Mr Twomey was one of the most generous people with his time. Every alternate Saturday (for the VFA 'Burras' football away games), he parked his large furniture van outside his place with two long benches along the inside of the van (sometimes a third bench in the middle). Anyone wanting a free ride to where the Burras were playing just ambled up and got on, no questions asked. Adults and kids had much fun together. We kids sat on the back of the van with the tailgate down, our legs swinging over it and singing the Burra song en route.

Thanks to Mr Twomey, we never had to find our way by public transport to any of the away games. When Oakleigh joined the VFA we thought that part of Melbourne was at the end of the world. In later life when we were teenagers, Mr Twomey, while collecting his own children from Church Socials, generously included a lift for others.

During the World War 2 Mr Orr acted as a Warden for the blackout – which meant ensuring all house window blinds were drawn at night while interior lights were on in case of enemy aircraft attack. Both the Orr's and the Twomey's had air raid shelters in their back yard which provided extra play places. One evening we were alarmed by search lights and

sirens while a plane went over in the cross beams of the search lights. We could only peer out from a total blackness inside and it was rumoured it was a reconnaissance Japanese plane.

We were in a vulnerable position, two blocks from the big Commonwealth Oil Refinery (C.O.R) oil depot and near Station and Princes Piers – all strategic positions. Years later it was confirmed it was a reconnaissance Japanese plane which managed surveillance the length of the Victorian coast.



Kilbride College, Albert Park – State Library of Victoria

During the war we children at Kilbride, on Beaconsfield Parade, practised evacuating the school in case of air raid, crossing the road and lying on the beach sand close to the brick wall. Apart from the food and clothing coupons and the shortage of eggs, no cream or rice, we were largely unaffected for war time food.

From my first day at school, I travelled to Kilbride via a small red bus that turned from Williamstown Road into Graham Street, travelling through to Albert Park, Middle Park

and eventually St. Kilda. My school friends and I travelled alone from Prep Grade, in perfect safety, getting off at Foote Street and walking to school. The alternative route to school if I missed the Graham Street bus was a bus that left from outside a lonely deserted location, an empty shop ie Princes Pier, but was not a safe place for a lone child where there was an air raid shelter nearby. This bus wound its way to The Shrine of Remembrance at St. Kilda Road.

Coming home from the bus stop in Graham Street, I had to walk past the Graham Street State School kids in the playground. They would group together when they saw me and ran to the fence to shout “Catholic dogs, jump like frogs, in and out of water logs”. In retrospect it would be quite funny, but for someone still in primary school it was scary and I dreaded the walk home.

For an extended playground we had what we called ‘the froggy’ off Williamstown Road (over Williamstown Road between Graham and Salmon Streets) which was a large area of swamp enjoyed by the frogs. There were also large sand hills – the butts – formerly used for rifle shooting practise. We enjoyed rolling down the hills where the Kraft factory, GM-H and other factories were later built. My brother was not popular when he and his mates played at the froggy and brought the dog home wet and stinking, and certainly not when he brought home tadpoles.

When we were very young our mother took us to the beach on extremely hot summer days. The area underneath Princes Pier was so large we could sit on cool sand, under the pier in the shade, with the water lapping at our feet. We could spend the day under the pier, occasionally venturing into the heat of

the day when we wished to swim. Unfortunately, now there are only rocks with no beach or pier.

In later years we children were allowed to go to the beach alone, walking through the swampy land at the back of the C.O.R. We thought the bright oil-coloured puddles on the sandy track were 'pretty'. Recognition of industrial waste was light years away.

The beach between Princes Pier and Beacon Road was wide and the water clean. We enjoyed having such a beautiful beach to ourselves and also being able to jump off piers into the deeper water near where the large ships were tied up at the wharf.

Sometimes we kids alternated our summer swims by going alone to the Olympic Pool (by train) in what was then Batman Avenue. It was very crowded but enjoyed by the hundreds flocking to it. The pools – large, toddlers and diving – were surrounded by rows of wooden seats staggered in height up to the top of the wall. There seemed to be enough room on the seats for anyone who wanted to claim a permanent spot to place their towels (to save a locker fee), but as there was no roof or shade it did get very hot.

Sometimes our mother took us by bus to the St. Kilda Baths which were very splendid and a great treat. They had tiny concrete igloos to crawl in and out of on the sand. There were two board walks the length of the jetties inside and laths underwater to make the pool shark and stingray proof. Unfortunately, some of the laths must have broken or rotted away because one of the swimmers dived from the board walk onto a passing stingray and was killed.

On Saturday afternoons out of 'footy season' we went to the

pictures in the city, the MGM theatres in Collins and Bourke Streets were very opulent, The Regent in Collins Street was huge, with the tiny Plaza theatre underneath. The State Theatre in Flinders Street was huge, statues and high curved ceiling with stars scattered around. We also patronised the local Port Theatre on the corner of Bay Street and Liardet Street and The Eclipse further down Bay Street, or the two cinemas at Albert Park, which we travelled to by bus.

As we got older, we went for extended bike rides to Richmond, along the Yarra, or ‘walking with boys’ on a Sunday afternoon to the milk bar of our choice or a walk to Albert Park



Milk Bar cnr Graham and Albert Streets c.1960  
Courtesy National Archives of Australia

Graham Street was blessed with milk bars but the two most preferred by our group when walking on a Sunday was McCarthy’s next to the double storey house on the corner of Graham Street and Evans Street, or McKenzie’s on the other

side of the Graham Railway Station on the corner of Graham Street and Station Street. This was a double-fronted milk bar reminiscent of the soda bars of the American teenage era. On entering, the milk bar section had numerous cubicle seats while the lolly shop had been a separate extension. There were always groups of teens gathering at this popular spot – mostly boys.

Two and three generations lived in Port Melbourne so it was common to have many relatives within walking distance of my home. In my case, I had cousins in Liardet Street, Princes Street, Station Street and Barak Road.

My uncle, who worked on the wharf, was a keen collector of mussels from the Princes Pier pylons. He often collected a bag full and used the occasion to have the extended family feed on the mussels boiled in a copper in the back yard of his home in ‘Baghdad’.

My aunt in Station Street had many parties, to which local and West Melbourne relatives and a few local friends came. It was common to sit around in a circle and each person was compelled to ‘give a turn’, by singing a song, whether you had a voice or not. One cousin always sang ‘Old Shep’ about a much-loved dog who died and went to heaven, which always brought tears to our eyes. An uncle who absolutely could not sing removed his teeth to recite ‘Forty fousand frushes with forty fousand feffers round their froats’ a clever poem-like ditty with a few verses. The songs were almost never changed as everyone requested the usual song. My father of course was never present as by this time he was working seven nights a week as a well-known drummer, as well as holding down a day job. The men drank beer and the ladies mostly shandy or

lemonade.

An uncle living in Preston used to have the occasional Saturday night sing song around a pianola, where all of us – adults and children, stood around and sang. It was a long way for us to go by public transport but my father usually picked us up to come home.

We all had full size bicycles by the time we were about seven and later, when I went to school at St. Kilda, I rode to school along Beaconsfield Parade, Fitzroy Street and up the Grey Street hill. My brother and I used to ride to the Albert Park Lake on frosty Saturday mornings before breakfast to collect mushrooms.

When not riding to Albert Park Lake on a Saturday morning I would cycle over the Graham Street railway gates to Caton's the butcher in Graham Street, one door from Princes Street. I would try to get there by 7.30 a.m. to avoid the crowd. It was an era before supermarkets had been thought of and shopping consisted of waiting three and four deep by a counter to be served one at a time. My mother had a penchant for the best quality food and Caton's was considered the best quality butcher. The alternative butchers were on the opposite side of Graham Street, one of them a few doors from Clark Street, the other three doors from the hotel on the corner of Ross Street. The chemist Ahearn was next to the hotel on the corner.

Grocery shopping was a nightmare on a Saturday morning. Scoble's grocery shop (later McLennan's), on the corner of Graham and Clark Streets, also had shoppers three and four deep lining the counter. The grocer and his assistant would tend to one shopping list at a time while everyone else was sighing at the length of the list being attended to. All shops

closed at midday on Saturday. My mother shopped predominantly on a Saturday morning because she was working two part-time jobs through the week.

Happily, Simmons fruit shop on the corner of Graham and Albert Street was a little more orderly. Tucked down Albert Street, about six houses down from Graham Street, was a place known as the ham and beef shop, where a lady specialised in cooking and selling corned beef. The Post Office was also on the corner of Graham and Albert Streets and also sold lollies, newspapers and comics.

But the greatest treat for me was Sidaway's Milk Bar in Graham Street, between the butcher and the fruit shop. Mrs Sidaway's hobby was to run a lending library. This was our only access to a library, as the council library was too far away, off Bay Street. Mrs Sidaway did not have many children's books or comics but she had a good range of adult books and instead of the unknown (to me) Australian girls' and boys' stories I indulged myself with many adult wartime biographies, battle stories and murder mysteries.

A small, horse-drawn ice cream cart occasionally went around the streets, heralding its arrival with a loud, distinctive bell. The baker delivered to the door, as did the rabbit man and the iceman. The number of times we forgot to empty the tray under the ice chest was legend and we were frequently mopping up puddles. The egg man who called was big, with long grey hair and wore a navy suit which was dusty and scattered with straw. He drove a large black car called a charabanc with enough space on the back floor for all the egg baskets. Claudie Butcher, the milk man also called, in a white coloured elegant horse drawn cart with a sloping back. He



ladled milk from large cans into a billy left out with money in it and later when bottled milk became the norm delivered the milk in bottles. Any extra milk (and cream when it became available after the war), was purchased from Claudie's dairy in Graham Street.

My brother at one stage helped Claudie with his deliveries, and delivered morning papers for pocket money and sold streamers to the departing ships at the piers.

When the American soldiers came to Melbourne, transported from the pier via rail, we lined the rail welcoming them and they threw American coins and chewing gum for us to gather. My father's two female cousins in the country decided to come and stay with us to enjoy this sudden socialising opportunity, which meant we had four extra people at our kitchen table (the two cousins and two American soldiers) and a sing song around the piano after tea, singing the latest American songs.

The Americans were dance crazy; Sunday afternoons were a specialty, with the Australian Big Band orchestra playing at the Trocadero (where the Victorian Arts Centre now is), with my father as drummer.

By chance the American Army kindly provided us with tennis practice by building large storage buildings. As we did not qualify for the tennis courts nearby, we used to hit tennis balls against the Masonite-like walls of the buildings which provided a large echoing sound. Someone invariably came along to shoo us kids away.

What was distinctive about Port Melbourne were the various smells. Depending on the direction of the wind we could smell rubber being manufactured at Dunlop, soap and

washing powder Persil and Rinso at Kitchens, delicious smells from Swallow & Ariell with their biscuits, and of course the best smell of all - the sea.

Looking back on it I realize we led a very sheltered existence within our small circle and yet at the same time had an extraordinary amount of freedom. Freedom to travel and move around alone at very early ages. The other thing that strikes me as unusual now is the way children and adults mixed equally at all times. There was no such thing as a dedicated teenage, or trappings of teenage fashions, although we did have teenage music pop parades. Teens as a separate species would come in later years.

After finishing Third Form in school, when most of us had turned 15 or 16, we went to work. I went to Business College for a year before commencing work.

I am truly grateful for my childhood in Port Melbourne.

## *My Port Melbourne*

**Robert Kilpatrick**

### *Introduction*

*After being encouraged to write his story by Patricia Grainger, a foundation stone of the PMHPS, Robert Kilpatrick sent this document to Pat from his home in South Australia about 2010. As he explains in the text, his family connection to Port Melbourne probably dates back to the early 1840s. It includes Captain Wate-Kilpatrick who was a one-time Captain of the 'Weeroona', the bay paddle steamer.*

### **Memories of Growing Up in Port Melbourne in the 1950s & 1960s**

I was born in 1947 to Robert Kilpatrick and Bette Jago and lived in the Garden City part of the Port Melbourne Council area until 1975. My father's family had lived in Port Melbourne since at least 1878 when my great grandfather settled there from Echuca. In fact the connection probably goes back even further because my great grandmother, whose maiden name was Thirza Portbury, possibly already lived in Sandridge, that is Port Melbourne, as she was born in Melbourne in 1844 and her father, a boatman, arrived at Port Phillip in 1839. Also, my mother, together with many of her family, moved to Port Melbourne from the Western District in the 1930s, so there has always been a strong sense of family identity with 'The Borough'.

Even after I moved on in 1975 I maintained strong links with

relatives in Port Melbourne and regularly visited the area, but since I have lived in South Australia since 1980, my visits are now infrequent and I am not totally aware whether some of the buildings and places I remember still exist or have been re-developed in the last few years and of course my memory after 50 years or so may not recall exactly how things were but I'm sure there are others who can correct me. Sadly, after 130 years, the Kilpatrick connection with Port came to an end in 2007 when my cousin Trina Kilpatrick moved to Ballarat (ironically where the first Kilpatricks settled when they migrated from Northern Ireland in the 1850s).

The 1950s and 1960s were fairly static in terms of development in Port Melbourne, perhaps because post war development concentrated on the eastern side of Melbourne. Looking back, it seems that it was almost an interregnum between earlier efforts to improve the living standards of the traditional working class area and the massive redevelopment of the early 2000s which has changed the face of the area for ever.

## **Port**

Everyone who writes down memories seems to have difficulties in knowing where to start and I am no different. Perhaps I should start by defining the area I call Port Melbourne, as in the 1950s and 1960s it still had its own Port Melbourne Council, distinct borders and identity; unlike today when it has been absorbed into the greater Port Phillip Council.

Locals always called Port Melbourne 'Port' never using its full name or putting 'the' before Port. To me the term 'Port' conveys the special sense of identity that local families, the

majority who, like us, had connections going back over a century, felt with the area. There was one exception to using the term 'Port'. If one was barracking for a sporting team, particularly the Port Melbourne Football team, you always called out 'car'n The Borough' for the Borough of Port Melbourne (or probably Sandridge to use its original name). As nicknames became popular for football teams this became 'Burra' or 'Burras' which has always annoyed me as it sounds short for 'Kookaburras', which was never the case. I don't know whether there have ever been kookaburras around Port Melbourne but I certainly never saw one.

I'm not sure if it was the true boundary, but I always took Port to be defined by an imaginary line which began at the bay at the junction of Pickles Street and Beaconsfield Parade, ran down the middle of Pickles Street, then down Ingles Street (or it may have more properly been Boundary Street for obvious reasons), then to the river. The bay and the river provided natural boundaries linked by these streets. If you came from within this area you were from Port, if you came from outside it you didn't matter.

In the 1950s and 1960s I always viewed Port as comprising several distinct sub-areas. To begin with, you had Port proper. This area would have grown out of the original settlement centred on Bay Street and consisted of the older, mainly weatherboard homes, shops, pubs and factories which feed off the railway or the shipping facilities. Broadly speaking it was the area to the east of Swallow Street and Graham Street School and south of Williamstown Road. Next was the similar area east of Bay Street to Pickles Street. Then there was the area north of Williamstown Road which was largely wool stores but gradually became developed into a more light

industrial and manufacturing area known simply as Port Melbourne or at the western end as the river bends south, Fisherman's Bend which was mainly swampy river flats. (I have read a debate on the Port Melbourne Historical Society's website as to whether the proper name was Fisherman's Bend or Fishermen's Bend. All I can say is that I naturally wrote Fisherman's Bend in this article and that is the name I recall, my sister uses that name and I have just been reading an old address book of my uncle from the 1920s and he has an entry using Fisherman's Bend and the 1908 electoral roll shows my great grandmother as living at Fisherman's Bend.)

Finally, to the west of Graham Street School, there was Garden City developed in the 1930s as new residential estate by the Government controlled State Bank of Victoria.



Children taking advantage of flooded streets in the  
Government Garden City Bank Houses Estate - PMHPS

I am no expert on the rationale behind the development but I understand that it was based on the English Garden City concept which aimed to provide improved quality housing on

the outskirts of industrial areas. It also incorporated a number of small green park areas within walking distance of any house, grass nature strips and trees, hence the term 'Garden City' which was the name officially given to this new estate in Port. Because of the involvement of the State Bank in the development of the estate the houses were known locally as 'Bank Homes'.

The estate is still a uniquely distinctive area of Port because the houses are all of a similar design although there were several optional floor plans. From the outside all houses look almost identical and very 'English'. They are two storied, semi detached (i.e. they have a common wall), constructed of cement rendered double brick with tiled roofs and covered porch entry. All have a front and back garden and wide nature strips. Most have a small garage of the 1930s 40s style. You immediately know when you enter and leave this section of Port Melbourne.

We lived in one of these Garden City 'Bank Homes' at 27 Page Avenue. It was bought in 1940 by my widowed grandmother and uncle and eventually taken over by my mother and father; so this is where I grew up. I remember seeing the documents when Mum and Dad eventually paid off the State Bank and the cost was £150, (\$3000) which would have been a considerable sum for working class people to commit to in the 1940s. After my parents died my sister Joy and I sold the house in 1975 for \$28,000 which was a fair price at the time. My sister tells me it's sold within the last few years for over \$750,000.

There is a second distinctive residential development in Garden City which I presume was undertaken about the same

time is the bank estate or perhaps a little later. This was a Housing Commission development characterised by the red brick, semi-detached bungalows beginning at Barak Road and covering the area between Howe Parade and the foreshore. It was a far cry from the later housing commission disasters and like the bank estate it has well laid out streets with small parks, front and back gardens and is built in that distinctive, beautiful red brick. Like the bank estate you immediately know when you enter and leave this adjoining area of Garden City and I imagine the houses are very sought after today because of their location and appearance.

However 'The Bend', as this area was called locally, always had a bit of a stigma attached to it, perhaps because it was Housing Commission. The area was also known as 'Bagdad' for reasons which I do not know, except that even among locals it was a kind of derogatory term. I must say that many of our friends lived in 'Bagdad' and I didn't notice anything wrong with their characters but by the late 1950s many residents had taken up the option to buy and perhaps the stigma surrounding the area comes from an earlier time when the residents were more transient and less house proud. I don't think that I will offend any old 'Bagdad' residents with these recollections because of course, as always happens, those who lived in 'Bagdad' were fiercely proud of the fact and wore the name as a badge of honour and even had their own 'song'.

### **Trains, Ships 'n Stores**

I mentioned earlier that the 1950s and 1960s seem to be very static in terms of changes in Port. Changes did eventually take place but tended to come about because of decline and decay rather than redevelopment. Nowhere was this more evident



than with the trains, ships and stores.

By the early 1950s the commercial shipping centre had long moved away from Port to new locations up the river; however, there was sufficient overflow to provide plenty of activity in Port itself. The two piers, Station Pier and the more westerly Princes Pier, had quite different functions at that time. Station Pier housed the overseas passenger terminal and all passenger liners to Melbourne berthed here. Passenger liners were still the main source of overseas travel until the early 1970s and the great P&O liners such as the *Orcades*, *Arcadia*, *Oriana* and *Canberra*, docked here. European migration brought the *Fairstar*, *Fairsky* and *Fair Princess* of the Sitmar Line, and the *Australis* and *Patris* of the Chandris Line and many others. Then there were the regular visits by American warships and inspections on their open days when I always seemed to come away with a prized American sailor's 'gob' cap.

Having lived in Port all his life my father Robert (Bob) had a great fascination with ships. His brother Hugh had joined the Navy in the 1920s and his uncle, Captain Robert Water-Kilpatrick, had been the master of many of the paddle steamers which plied Port Phillip Bay including the *Weeroona*, *Hygeia* and *Ozone*. There are streets in 'The Bend' named after these ships. Dad also knew most of the Port Officers, either because they lived locally, or from his work in the iron and steel division of Elder Smith and Co. which regularly took him to the docks to supervise shipments.

The result was that as a boy I must have at some time 'inspected' nearly every passenger and cargo ship that docked in Port Melbourne. Dad would take us down of an evening and nod to the officer on the gangplank and we would walk aboard

and tour the ship. It sounds boring but it always seemed exciting at the time. Later in 1972 I savoured the excitement of leaving Port when I sailed to England on the Fairstar. I will never forget the bustle of getting aboard, finding the cabin and streamers. I can still remember being alarmed because my brother-in-law Geoff and cousin Phil were still on board throwing streamers with me long after the 'final call'.



Throwing streamers was a way for passengers and families to bid farewell as the ship left the dock. Courtesy of The Age.

However, they timed it to perfection and got off just before the gangplank was raised. Sadly my father passed away in 1964 and wasn't there to share the experience.

I left Station Pier by ship a second time in 1988 when I sailed on the South Australian Square Rigged Training Ship One and All and spent an interesting 10 days sailing to Adelaide into weather conditions up to force 10. I had been involved in

supporting the effort to build the ship in the 1980s and I was given the honour of taking the helm and steering the ship up Port Phillip Bay.

1972 was at the very end of the passenger liner era which had flourished in the 1950s and 1960s when migrants were

brought to Australia by ship and young Australians in their thousands backfilled the ships to embark on their own great adventure to Europe. I remember that in 1972 the fare was \$400 for the 6-week journey, fully found, with three huge meals a day but I seem to recall spending nearly that much again socialising on board. By comparison the airfare to Europe was about \$800 so the end cost was probably much the same but we had more fun! By the mid 1970s airfares had fallen and airplanes superseded the passenger ships which were refitted and used for cruises mainly out of Sydney, and the passenger ship activity in Port went into decline.

Princes Pier had a quite different function to Station Pier. It was the cargo ship pier and the scene of more day to day activity than Station Pier. The pier was directly opposite the Commonwealth Oil Refinery (C.O.R.) oil storage complex so many tankers berthed here and discharged their cargo through pipes directly into the holding tanks.

For me the most fascinating aspect of the shipping was watching the great liners berth and leave port. The tug and pilot stations were across the Yarra River outlet in Williamstown and the ships would indicate when they needed the tugs and the pilot by giving a series of short blasts on their whistles. Leaving from one of the outer (seaward) berths seemed fairly straightforward as the ships could basically be reversed out into the channel. Berthing or leaving from one of the inner berths was more delicate and required great co-operation between the tugs as some would have to pull or take the strain while the others gently nudged the ship in the opposite direction. If one of the big liners was turned in the area between Station and Princes Piers, it was a spectacular sight as you are probably no more than 100 metres from the

action. The tugs had a mystique of their own, and some, like the great steam tug 'Howard Smith', was just as famous as the great liners they serviced.

The lifeblood of the working port was the railway. There were large railway yards located between Swallow Street and the main railway line with spur lines to the oil storage complex and Princes Pier. Another spur line ran across Swallow Street where there were manual railway gates and past the land lighthouse between Garden City Reserve and the oil tanks, then across Beacon Road where it turned south towards the beach between Beacon Road and Barak Road and then west along the foreshore parallel to the Boulevard.



Graham Street Railway Gates - PMHPS

This railway was partly lined with old wool and grain stores so the outlook along the foreshore was not very attractive. I

believe that the original plan was to have another spur line run down Howe Parade, hence its width, but as far as I am aware there was never a line there.

The yards exited via the railway crossing at Graham Street which was a double crossing with two sets of old traditional railway gates. One set served the passenger line and the other the freight line. The gates were manually controlled from the signalman's box where he could be seen turning the huge wheel which operated the gate mechanism. The two sets of gates rarely were closed at the same time but when they were it was possible to get caught in no man's land between the two sets. A similar single set of gates and signal box operated at the Bridge Street crossing.

Although the passenger line had long been electrified, the freight was still hauled by steam trains and they could regularly be seen working in the yards. The trains would have to cross Graham Street and into a siding area along Evans Street in order to gain room to shunt back into the main yards, and if you got caught at the gates during a shunt you would be in for a long wait. The yards have been redeveloped for residential housing.

The electric passenger trains were of the 'red rattler' type. The 'modern' ones had sliding doors and an open plan but the older types had individual compartments with doors that opened outwards. The picture holders in these old carriages were adorned with fading photographs of Ferntree Gully and Sassafras and other parts of the Dandenong Ranges and had clearly not been changed for thirty years.

Among features I remember, especially in the early 1950s, were the Wool and Grain Stores. Much of the huge

Commonwealth Wool Stores complex to the north of Plummer Street is still there but there were also the stores along the Beacon Road/Barak Road/Foreshore railway spur I mentioned earlier. These were beginning to fall into disuse even in the 1950s but I still remember nearly being hit by a steam engine as my grandmother and I collected fallen grain from between the tracks to feed our chooks. The stores were knocked down about 1960 and the land lay waste for years until it was redeveloped for housing. I also remember a store in Plummer Street catching fire in the late 1960s or early 1970s and it created a massive blaze.

The other major storage complex was the Commonwealth Oil Refinery (COR) tank storage along Beacon and Beach Roads opposite Princes Pier. This complex actually grew in size during the 1950s and 1960s presumably as the demand for oil increased. I'm fairly sure that it was just a storage and distribution point as the refining was done across the river in Altona. This area has also been redeveloped as part of the Beacon Cove residential development.

### **Beaches 'n the Foreshore**

Port's beaches were never in the great category as they were broken into a series of small sandy coves by the piers and other foreshore developments, but they were close to where people lived so the beach was an integral part of growing up in Port.

The beaches were essentially the same as they are now although sand retention schemes have made them sandier and more attractive. We usually swam at Sandridge as it was the biggest beach and the one closest to home. In his younger days Dad was a member and secretary of the Sandridge Lifesaving Club. There was another beach area where Webb Dock is now

but it wasn't used for swimming as it couldn't be accessed easily. Access was off Williamstown Road along a dirt track which ended up running along the top of a dirt sea wall. Dad and I would sometimes go there to walk our dog or use the paddle board he made for me. Around 1960 a terminal was built here for the new Tasmanian car ferry called the Princess of Tasmania (nickname the 'POT'). Of course I had the mandatory inspection of the POT soon after it went into service. The ferry terminal eventually was developed into Webb Dock and the passenger ferry operations moved to Station Pier.

Sandridge Beach wasn't as long as it is today because between the corner of where Beacon Road becomes Beach Street and about the start of The Bend (i.e. the road) was a



Children playing at the beach.

London Family Hotel and Swallow and Ariel factories in background - PMHPS

stepped concrete sea wall. In the 1950s there was a rusting hull of a small ship partly buried in the sand about halfway along the wall but I can't remember the ship's name or how long it

had been there, though I have a vague recollection of seeing it as a child when it floundered which would put it in the early 1950s.

Between the western end of the concrete seawall and Princes Pier was another small beach where we also swam but it was fairly dirty from its proximity to the pier. The end of the seawall here had a hole in it and as very young children we would go through it into the hollow area in the sea wall looking for treasure.

Digressing for a moment, there was a local story about a fortune in gold which went missing in the 1800s when a sailing ship broke its moorings at the Town Pier and floundered along the beach. Perhaps this treasure is the one we never found as children.

Beyond Princes Pier at that time there was of course no housing along Beach Street and the roadway was very wide and ran directly along the seafront which was retained by a wooden sea wall. Halfway between the piers was a lighthouse, accessed by a rickety old wooden walkway, which lined up with the land lighthouse at the Garden City Reserve. Both lighthouses remain after the new development and I think still line up through a gap left between the houses.

This area between the two piers could produce strong wave surges in a storm and waves would frequently hit the sea wall and break well across Beach Street which was at least twice the width of a normal road. I distinctly remember being in a bus which was broadsided by a large wave breaking over the wall. I can only assume that the area is too shallow now to present a problem to the apartments which have been built directly along the foreshore.



I also remember a particularly severe storm in the early 1960s caused a cargo ship to break its moorings at Princes Pier and swing at a right angle to the pier and parallel to the foreshore. Fortunately, it fitted perfectly in the space between the pier and the light house and no damage was done. It took several days to refloat as it had stuck fast in the sand.

Along the landward side of Beach Street were the oil tanks I mentioned earlier and a shop which I presume did a good trade from the pier workers and oil workers. I remember it as a place to buy ice creams and malted milk shakes. My mates and I would fish for crabs from a landing jetty just opposite it by dangling a piece of meat on a string. We occasionally caught one but not knowing what to do with them just threw



Australian Government Engine Works - PMHPS

them back. Further along Beach Street were the end of part of the rail yards then the Missions to Seamen building and at the corner of Swallow Street was the Commonwealth Engine Works.

This factory would build diesel ship engines and fully

assemble them for testing before installation. Needless to say Dad and I did numerous inspections of these engines while they were being tested. I apologise to any former residents who might read this but both my sister and I remember being warned not to hang around Swallow Street as several particularly unsavoury characters apparently lived there, although I used to regularly visit a mate who lived at the beach end of the street without ever being mugged.

At Station Pier, Beach Street went over a concrete monstrosity call the Centenary Bridge, built in 1936 (Melbourne's centenary) to take the road over the railway line extension from the Port Melbourne Station to the pier. Halfway up the bridge was the main road entrance ramp running down to the pier although there was road access from Beach Street alongside where the bridge started and you could also access under the bridge where the train lines ran and there were a couple of sets of concrete stairs on either side. I know not everyone (including my sister Joy) agrees but as far as I'm concerned if ever the redevelopment of the area did Port a favour it was to get rid of the Centenary Bridge.

The western side of Station Pier appears to be largely unchanged although I recall that there was a kiosk on the corner of the customs building (at least I think it was the customs building). On the eastern side was another jetty with a landing stage in another building which also housed a kiosk usually only open in summer. This was the jetty which you jumped off if you were game and/or stupid. I think this jetty has mainly gone and last time I was there it had been replaced by an exceedingly ugly concrete walkway which could only have been designed by a descendant of the designer of the Centenary Bridge, although I think it may have since

thankfully suffered the same fate. I used to duck dive with Dad and Uncle Hugh to collect mussels from the piles of this jetty. We would only take the bigger mussels but later a rake and bucket device was introduced which stripped the piles bare regardless of size and the mussel numbers declined. I think I read somewhere that the Port Melbourne mussel was a distinct subspecies.

The beach on the eastern side of the Station Pier was very popular as it served Port proper whereas Sandridge was more the Garden City beach. I also swam a lot at this beach because my cousins lived in Station Street and later Stokes Street and I often went swimming here with them and Uncle Hugh. The beach was divided by a small jetty about level with the end of Princes Street and there were remains of another jetty further along the beach towards the yacht club.

Directly opposite this beach was the Swallow and Ariell factory which made biscuits and the best plum puddings in Australia. My Uncle Hugh and Great Uncle Cowan spent all their working lives here and my uncle used to tell me that they had large cellars where they would mature their own cheese for use in some recipes. Swallows also made its own brand of ice cream at a factory further down Rouse Street next to St Joseph's School. Eventually the baking business was sold to Arnotts and the ice cream business was taken over by Peters. The building was turned into apartments and I think it is still there.

Swallows used to hold a Christmas party for the workers children and my uncle's allocation of tickets was always enough to include my sister and me. The party was held in a big upstairs area which I assume was the canteen and would

have the usual party food, a clown for entertainment and of course a visit and a gift from Father Christmas. Because many of our friends worked on the wharves I also attended a number of “wharfies” picnic days when we would all get on chartered buses and travel to a country location such as Ferntree Gully for a day of picnicking and games.

I believe that the old cable car terminus was just outside Swallows but it was long gone by my day. However, the tracks were still there and were not pulled up until the 1960s when the median strip was put down Beach Street and Bay Streets. The rails were set in a base of fitted redgum blocks, about 300mm x 150mm which had been tarred over. They must have pulled up thousands of these blocks as the line went all the way up Bay Street then City Road to the city. From what I remember the blocks appeared to be in perfect condition and still retained the typical red hue of freshly cut wood.

Further along, just in front of the Bay Street intersection with Beach Street, was the yacht club which is still there. In earlier days this was the site of the original Town Pier and when I was growing up there were still many of the wooden piles which had supported it protruding from the water. When I visited Greenwich in England in 1972 I was chuffed to see a photograph in the great clipper Cutty Sark showing it moored at Port’s Town Pier in the 1800s. Sadly this photograph probably was destroyed when the Cutty Sark caught fire several years ago.

Further east was the lagoon beach (also called Liardet’s beach) and jetty which is little changed but I never swam there as a child as it had a bit of a ‘reputation’ for what went on in the small sand dunes which still remain there. Similarly, we

rarely swam along the long sweep of beach which began where Beach Street becomes Beaconsfield Parade because this was where Port ended and it was 'Beyond the Pale'.

## **The River**

The Yarra River itself never played a great role in my childhood simply because it was largely inaccessible. The river at the Port end was a working river and the banks were either lined with wharves or fenced off as restricted areas so you couldn't access the river itself. However, the river did have swampy mud flats in the area to the west of Salmon Street which proved a natural playground for children.

In those days there were no bridges across the river from the Port side and it was necessary to go all the way round via Spencer Street Bridge and Footscray Road to get to Williamstown unless you took the Williamstown Road ferry which went from the end of Williamstown Road across the river to a point just in front of the Newport Power Station.



The 2<sup>nd</sup> Williamstown Ferry operated from 1907 - 1931. Image shows the roads leading to the ferry - PMHPS



The 3<sup>rd</sup> Williamstown Ferry operated from 1932 - 1974. Courtesy of Reg Macey

There was also a small passenger ferry which ran from a landing further up the river across to Yarraville. I cannot recall

exactly where it was located but I think it must have been past the end of Lorimer Street, which in those days didn't connect up with Todd Road, near to where the river takes the bend to the south. The landing point was in the middle of a ships' graveyard of old hulks and I think the Polly Woodside might of been amongst them before it was restored. I only went on this ferry once or twice for fun but I think it may have been skippered by the son of my uncle Captain Robert Water-Kilpatrick who I mentioned earlier and I think that the skipper lived nearby on one of the old hulks.

Speaking of the Polly Woodside, the Duke and Orr's dry dock where she is berthed was still a working dry dock in the 1950s and early 1960s and Dad would take me there to watch the water being pumped out and see the ships chocked for maintenance. Of course I had to go down into the dry dock and inspect the ships from underneath to ensure the work had been done properly.

The mudflats between Williamstown Road and the river were partly restricted land but had areas where you could ride a bicycle or motorbike or just generally 'muck about'. Part of the area was used for the Port Melbourne tip and another part had an old airstrip on it, probably belonging to the Commonwealth Aircraft Factory on Lorimer Street which was used for car racing. My mates and I would gain free entry to the races by walking across the mud flats.

### **Shops, Pubs 'n Places**

By the 1950s the day of the corner store which sold everything had passed but many shops still remained as milk bars and others had been converted into residences.

My Auntie Rene, who was the first of my mother's family to

come to Port, ran a typical corner store on the corner of Ingles and Heath Streets in the 1930s and she is pictured outside 'Miss Jago's Corner Shop' in a photograph in the Port Melbourne Calendar of 2001.



Miss Jago's Shop - PMHPS

Most milk bars just had a counter but there was a milk bar on the corner of Station and Graham Streets near the railway gates nicknamed 'Grahamy Gates' which had tables and a pinball machine so it was a bit of a teenager hangout although I was too young to be involved. Immediately across the road was an elaborate drinking fountain and horse trough which was quite a feature. Next to the milk bar was Ingolby's barber shop where Dad and I had our hair cut. Dad was a good friend of Mr Ingolby and because the Ingolbys lived above the shop we used to check on the shop when the Ingolbys went on holiday. It always seemed strange going into the empty shop even though I knew it well. Next door to that I think was the bootmaker and on the corner of Princes Street, a hotel.

Across the road on the south-west corner of Graham and

Princes Street was another corner shop which was converted into a fish and chip shop. It was run by a migrant called I think Peter. I would bike to Peter's fish and chip shop every Friday night to get tea because being Catholics we didn't eat meat on Fridays. I would bring it home wrapped in newspaper in my cotton 'bicycle bag' which was slung over my shoulder. If I got caught by a shunting train at the gate then tea would be cold.

Diagonally opposite Peter's fish and chip shop on the north east-corner of Graham and Princes Street was another pub, the Foresters' Arms, known as 'FitzHenry's', I suppose after the publican or a former publican. This was the pub where my father and all his family 'drank'. I have no idea how many pubs there were in Port at this time but I remember doing a count in the late 1960s and I could remember at least 40 still operating then and in the 1950s there would have been many more. Even amongst Port's pubs FitzHenry's had a reputation. You wouldn't just walk in off the street and have a drink; right of entry was more or less earned by birth. All I can remember of the pub was a small bar with a totally stark interior with no tables or chairs and great lemon squashes. I'm not even sure that it had a parlour for the ladies. FitzHenry's was demolished when the railway overpass was built the 1970s.

Like all the older areas of Port there was a night cart laneway running behind the Pub and the houses in Princes Street (it is still there) and an SP (starting price) bookie used to operate in the lane on Saturdays and Cup Day. Occasionally the police would do a raid but I imagine that this was for show as the SP operation was well known to everyone in Port. By the time the police arrived the bookie was nowhere to be seen and had fled to the safety of my great uncle Cowan's and aunt Alice's back yard which backed onto the laneway. They had a telephone



and I understood took the starting price calls for the bookie and my uncle Hugh said as a child he acted as a runner for the bookie of his day. My great uncle's residence at 176 Princes Street was itself a converted hotel.

Shops outside of Bay Street were congregated into little strips which contained shops supplying the basics such as groceries and meat and perhaps a sub-newsagency which sold papers, magazines and stamps. Even Bay Street tended to be groups of similar shops with others that came and went in between, although it had the larger stores like the hardware stores and the main Post Office and Authorised Newsagency as well. I remember that Bay Street had a Chinese take away and a hamburger shop as well as a fish and chip shop which would have been the closest thing to restaurants in Port as the pubs didn't provide meals in those days.

Page Avenue, where we lived, was not particularly close to such a shopping strip. The nearest was at The Bend which had a delicatessen, grocery store, post office/newsagency, hairdressers, milk bar and chemist. This shopping strip still exists. It was also the Garden City bus terminus. The buses were the old Bedford or Leyland buses with a big protruding engine bay with the driver in a separate cabin alongside the engine. They were single decker with a front and back door, sometimes with a back platform inside the back door. They were painted in Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Board green with yellow trim and of course had a conductor. The post office/newsagency at The Bend was run by my Auntie Rene of the corner shop fame, who by now had married Alan North and lived at 36 Edwards Avenue just around the corner from us in Page Avenue. Aunt Rene's shop also was a dry cleaning agency and I'm sure if there are any old residents still

around they would remember her well.

We didn't use The Bend shops much except Aunt Rene's and the chemist. Our grocery store was Scoble's in Graham Street between Princes and Stokes Street and we used the butcher next door to him whose name I have forgotten. Scoble's was a typical old grocery store with an entire wall covered in large biscuit tins and Mr Scoble wore a full length white apron. The Scobles lived on the corner of Page Avenue and Edwards Avenue so I imagine that there was a sense of loyalty in using him as our grocer. All the shops on this side of Graham Street were demolished when the railway overpass was built except for Hogan's bakery on the corner of Stokes Street which survived and continued to produce the best square pies in Melbourne although it eventually closed.

Not that distance from the shops really mattered as meat and groceries and other supplies were delivered to your door each week. The grocery and butcher boys would come on Thursday and take your order and then return on Friday with



Rae Stuart with milk cart - PMHPS

the goods for which you paid COD. Fruit and vegetables were supplied by Mr Vin from his van which also came round once a week. I'm pretty sure the Vin was his Christian name and I never heard him called by his surname.

Milk and bread were delivered daily and in the 1950s they still came by horse drawn cart. Milk came unhomogenised in bottles so the cream rose to the top and could be skimmed off to use on your cereal.

The bread was unsliced and could be broken down the middle to give that prized lumpy end bit. In the early 1950s we still had an ice chest and ice too came by horse drawn cart. We would run after the cart on hot days to get a piece of ice from the driver. The rubbish carts were also horse drawn and there were two collections a week. However, probably the favourite horse and cart was the summer ice cream cart which served 'dixie' ice cream buckets years before Mr Whippy came on the scene. My grandmother and old Mr Halfpenny who lived a couple of doors down on the opposite side of Page Avenue used to compete for the horse droppings to put on the garden.

My great uncle Bill Kilpatrick, who lived in Ross Street, had stables in his back yard and where he looked after three or four council Clydesdales even though he must've been close to 80 at the time. Uncle Bill apparently drove Clydesdales for Dame Nellie Melba's father (he was a builder) and he was severely wounded on 25 April 1915 landing at Gallipoli ('The Dardanelles Campaign' as my old relatives called it). Dad had Uncle Bill's WWI leather leggings in the garage for years.

Because we were a fair way from the proper shops there was a 'dairy' shop located in the back yard of a house in Crichton Avenue. I think it was number 11 as my mate Geoff Bainbridge

lived next door and I pretty sure that he was number 9. There was no sign up advertising the shop, you walked up the driveway and around the back to a small brick building with the window counter and rang the bell. It sold milk and other dairy products, ice cream, soft drinks and cigarettes. The couple who ran it were European, possibly Hungarian, and it operated for about 15-20 years.

The Port Melbourne football club was the focus of port sporting passion. Names like 'Mopsy' Fraser, Frank Johnson, 'Shacky' Landorf, Bernie Laffey, Robbie Freyer and of course the greatest full forward ever Bobby Bonnett got Port to 8 grand finals in a row in the 1950s. My sister and I went every Saturday afternoon with Dad and I once saw Bonnett have a glass of beer at three quarter time to quench his thirst. This might seem odd to the purists but it was just so he could calm his nerves and slot one of his trademark torpedoes straight through the middle from an impossible angle to win the game. The problem was that Port only won the 1953 Grand Final and lost most of the rest to the hated Williamstown. It still hurts to speak about it even today.

Murphy's Reserve along Williamstown Road was the largest sporting complex in Port. I seem to recall that it was originally laid out as a golf links as I remember the remnants of a couple of bunkers still around in the 1950s. The soccer club was established properly late 1950s and I remember watching games which had crowds 4 or 5 deep even then. As a teenager I played cricket for Garden City on the oval at the opposite end to the soccer ground. The Garden City team was formed by old Harold Halfpenny from Page Avenue and it consisted of one team which played in an under 16 competition so you only ever played for a few years. We won the premiership a

couple of times when I played, not because of any great contribution from me but from my bat which was the best in the club and our gun batters like Teddy Wale and Mike Woodruff regularly used it to score 100s.

Apart from the North Port Oval where the Port Cricket and Football Clubs were based there was also the Lagoon Oval over the other side of Bay Street and a smaller one down in 'Bagdad' (Julier Oval?).

### **Family, Friends, School 'n Neighbours**

I'm sure there were many Port 'characters' around when I was growing up but because I was only a child my memories revolve mainly around family, friends, school and neighbours.

I mentioned that my paternal great grandfather had settled in Port in the 1870s and his wife Thirza Portbury probably lived there much earlier than that. They had seven children and Thirza had two others from an earlier marriage to a sea captain named Wate who had drowned when his ship went down (that's where Captain Wate-Kilpatrick comes in as he was the son of this sea captain) and a sister who married Francis Hilderbandt, a local grocer and raised a family in Port; so by the time I was growing up I was related to a fair percentage of the population although I didn't always know just how.

I have documents that show my great grandfather Hugh and his wife Thirza were living at Railway Place Sandridge in 1878, 95 Rouse Street in 1887 and at 120 Clark Street in 1905. My father, his brothers and mother lived at 36 Clark Street before they moved to Page Avenue in 1940.

My father and his two older brothers Hugh and Albert all

attended Graham Street Primary School. Hugh entered the navy in the 1920s and in the 1930s was seconded to the British Navy and he and my widowed grandmother Mabel lived in England for several years. He served as private secretary to the British Admiral Evans and was awarded the British Empire Medal for this service. On his return home he was apparently given a civic reception at the Port Town Hall to mark this achievement. Hugh returned to active service during the war and died in 1950.

My father Robert (Bob) also served in the war enlisting in 1939. He would've preferred to enter the Navy but was placed in the Air Force where he served as an armourer and later aerial reconnaissance with 13 squadron based in Darwin during the Japanese attacks and was shot down during the evacuation of Ambon. My grandmother, who was back in Garden City by this time, received a telegram with the news that he was missing in action and because of the delay in receiving communications during the war Dad arrived home and walked in the back door before my grandmother heard that he had survived. She apparently fainted on the spot. Dad later served in New Guinea with 5 squadron as an aerial gunner.

My mother Bette and her sisters Nell (married to George Rawlings) and Maureen (who married my father's cousin Hugh Kilpatrick) had followed Auntie Renée to Port from Port Fairy in the Western District in the 1930s. The fifth sister Marge (married to Dan Reilly) lived at Windsor but they took over the Station Hotel on the corner of Station Street and Bridge Street in the 1960s and lived on the premises for a while. It was one of the first pubs in Port Melbourne to offer counter lunches and my mother and her sisters all worked in

the kitchen. My grandmother came to live with her daughters in Port after the death of my grandfather in 1941.

During the war years my grandmother, mother, Auntie Renée and Auntie Maureen rented 98 Station Street on the corner of Farrell Street and after the girls married and moved out and my grandmother had come to live with us at Page Avenue, 98 Station Street was rented by Auntie Nell and Uncle George for years; so although we never owned the property, it tended to be viewed as the family home. My mother told stories how during the war many young American soldiers, who were very homesick, would spend all day at number 98 just talking about home to Nan, although I imagine that her three unmarried daughters might also have provided some attraction. I can remember that the property had a pressed metal ceiling and pressed metal lower walls in the hall which would fetch a fortune today. The house is still there in 2010.

Our social life revolved around family. Every Saturday night I, Mum, Dad, my sister Joy, and Nan would be joined by Dad's unmarried brother Albert, Auntie Maureen, Uncle Hugh and their children Brian and Trina for tea. Two older cousins Alan North (Auntie Rene's son) and Terry Reilly (Auntie Marge's son) would also come for tea before heading out for the night. This makes twelve for tea every Saturday night. My sister Joy recalls that tea in winter was tripe (the lining of the sheep's stomach) with mashed potatoes and white sauce spiced with onions. In summer it was sliced cold pressed tongue with salad. I remember Mum would press the tongue in a big bowl with a large weight. I tell my own children that we used to eat offal but the experience had eroded the specific sordid details from my mind.

After tea we would set up the card table and play gin rummy or euchre or 'pick up sticks' until 'Red' Newman, a friend who lived in Howe Parade, arrived and made a foursome with Dad and my uncles to play 500. They would play to about 11:00 pm when dad would drive everyone home. This Saturday night routine continued all through the 1950s until dad died in 1964.

The other big family occasions were Christmas and New Year. We did Christmas lunch for much the same cast as Saturday night but with several other relatives thrown in as well. Christmas was the only time we had chicken which came from our own chooks in the back yard. Dad was too squeamish to do the killing so Nan did the dirty work and I had to hold the chooks while she lopped off their heads. They were then tied upside down to the fence so the blood would drain out and I remember one getting away and fluttering headless over the back fence. Nan also made the Christmas puddings well in advance which were hung in muslin in the laundry to mature. The traditional silver sixpences and threepences were mixed in as they were cooked. After lunch we lazed around and then went around the corner to Auntie Rene's for Christmas tea followed by a party which usually ended with songs around the piano.

New Year's Eve was always a party at our place for family and friends. It was drinks, nibbles and dancing to 78rpm records. At a couple of minutes to midnight we would all gather on the nature strip and wait for the ships' whistles to go off signalling in the new year. We would then join hands and sing Old Lang Syne as people from another party around the corner came down the road in a line banging the traditional pots and pans.



My mother's family were Catholics so my sister and I attended Saint Joseph's Primary School which was then on the corner of Rouse and Bay streets and run by Brigidine Sisters from Kilbride Convent in Middle Park. School was very regimented in those days and before school and after lunch when the big bell sounded we would line up in our classes and march into school to the beat of a drum. The bell was a large hand bell and also sounded the start of lunch and the end of school and the Angelus at midday every day.

The boys and girls had separate yards divided by the lunch room, bike rack and shelter shed and the toilet block. A small open gateway in the bike shelter connected the two yards. On the Bay Street side was a small space between the school and the high cyclone fence which was common ground for boys and girls. The cyclone fence extended along the Rouse Street side of the boys' yard and back of the yards was formed by the high bricked wall of the next door ice cream factory which was the backstop for all sorts of ball games; cricket, pack marks etc. The other side of the girls' yard was the wall of the adjoining shop. The school itself had a brick ledge about three feet off the ground and this was used for 'ledgies' or as the line for 'downball'. There were no grassed areas, just asphalt, but grades 6 and 7 could go to the Lagoon Oval at lunchtime. There were also races around the school which meant running through the girls' yard which seemed to be tolerated so long as there was no lingering. I assume that the girls had their own games.

Boys and girls entered the school through different entrances at opposite ends of the main corridor and if your class was upstairs then you went up by different staircases. The classes were combined but the girls sat on one side of the room

and the boys on the other.

The building no longer stands but it was two storied, red brick and on the Bay Street side of the ground floor we had the rooms for babies (reception) grade 1 then grade 2. On the opposite side, separated by the corridor, there was a staircase at either end and between them the home economics room at the girls' end and grade 3. The canteen could be entered through a door alongside the girls' stairs and I think it must have been built in under the stairs which were quite wide. There was a similar room used as a cloak room under the boys' stairs. The canteen distributed free quarter bottles of milk from the Government milk scheme. These had usually sat out in the sun after delivery and tasted disgusting.

Upstairs, along the yard side between the two staircases, were a small music room, grade 4, grade 5 and the nuns' lunchroom. On the Bay Street side were grade 6 and the combined grades 7 and 8. The rooms were created by large folding panels so they could be combined easily. The desks, which sat two people, were lined up in rows and had ceramic inkwells filled with a black ink which had been mixed by the ink monitor in a huge old teapot. We used dip pens and I think that by grade 7 we were allowed to use fountain pens but never those diabolical inventions of Baron Bic.

All the class teachers were nuns although a couple of specialist teachers came in each week. From memory, in my time Sister Teresa took babies, Mother Peter had grade 1, Mother Amard grade 2, Mother Bonaventure (everyone's favourite) had grade 3, I'm not sure about grade 4 and I think it was Mother Paula in grade 5. Grade 6 was Sister Jerome and grade 7 and 8 were taught by the head nun, the dreaded

Mother Loreto. Sister Jerome was a bit of a wag and when we lined up ready to go into grade 7 for the first time I distinctly heard her quoting the lines from Alice in Wonderland 'the time has come the walrus said'. I can't remember if the music



St. Joseph's Primary School, Port Melbourne cnr Rouse & Bay Streets - PMHPS

teacher was the famous old Mother Anthony or another old nun but she ruined my music career in grade 2 by sending me out of the recorder class for hitting a wrong note. I never returned.

Mr Driscoll came in once a fortnight to take singing. The songs were very traditional such as Waltzing Matilda and Advance Australia Fair and we used to compete in school Eisteddfods from time to time. Miss Holyoake came in on the opposite fortnight to give elocution classes and had a favourite poem about 'The little word Oh!'

As I am writing this I am looking at my grade 6 school photograph from 1958 which shows 13 boys and 32 girls a total

of 45 in the class. I don't know if this gender bias was unusual or the norm. I can remember most of the boys, Brian Bell, Barry Urmston, Trevor King, John Gaunt, Michael Woodruff, Ray Donchie, Jimmy Stewart, John King, Peter Bedford, Garry Dowling and Trevor Bishop. I should know the other one who was Maltese but his name escapes me. A couple of others such as Peter Russo and Peter Carroll must have been away that day. I remember most of the girls' faces but not many names. Mary Muscat, Christine Conroy, Christine Collins, Yvonne Collins, Christine Woodruff, Mary Foy, Pam McMillan, Janet Murray and Bernadette McKew come to mind together with a few other first names; if I only had written the names on the back like Mum told me to do! I have appended the photograph and I am the fat kid, third from the right in the top row as you look at it between Peter Bedford and Garry Dowling.

St Joseph's Church run by the Carmelite Fathers was (and still is) on the next block down on the corner of Stokes and Rouse Streets and obviously played a big role in our school life. We would walk down in twos to Friday benediction and the school fete and plays were held in the Church Hall. I didn't go to Sunday Mass here much as Sunday Mass was also held in a hall at 'The Bend' opposite the shopping centre. I should remember more of the priests' names because I was an altar boy, but only Father O'Farrell who baptised me and Father Shortis come to mind. My parents were married at St Joseph's as was my sister and both my sister and I were baptised there.

My best mates were John Sidwell. who lived opposite on the corner of Page Avenue and Crichton Avenue and Geoff Bainbridge, who lived in Crichton Avenue. With others around the area we would play pick up football and cricket games every night after school on Murphy's Reserve and in

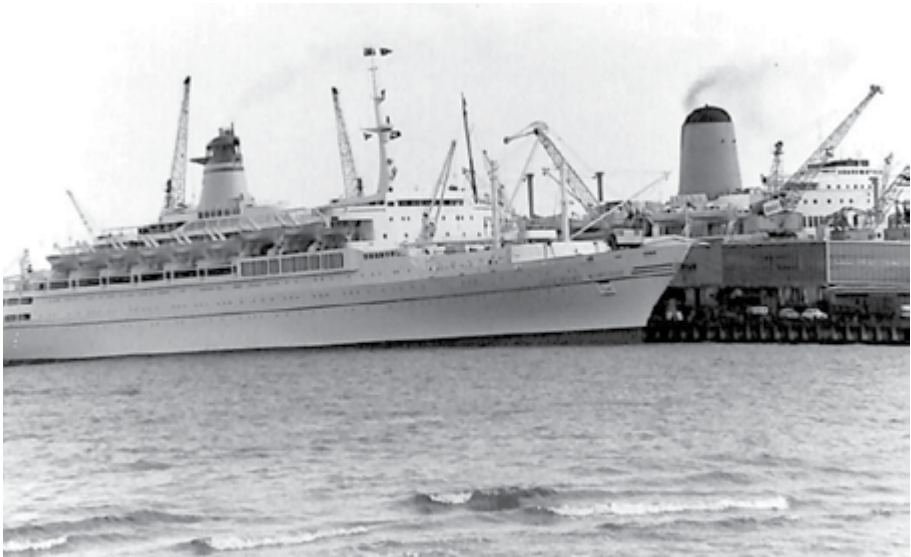
summer would continue the cricket games after tea in the street with a cricket ball which had been painted white long before World Series Cricket took up the idea.

John's father made him a couple of plywood paddle boards and I got Dad to make me one as well. They were a 1950s forerunner of the surf ski. We would take them to the beach on a hand cart made by John's dad. John, Geoff and I would paddle from Sandridge along the foreshore and under the piers to the Princes Street beach. There were a few kids there who had peroxided their hair and bought the new fibreglass surfboards. They looked down on our paddle boards but didn't know how to surf any more than we did. At least we could paddle under the piers and along the beach front while all they could do was lie on their boards and let the swells wash over them.

John and I once found a small boat about 8 feet long abandoned amongst the mud flats. We brought it home and set about restoring it. We bought timber rails home on our bikes from Earl's Timber Yard and kept them wet as we bent them into new gunwales. We then covered the hull in canvas to make it water tight. Actually John did all the work as he was the practical one, Geoff and I just supervised. I thought that we could row across to Williamstown in it but John didn't think we should go beyond the end of the pier. We launched it off the concrete sea wall and about 5 metres out it began to take water. We dragged it along to the end of the sea wall and abandoned it again.

The Greek migration was in full swing in the 1950s and the house next door in Page Avenue was rented early on by a Greek family. Dad had a work car, and over the next few years

as more of their family, and brides to be arrived from Greece, Dad would go down to the ship and bring back the new arrivals and their baggage. In gratitude Mum and Dad would be invited to the weddings and I had my first encounter with the traditional gift of sugar coated almonds. Many of these Greek migrants settled in the area but since many European migrants, particularly Greek migrants, in the 1950s and 1960s never had surnames because we Anglo Saxons found



SS Guglielmo Marconi - PMHPS

Papadopoulos or Mitsios impossible to pronounce, I only remember them by their Christian names i.e. Mr Peter, Mr Chris and his mother Mrs Chris etc., so I unfortunately wouldn't know if they or their descendants still live in the area.

I had two Greek mates Con and Omiros but they moved to South Melbourne where their parents opened a fish and chip shop and I lost contact.

The nearest telephone box as I recall was on the corner of Emery Street and Williamstown Road but obviously it

couldn't be used to receive calls. Since we had one of the few telephones (MJ (64) 1998) in the street we would take calls and I would deliver the notes to the neighbours. Unfortunately, incoming calls were likely to be bad news. Before we had the telephone put on in the early 1960s, in an extreme emergency we could use Mrs Barry's from next door. Her telephone must have been the first in the street as it was the old-fashioned wall type with a fixed mouthpiece and a separate earpiece. Mrs Barry was the mother of Justice Sir John Barry, a Supreme Court Judge. There was also a fire alarm at the corner of Page Avenue and Howe Parade which was activated by smashing the glass and pressing the bell.

I can remember the faces of most of the immediate neighbours in Page Avenue in the 1950s and 1960s but not all the names. We lived at no 27 which was directly opposite Crichton Avenue and Mrs Ridewood lived at no 29 (later rented by the Greek family I mentioned); no 25 was owned in the 1950s by the O'Days, then Mrs Barry and later the Edwards; the Heatheralds were at no 23 and the Powells at number 21; no 19 was rented by a younger couple whose name I can't remember; the Keys were at no 17 and Alan Miller lived on the corner of Page Avenue and Edwards Avenue. The Scobles lived on the other western corner. Around the corner into Edwards Avenue going west were the Manns, then the Moores, the Jarretts and the Stewarts who later moved to Sydney and sold to the Elliotts. Nearly opposite on the south side of Edwards Avenue I remember the Plumridges and my Aunty Rene and Uncle Alan North lived at no 36. The Allports lived on the south side of Edwards Avenue as well but back across Page Avenue.

On the Western side of Page Avenue beginning at Crichton

Avenue were the Sidwells, the Frosts and the Halfpennys. Further along that side over Edwards Avenue were the Walshes and the McKews. I know that I should remember more names but it's been 35 years since I left.

## **Last Words**

I'm sure that everyone has an opinion on whether the vast redevelopment of the last decade has been good or bad for Port. Initially I was on the positive side because by the time I left in 1975 Port was dying; the old families were breaking up and moving away and the Port of my childhood was already only a memory and the first developments injected a new vitality. However on my last visit in December 2010 I was very disappointed with much of the redevelopment which just seems to aim to cram as many houses and shops into as small an area as possible without any effort to maintain the character of the place.

Bay Street has now totally lost its character as it is lined with new modern buildings and could be any main street in any suburb in Australia. I have no issue with renovating old buildings for new purposes so long as the buildings and their surrounds maintain their character which in turn helps maintain the character of the area. Sadly, this has not happened in Bay Street and many other parts of Port. I can give no better example than the redevelopment of the Holy Trinity Church of England on the corner of Graham Street and Bay Street. Instead of being the lovely old Church and Hall set back from the footpath giving the corner great character it is now dominated by a modern apartment façade. My grandparents were married and my father baptised in that church and although we were brought up as Catholics and



attended St Joseph's rather than Holy Trinity, my sister and I nearly cried when we saw how that corner had been destroyed. Goodness knows what is in store for the Police Station and Court Complex on the opposite corner.

One ray of hope remains in that the Garden City Bank Estate seems to be intact and despite a few encroachments by 'modernisers' along the Boulevard, the 'Bagdad' Commission Estate also seems intact. I hope that the Governments have the courage to preserve these estates intact and provide a true link to Port's past.

I suppose that there are a few members of the old families left in Port who can correct my memory where I have strayed from the reality. I am more than happy for this to be done as I will still feel I have achieved something by getting some of the record down and jogging the memories of those who retain that special sense of identity that coming from 'Port' gives. Hopefully the newcomers will stay long enough so that in time they too will gain that sense of identity and be proud to say that they too 'Come from Port'.

## *Working in Port*

### *If Walls Could Talk*

**Kevin D. Staines**

#### *Introduction*

*Kevin Staines wrote this account using his own recollections supplemented by material from various other sources stored at the Melbourne Tramway Museum. He spent his working life as an employee of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board and then the Public Transport Corporation from which he retired in 1998.*

*The copy from which this was taken was donated to the PMH&PS. The photos are reproduced with the permission of the Melbourne Tramway Museum as the images in the original document were low resolution.*

*The work culture of the times was, by today's standards, sexist and racist and we have not edited out the evidence for this in the document.*

*Kevin Staines lodged two documents with the Port Melbourne Historical and Preservation Society. The second "If These Walls Could Talk" repeats most of what he wrote in the first one "Life at the Port Melbourne Bus Depot" but puts it into the context of his working life in Victorian public transport which began in 1962 when he became a tram conductor at the Glen Huntly Tram Depot.*

*In 1936 the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board bought the Port Melbourne Stevedores Association building in Bay Street in order to build a bus depot, as part of their plan to replace the Port Melbourne cable tram service with a bus service. The cable tram*

*service closed down in March 1937.*

*Kevin Staines commenced work at this depot in 1964. In his introduction Kevin wrote: "While there still is someone around who remembers this unique bus depot, here are a few humorous stories about this great workplace."*



New Bus Depot 1937, Annual Report MMTB, 1937

## **Port Melbourne, Loyalty to the End**

Port Melbourne being an industrial suburb generated heavy passenger loadings as workers arrived by train and bus to supplement the local workforce. Port Melbourne was also a popular beach picnic area, especially during the hot summer months. The newly developing industrial area of Fisherman's Bend saw the building of new factories, and increased activity along the South Wharf. Under the cable car replacement program it had been planned to replace the cable trams with electric trams. As the Melbourne City Council did not want trams back in Lonsdale Street the proposal was to have the service operate along Bourke Street.

With the coming of the Second World War future electrification of the tram network was put on hold allowing

the depot to play an increasing role in the war effort. Apart from providing services along Bourke Street, additional services were needed in the port area as troops and supplies were loaded onto ships to head overseas. The depot had the capability to park 29 buses as built, but with the war and the extra services the depot was expanded to park around 50 buses. Even then with the austerity buses and furniture vans that had been seconded from private companies, it had become necessary to park the last dozen or so to arrive at the depot in Bay Street along the old cable tram tracks.

After the war and with the proposal for the building of the electrical tramway along Bourke Street being discussed in Parliament, the future of the depot looked very bleak. However, in 1948 a life-line was thrown with the announcement of the General Motors Company, which had amalgamated with the Holden Motor Body Builders of Adelaide in 1931 to form General Motors Holden, were to build a new plant at Fisherman's Bend on the corner of Lorimer and Salmon Streets.

The 1960s, saw a booming economy, and the workers, once loyal to public transport, were deserting services in their droves in preference of the motor car. Seeing the passenger numbers ever decreasing the Board decided if services were to survive then one man bus operations would have to be introduced. The Union resisted aggressively which resulted in the "One Man Bus Dispute". The strike began in December 1965 and was not settled until February 1966, when the High Court ruled in favour of the Tramways Union.

The Board was not pleased with the Court's decision. Management believed that to make the services viable once

more, the move to one man operations was the only option. During the strike many of the workers had found other forms of employment, leaving extreme staff shortages.

The shortage of crews was so great that drivers and conductors had to be brought in from other depots. Along with the increased costs in overtime and travelling expenses having to be paid, there was a massive decrease in numbers resulting in a substantial drop in revenue. With these pressures the Board had no other choice than to close the depot which occurred on Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> July 1966.

With the depot's closure drivers and conductors were transferred to the North Fitzroy Bus Depot, on the other side of the City. About half a dozen drivers transferred to the Footscray Depot in the western suburbs, with three remaining transferring to the elite Doncaster Bus Depot, known in those days as the "Country Club". At North Fitzroy there was a lot of friction between the former Port Melbourne and North Fitzroy crews, after all they had been competing enemies for almost 30 years. Furthermore in those days where you grew up was where your allegiance lay; once a Portonian always a Portonian. You were born in Port Melbourne, you went to school in Port Melbourne, you worked in Port Melbourne and you met your future partner in Port Melbourne or at the very least in South Melbourne, and you bought your house in Port Melbourne!

Sports-wise you followed South Melbourne, known as the 'Bloods' because of the blood bath during the 1945 Grand Final against Carlton, and in the Association you followed Port Melbourne, the "Burras". This left me out on a ledge, because I followed Richmond in the Victorian Football League and

## Moorabbin in the Association.

Within two years of the closure of the depot most of the employees, especially the conductors and conductresses had all left the job as medically unfit, the usual claim being “Back Problems – caused by sudden braking”. All but a few went to the same doctor on the corner of Bay and Graham Streets, Port Melbourne and were put on Workers’ Compensation, where they remained for a specified period of time before they were called to the Head Office and signed off. The Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Board tried, but unsuccessfully, to pin something on this doctor, but in the true tradition the doors of Port Melbourne remained closed.

I was never fully accepted at Port as I’d not been born there or anywhere nearby. It was like moving into a small community, where newcomers were looked upon with suspicion and acceptance takes years.

## **The Love Hate Relationship, More Hate Than Love**

Port Melbourne crews hated the North Fitzroy crews, most loved working the industrial routes to Fisherman’s Bend where there were only a few North Fitzroy buses, to work Bulleen - Garden City was to some crews like working in hell.

Drivers were under constant pressure from their running mate, the conductor, as they came down Russell Street and along Flinders Street to the Flinders Street Railway Station where the “Bundy Clock”<sup>1</sup> had to be recorded before heading to Port Melbourne.

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<sup>1</sup> A special type of bundy clock, invented by Willard & Harlow Bundy, was used on Melbourne bus routes to monitor punctuality. It is a mechanical time clock that uses a time card to record the arrival and departure of employees at the start and end of their assigned shift.



Bundy clock at Domain Interchange – Courtesy Wongm’s Rail Galley

Efforts to block a North Fitzroy bus from passing your bus were not uncommon. Good drivers would constantly be checking their rear-view mirror for any buses coming up behind, Port drivers usually put their parking lights on as a sign of their allegiance. Drivers would take the risk that the police officer at the corner of Russell and Flinders Street or Flinders and Swanston Street, would not give them a ticket for straddling the centre white line

there by blocking the left or right traffic lanes. This ploy was to stop North Fitzroy drivers passing them and ‘Giving Them the Stick.’

The ‘Bundy Clock’ at Elizabeth Street had to be recorded before heading towards Port Melbourne, so it was often a race to see who got to the clock first. If a Port bus was on time and overtaken by a North Fitzroy bus, it was a certainty they were ‘Eating Time’ and the conductor would most probably have ‘Greased the Key.’<sup>2</sup> One local Inspector appeared more interested in the trains as they crossed the viaduct, so it was pretty easy to slip past undetected. The North Fitzroy Crews played on his lack of observation, and if the ‘connie’<sup>3</sup> could record the clock early, the bus would head off down Flinders Street, and over the Queens Bridge into City Road, sometimes

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<sup>2</sup> In a Bundy clock, greasing the key means lubricating the keyhole with grease to prevent rusting and to ensure smooth operation of the clock.

<sup>3</sup> A Connie was a bus conductor that sold tickets to passengers and indicated to the bus driver when it was safe to proceed.

displaying 'Special' and leaving all the passengers for the following Port crew.

Sometimes a shifty North Fitzroy crew would 'Ghost' a Port bus and when they stopped to record the Bundy Clock at Elizabeth Street they'd swing out from behind and head off down Flinders Street, leaving the Port crew wondering what the hell is going on. Failure to record a Bundy Clock without a good reason could bring strong disciplinary action, but the usual excuse given by a North Fitzroy crew was that they were fouling the Elizabeth Street intersection and had been ordered by the police officer to move on.



Port Melbourne Bus - - leaving Hearn's Hobby stop in Flinders Street 1973  
Courtesy Raymond Marsh Collection

## Slow Jo and Itchy Head

One day at Port Melbourne I was doing the gut buster shift 51 with Nina Curtis as my running mate. We picked up at the depot going to Garden City and were to make the 2:20 pm to



Bulleen. This was a busy trip as it got to the early casual workers on the way home from the city and the scholars from Kew Junction. As we were just arriving at the Garden City terminus I saw one of the Port drivers, Jimmy Anderson, departing on the 2:10 pm service, so I said to Nina that I thought this could be one hell of a trip to which she agreed.

Jim was a very nice man, but he had no idea of timekeeping and should never have been a bus driver. He was the type of person who did everything in a slow and deliberate manner. I reckon there were times a snail or a tortoise could've beaten him to where he was going.

We left Garden City on time at 2:20 pm and recorded both Port Melbourne and City Road Bundy Clocks at the correct time. As I turned into Whiteman Street, I saw Jimmy in front of me which meant he'd already lost 10 minutes. I pulled over and called Nina forward and asked her if she wanted to follow the leader or skip around Jim and make our own road. She told me to let him take the SEC stop (State Electricity Commission offices in Flinders Street) and then we skip out from behind and take Russell Street. By the time we'd cleared Bourke Street the bus was packed like a sardine can, so we had to leave the rest and only picking up when we had to stop to let passengers off which was nearly every stop along Lygon and Johnson Streets.

By the time we got to the Collingwood Depot I was all about 17 minutes late. Inspector Jack Lloyd came over and asked if the bus in front was off the road. I said "No Jack, Jimmy Anderson was driving." He asked what had held him up, I said "Jack he is an extremely slow driver!" Adding that a snail could beat him to wherever he was going and probably meet him on

the way back. Jack just laughed and said, “I can’t do anything for you now, but I’ll look at you on the return,” meaning he would adjust our destination to get us back on time, if we were late!

We must have rolled our load over three times, approximately 250 passages, the trip was so busy but I only lost a further three minutes to Bulleen, making us 20 minutes late as we arrived to Bulleen. I turned the destination to SPECIAL and told Nina to put her feet up as I was heading back special to Collingwood. This was highly illegal and if a driver was caught, he could be severely disciplined and even reduced to conductor for three months, but it helped get the run back on time so the risk was worth it. We came off the Boulevard at the Collingwood Terminus and I changed the destination to Garden City. Nina said, “Gee’s Kev’ I’ve heard you’re shifty and they’re not wrong, you’re a good mate to work with!”

Earlier as I was coming back along Thompsons and Bulleen Roads I passed Jim who was just turning from Doncaster Road into Bulleen Road making him about 45 minutes late. Driving along Thompsons Road I had already passed the four buses that were behind my bus. Jim’s bus was packed to the rafters, and I felt really sorry for his conductor, Arthur Crooke who must have copped a beating.

I pulled up at the Collingwood Depot only three minutes late. Jack Lloyd came around to the cabin door scratching his head and said, “I know you’re up to no good Stanzie, I don’t know how you did it and I don’t want to know, now get to hell out of my sight!”

Some years later when I had become a Traffic Officer I was

at a tramway social function and ran into Jack who remembered the incident and many others and said, “Being a tram man and never having driven buses I never understand the shifty moves bus drivers got up to, and sometimes I think it was better I never found out how you blokes could make up so much time.

## **Port Melbourne Weather**

Driving over some routes operated from the Port Melbourne Depot could be interesting and sometimes very dangerous especially if there were sudden weather changes. One afternoon while driving to Garden City there were very strong winds blowing off Port Phillip Bay.



Port Melbourne bus passing the C.O.R. tanks in Garden City  
Courtesy of The Bus and Coach Society of Victoria

I arrived at the bottom of Bay Street and made the right turn into Beach Street where I saw very high waves crashing over the bluestone dividing wall. As I drove along the street the wind was so strong the bus began to rock violently. About 100

yards from the Port Melbourne Railway Station a king wave crashed over the wall and hit halfway up the side of the bus shaking it violently and pushing it about a foot (30cm) sideways.

Water gushed into the bus and over the passengers, even though the doors and windows were closed, as well as gushing over the engine, almost causing it to stall, water hit the radiator blades, forcing it into the cabin, followed by steam. Visibility was extremely poor for a short period, and my uniform was soaked through to my underclothing, making for very uncomfortable driving until it dried out.

On another occasion I was working a late shift and was about to pick up the bus going to Bulleen. When we went for our meal break it was mildly cold. After the meal, as we walked outside to pick up, a very thick fog had developed. I climbed into the cabin and could see no more than 10 yards in front of the bus. At Graham Street I called my conductress, Jean Harefield, forward and suggested she might have to walk ahead of the bus as per the rules.

Jean then walked ahead of the bus, using the flashlight torch, guiding me all the way to the city, until we crossed Queens Bridge, where the fog lifted.

By this time we were 45 minutes late, but due to the adverse conditions there were very few passengers and we left Bulleen only 15 minutes late arriving back at Garden City on time. My racehorse days from the trams had not let me down!

## **Merna and the Mouse**

Merna Nichols was a small dumpy woman about 5'3" tall and about 176lbs in weight. She also had a mouth that roared like a

bull and loved to take the mickey out of whoever she could, especially anyone from outside Port Melbourne, but like a lot of practical jokers, she could not take a joke herself.

One morning after she paid in the first portion takings she hung her conductor's bag on the rack and went to the ladies. In her absence a mouse ran across the floor, quite common in Port, so a couple of the lads caught it and put it in her bag. When she returned she had her lunch and a cuppa and then put her bag over her shoulder ready to go back on the road. As she put her hand in the pocket she felt this furry thing which let out a little squeal as she touched it. Not only did the mouse squeal but so did Merna as she threw the mouse out of the bag and jumped up on the table. We'd never seen anyone, let alone Merna move so fast. She threw a real tantrum, accusing this person and that person, but no one owned up. Not long after she was transferred to the Glen Huntly Tram Depot.

In 1970, I transferred from Doncaster to Glen Huntly when I bought my house in Frankston North. One morning when I came in for my break she fronted me in true Merna style and in her booming voice in front of the full mess room, said, "You ya bastard, you pulled that shitty trick on me didn't ya?". I told her I had no idea what she was referring to! She said, "You know the time you put the mouse in my conductor's bag at Port." I told her I had no idea who did it, which was the truth, but she never believed me because Myrna had to blame someone, anyone.

### **What's for Breakfast?**

Australians, until the influx of migrants had been fairly basic eaters, their diet mostly consisting of the traditionally British food of our ancestors; lamb, potatoes, peas, beans, carrots, and

broccoli. So imagine the shock to many of us when we saw and smelt the range of foods being brought in for lunch by the ever-increasing migrant population.

North Fitzroy Depot had a far greater influx of migrants than did Port Melbourne where the workforce consisted mostly of Australian or British, so when a few Greek and Italian migrants arrived at the depot many of the workers were shocked at their vastly different practices, and the type of food consumed.

Around Port Melbourne and Fisherman's Bend were thousands of seagulls and a few black crows. So imagine the surprise to a driver or conductor to see your mate, who might be Greek or Italian, take out a pea shooter or shanghai and bring down one of these birds. They were easy picking, and these people were experts at trapping them. The food must have been tasty, but not to us locals, the variety of stews and pies they brought for their meals was incredible.

One driver really shocked everyone at the depot one morning when he bought a big black crow into the mess room. Apparently, it was scavenging in the rubbish dump across from the Garden City terminus. According to his conductor, who stated, "As quick as a flash, he took out a slingshot from his bag and brought the big bird down."

Several crews were eating their meal as he proceeded to fill the sink with hot water and defeather the bird, remove the insides, which we found out later made good bait for fishing and, cutting sections of the flesh away, he pan fried the meat.

As he sat down to enjoy this apparently tasty morsel most of the crew headed into Bay Street to finish breakfast. As time went by several people tried to explain to him and the other

migrants that this was not the Australian way, but they never seemed to understand. Not long before the one man bus strike he left and opened a Greek restaurant in Brunswick which became very popular. What food was being served, who knows and who cares!

### **Don't Stick it up the GMH Boys**

When I transferred from the Glen Huntly Tram Depot to the Port Melbourne Bus Depot I had to start from scratch again as a conductor. This was to get a better knowledge of the suburbs I'd be working through and await my turn to train as a bus driver. One afternoon I was working a General Motors extra out of Coode Canal to Princes Bridge. As the workers boarded the bus I began collecting their money which was one shilling and nine pence for the through fare.

One man gave me his fare in halfpenny coins, 42 coins. I gave him a bit of a black look and he returned a smirky grin. I continued collecting fares, but everyone who gave me a 2 shilling piece I gave them 6 halfpennies in the change. There were a few protests, but I ignored them and continued collecting fares.



Conductor's Bag  
Courtesy - Youtube Tram  
People Down Under DVD -  
Video Clip #3

The next day I was working the same shift, and as I collected the money, everyone paid the one shilling and ninepence fare in penny coins, 21 coins, and to those who remember the penny coin it was made of copper and weighed quite a lot, probably about the same weight as a 20 cent coin today. It was not long before my bag became so heavy

that I had to offload some of the coins into my ticket tin. They all thought it was a great joke. After the trip to Princes Bridge we did a trip to Port Melbourne, then ran into the depot.

Back in the revenue office about 20 Conductors paid in the day's taking while I counted my money which took over 30 minutes. The revenue clerk, Jack Moffat, couldn't believe his eyes when I presented him with two coin trays, one with the silver coins and the other with just on £5, or \$10, worth of pennies. He said, "What's all this, what's going on?" I told him it was the GMH workers, and how it had come about. He said, "Some people will never learn will they!" I did, because I never pulled that stunt again with anyone especially the Fisherman's Bend workers. For the record there were 240 pennies to one pound, equal to \$2 metric currency!

### **Crying Over the Job**

One easy shift to get at Port Melbourne was 51 Table which was a gut buster. It was one of the few full-length Broken Shifts as most broken shifts were what was known as Bayless Brokens, these had a minimum break of two hours and one minute, and under the award were considered to be a straight shift and as such did not incur any penalty rates. This shift was off on Sunday and Tuesday and nearly always got overtime on the Tuesday, so it generally paid well. The shift picked up at 6:46 am outside the depot going to Bulleen which was about the only easy trip for the day.

The bus departed Bulleen at 7:50 am for the return trip to Garden City and copped heavy loading all the way to the city. Arriving at Kew Junction the line of traffic was such that it often took five minutes to turn into Studley Park Road. From the junction and all the way to the City the traffic was just



bumper-to-bumper. After having arrived at Kew Junction on time it was not uncommon to be 15 minutes late at Collingwood and 20 minutes late leaving Garden City. It was a struggle to make up the time on the way back to Bulleen where you might be lucky to get a two minute break. Leaving Bulleen at 10:08 am and you copped another load, this time shoppers travelling to Kew and women with prams heading to the trams at Burke Road. Battling the late traffic coming into the city, you'd be very lucky to be relieved on time at 11:04am.



Gilbow - Scale Model of Port Melbourne Bus  
Leyland TS8 Bus, Melbourne Transport, 18307A - PMHPS

Unfolded prams and pushers we're only allowed on buses as far as a connecting tram service in the off-peak only, as well as Saturday, Sunday and public holidays.

The second part of the shift was no better with early

shoppers heading out of the city at 2:30 pm and school children from Kew and Bulleen, making it lucky if you were relieved on time at 5:15 pm on the 'Up' from Garden City, where one made a dash to the Exchange Hotel downing the first few beers which I'm sure never touch the sides. Many blokes would order three pots, with the first being drunk before the barman had finished pouring the third pot.

The Saturday shift was also a real killer, especially if the wharfies were working along the South Wharf. The blokes finishing on the 3.00 pm shift were an uncontrollable bunch; crews never attempted to interfere with their behaviour. If they didn't want to pay their fare they were not pushed, they'd smoke anywhere on the bus and crack open a few bottles of beer and pass them round on the way to Flinders Street Station. This shift did 14 return trips from Coode Island to Flinders Street, the first portion, and seven return trips from Fisherman's Bend to Flinders Street, the second portion.

One Saturday I copped it pretty bad because bulk sulphur was being unloaded somewhere along the North Wharf across the Yarra River opposite General Motors Holden. There were no containers in those days and to make things worse there was a mild north west wind blowing. Generally, the wharfies didn't load or unload bulk minerals or grains under these conditions, but for some reason on this Saturday they did.

Before the day ended tears were running down my cheeks and looking in the rear view mirror, I saw my eyes were very blood shot, not to mention I was finding it difficult to breathe. By the time I returned to the depot in the late afternoon, the minerals had begun to cut into my face. Small amounts of blood were running down my cheeks. There was no medical

kit at the depot, so I headed to the local doctor on the corner of Bay and Graham Street. He was alarmed at my condition and told me I should've requested to be relieved of duty and sought medical attention at the first signs of the tears running from my eyes, adding I was lucky to not be in hospital. Later he wrote the depot master suggesting services should've been suspended under such conditions, but I doubt if his advice would have been heeded as the health and safety of employees in those days was not a high priority.

### **The Wharfie's Special**

For a very short period of time the wharfies working along South Wharf hired a couple of buses to take the afternoon workers who finished at 11 pm to the Flinders Street railway station because the earlier bus was at 10:50 pm, and the next one was 11:30 pm. As they were charter buses the conductors were not required to work the run, so, as the bus passed the depot in Bay Street they would get off. When the bus arrived at Garden City the driver would head to South Wharf.

The wharfies could be a shifty bunch and you were never quite sure what they might be up to. One night I was driving one of the specials when the customs decided to do a raid on the buses. I was ordered out of the cabin and frisked by an officer and the next thing one of them found half a dozen transistor radios wedged down the back of the driver's seat. I was taken into the office and interrogated, finally after about an hour it was agreed that I knew nothing about it. On returning to the depot, well after midnight, the depot starter was not impressed and double checked my story.

As a result of the raid and the contraband being found the specials never entered the wharf again. This meant the buses

never got away until about 11:10 pm. Not long afterwards the charter buses were cancelled because they could not catch the earlier trains so they drifted back to the normal 11:30 pm service. Often on a Friday night the wharfies would get off at Market Street and head down to Flinders Street to the Waterside Inn which traded from 10 pm to 8 am and probably wobble back to the station in time to catch the first train out of the city after 5am.

### **The Bellowing Cop**

Television personality, and former Richmond footballer, Rex Hunt, was a police officer for a very short period. After his initial training he worked traffic control at several city intersections, one of which included Flinders and Swanston Street. One afternoon I was driving bus number 444 Bulleen route.

As I stopped outside Young & Jacksons Hotel I saw Rex directing traffic. As the traffic began to build up on the east side of the intersection he directed the traffic to stop on the west side of Swanston Street. One driver in a yellow Morris Mini Minor decided to try to sneak across the intersection. Suddenly in one fell swoop of his fist Rex brought it down on the roof of the car and then in his booming voice he said, "WHEN I SAY STOP, I F\*\*\*\*\*G WELL MEAN STOP". Well, not only did the motorist stop, the whole intersection stopped as well!

He walked up to the motorist who must have been trembling with shock and began laying down the law. As I drove past this poor trembling man, I noticed a considerably large dent in the car's roof, apparently made by the crushing blow of Rex's fist.

## **The Port Melbourne Cockatoo**

The Exchange Hotel had a public and saloon bar like all pubs did in those days, but due to its small size did not have a ladies lounge, so the saloon bar was mostly used by women as in those days they were not allowed in the public bar, and what is more it was unladylike to be seen associating with such ruffians as wharf labourers and bus drivers. So the old outside men's toilet was converted for use by women and a new entrance was built on the inside, however the outside entrance was never covered up, the only warning to outside it being a sign reading "Do Not Enter Women's Toilet".

This did not deter the trammies as they used this entrance to sneak from the mess room into the hotel without being seen by any of the officers for a quick snort. Someone would always be watching out from the public bar window as head office would often raid the pub, either with the infamous M Squad (Plain Clothes Ticket Examiners) or the Senior Inspectors.

When a driver or conductor was called over the public address system, it was the job of the conductor or driver of one of the many standbys to check to see if the person was in the mess room, if not, there would be a fast dash out of the mess room door, around the back of the fuel tanks, through the women's toilet and into the bar, puffing and panting he'd yell out, "Hey Smithy your wanted in the starters office!" to which the reply might be, "Gees, can't a man knock down a beer in peace and quiet."

One Depot Starter, who knew of the behavioural patterns and was known to sneak a few ales on the side himself, would often call for a driver or conductor to come to the starters office just for the hell of it.

## Six O'clock Closing and all That Stuff

The depot being almost next to the Exchange Hotel was a haven for drivers and conductors coming in off broken shifts, which began finishing from 4 pm due to the industrial nature of Port Melbourne.



Port Melbourne bus outside Holy Trinity Church, cnr Bay and Graham Sts -  
PMHPS

Hotels in those days closed at 6 pm, but there was not the rush to get to your favourite watering hole like most other depots where broken shifts began finishing from 5:45 pm. At Port most buses were off the road before 6 pm with only a dozen or so middle and late shifts finishing between 8 pm and lam. On a hot evening it was possible to pick up a cold beer during one of the extended layovers at Kew or North Kew, as most workers carried a “Gladstone Bag” a sort of travelling bag, which was popular until about 1975. These bags could comfortably hold six longneck bottles.

A Depot Starter or Inspector could ask you what was in your bag or try to smell your breath to see if you were in breach of Rule 96. Therefore, it was important that you never placed

more than two bottles of beer in your bag and covered them with a pullover or towel. Some drivers and conductors even went to the extreme of pouring a bottle of chilled beer into a thermos flask for a discrete swig later in the evening.

At a terminus, if someone wanted a quick swig, they'd disappear around the corner while their running mate would stay around the bus. If an inspector was spotted or worse still someone in plain clothes, the "cocky" would usually warn his mates by coughing or lighting a cigarette. One way to camouflage your breath if you've had a drink was to take a swig of pure raspberry cordial, which some drivers carried with them.

### **Oh Pew, Stinky Pew**

There have been a number of people I've worked with in public transport whose personal hygiene has not been the best, some apparently seldom bathed or showered, while others did not have their uniforms cleaned regularly.

There was one driver at Port Melbourne who owned a pig farm in the outer east of Melbourne. His uniform was absolutely filthy and the smell, not only from the uniform, but body odour was terrible. We all reckoned he slept with his pigs, so bad was the smell that he was banned from eating in the mess room and the conductors hated to work with him. He always liked to drive with the windows open, not only the driver's window, but the small window behind the driver, which of course pushed any smell down the inside of the bus.

Most conductors carried a fly spray with them in a small bag which was filled with a mixture of pine-o-clean and phenyl, and would from time to time spray around the front of the bus and sometimes into the driver's cabin much to Bill's

objections. In those days there were no such items as sweet smelling aerosol spray cans. I think the first aerosol product on the market was about 1963 when the Samuel Taylor Company produced a fly spray marketed under the brand of Mortein.

Bill passed away suddenly after short illness and his wife drove to the depot and returned nine complete uniforms and six caps still wrapped in the delivery bags. As we got two shirts, six detachable collars and trousers, every 18 months, a tunic coat every two years, a great coat every five years and a cap every two years. This added up to the fact that he'd not changed his clothes for about 12 years.

### **The 10:00 pm from Russell Street to Garden City**

The 10:04 pm from the city, Russell Street and Victoria Street to Garden City was one of the most entertaining trips at Port Melbourne as it travelled past the hotels along Bay Street just on closing time. Like the former 6 pm closing, drinkers were allowed 15 minutes grace to finish their last drink.

The Port Melbourne council workers are rough and tough men and very heavy drinkers. They generally finished work around 2 pm and will head to the Flower Hotel in Bay Street which had a bus stop out in front. In the old 6 pm closing days a three hour drinking session usually saw them pretty well inebriated, but when the drinking laws extended at 10 pm. This just gave them more drinking time, so that when the pubs closed they were well and truly sloshed.

So sloshed were these men that they were often unable to board the bus without assistance. The barman would lead them to the front door and with the help of the conductor they'd be placed on the seat near the doorway. Often they'd



light up a smoke, but it was too risky to get them to move to the rear of the bus to the smoking section for fear they would fall flat on their face.

Most of the men lived along Howe Parade, Garden City and the regular conductors knew where they lived, so the rule was to stop outside the place of residence and as the bus stopped the driver would sound a horn and hopefully someone would come out and help them off the bus, but if no one came to their assistance the conductor, and sometimes a sober passenger or the driver would help the conductor to push them onto the nature strip where they'd often hit the grass face down.

Amazingly, these men were never hurt and seldom missed a day's work. They were nearly always on the first bus at 5 am, heading back to the council depot where I guess if they had a hangover that worked its way off after killing a few kilometres as they ran along behind the truck collecting empty rubbish bins.

### **Luck's a Fortune**

As has already been mentioned the relationship between the Port Melbourne and North Fitzroy crews was not very amenable. Drivers of either depot would go out of their way to stop a bus from the other depot from overtaking them, especially during peak hours in the city area.

At North Fitzroy the tension was unbearable, so much so many former Port Melbourne people looked for every opportunity they could to be signed off medically unfit. In most cases, it was the conductors who went off claiming an injury as a result of sudden braking, but on a few occasions drivers found a reason to be signed off.

One driver who lived in Garden City, commonly referred to as Baghdad, was left his father's house opposite North Port railway station which cost £85 in 1934.

About a year after the Depot closed this man was signed off medically unfit due to an alleged injury caused when he slipped off the step while getting out of the driver's cabin and got a job with the Port Melbourne City Council. With council amalgamation in 1997 (sic) he like many others was offered a very generous redundancy package. He had received £20,000 from the Melbourne Metropolitan Tramway Board for his injury and when made redundant from the council he received approximately \$420,000.

One evening they were watching television when there was a knock at the front door. The man identified himself as representing a client from Denmark. He asked George how much he wanted for the house, so he hummed and harred for a few minutes thinking the house was worth about \$450,000 and went to discuss the matter with his wife. After a few minutes, the man said, "My client is interested in one of these houses as he wants a property close to the transport corridor and is prepared to pay up to \$750,000 but there would be a condition. Should you accept you must vacate within 30 days." George and his wife could not sign the deal fast enough.

### **Rumours, Just Rumours**

After the closure of the depot, Port crews tried where possible to stick together. At North Fitzroy in the mess room there were a few tables where the Port crews would sit for their meals. Most of the women did not like the upstairs mess room, probably because of the noise coming from the card players' table. They took over an empty room next to the cleaners

downstairs, such was the desire for isolation.

Where possible Port crews would endeavour to work together, but over the coming year this became almost impossible due to conductors going off on Worker's Compensation.

Often drivers working on the Bulleen to Garden City route would drive slowly past the now closed depot with some drivers stopping as a matter of respect. Often, you'd hear from your conductor or one of the passengers that there were plans to reopen the depot, but they were just rumours. Even when the auction house of Fowles took out a lease on the site, the rumours persisted. This was only a temporary measure, they said, while the Board decided that the North Fitzroy depot was too congested.

What was not taken into consideration, and was quite understandable, was that with the strike the once loyal passenger base had been lost to the railways, and it was very unlikely that it would return. Which it never did even to this day. The passengers, while sympathising with the strikers, only wanted to get to work and like a lot of things once a move had been made it seldom, if ever, reverses.

Eventually, the remaining Port crews did amalgamate into the mainstream workforce at North Fitzroy, but this only really happened after most of the hardliners had departed either medically unfit or to other positions such as assistant conductors working the safety zone at busy city tram stops. A number of drivers, fearing a further attempt by the Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Board to introduce one man bus operations over the disputed routes transferred to tram depots and became tram drivers.

## *Woolbales of Wrath*

**Lyn McCleavy**

### *Introduction*

*The McLeavy family had a long association with Port Melbourne. Lyn was a member of the Port Melbourne Historical and Preservation Society and passionately interested in preserving the stories of the waterside workers and her family.*

*'The Woolbales of Wrath' was one of the many articles she wrote. It first appeared in 'Overland, Issue 157, Summer 1999' and is reproduced here with their permission.*

The earliest photo I have of myself is when I'm three years old, a stout little tree trunk in a white dress and sandals, at the wharfies' picnic. It would have been around 1951 when Menzies was trying to eradicate the wharfies' union, using fear of communism as the weapon. You can see I've got a worried look on my face.

My father was a Port Melbourne wharfie, and so was his father and his. The McLeavys had been on the Port Melbourne wharves since at least 1866. Our family's oral tradition goes back to 1880. I know a lot about my grandfather's life and my father's life, as wharfies. I learnt it at the knee; the rest when I interviewed my family for an oral history, some of which was published in *Under the Hook* by Wendy Lowenstein and Tom Hills. The pre-1880 stories I researched in the last two years. I know what it means to live in poverty, a hundred years and more, on the Melbourne waterfront.

My great grandfather Archibald listed his occupation as a 'lumper'<sup>1</sup>, when his son, Hugh, my grandfather, was born in Sandridge<sup>2</sup> in 1876. Archibald may have carried four or five hundred bags of wheat on his back in a day as Ned Kelly serve three years nearby on a hulk at Williamstown.



Loading Wool c.1965  
Courtesy of Port of Melbourne Authority

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<sup>1</sup> A labourer who loads and unloads wharf cargo; a stevedore.

<sup>2</sup> Sandridge was the original name of Port Melbourne. The surveyor William Darke named it in 1839, after the ridge of sand dunes along the beach.

Archibald was born in Carlingford, County Louth, Ireland in 1837. His elderly father, Hugh, told the 1871 Douglas, Isle of Man, census that he was a seventy-three-year-old labourer born in County Louth, recently widowed and living with his seventy-one-year-old relation, Catherine, also born in County Louth, who was “on charity”. Hugh died the following month. I was relieved to see they were not living in “the House of Industry for the relief of the poor of Douglas” or “sleeping in barns, sheds, or tents, or in the open-air” as the Census suggested. They’d left Ireland to escape the famine in 1846 when Archibald was nine years old.

Archibald arrived in Victoria in 1855, aged nineteen, headed for the Ballarat goldfields. I imagine he wanted a better life; to leave behind the recurring famines and hardships of Ireland.

Ten years later he had a child with a woman living in Market Street Emerald Hill (South Melbourne). She was born in Galway Ireland arriving in Port Melbourne from Jamaica when she was 14 years old in 1856. Margaret Fleming was possibly a convict or the child of convicts. Being a long-time fan of Bob Marley I can now joke about my Jamaican roots.

Margaret, thirty-one, had three “illegitimate” children under eleven years when she and Archibald, thirty-six, married at the Registry Office in Sandridge in 1873. Archibald couldn't sign his name and Margaret's signature is laboured. It's a time when the poor of Sandridge are starving.

I expect Archibald was involved in the first union on the Melbourne wharves in the 1870s, in the eighteen-day strike of 1886 that supposedly gave Melbourne wharfies an eight hour day (thirty years after the stonemasons and craftsmen); and in the five month strike of 1890 in support of trade unionism and

the principle of the right of labour to organise.

The lament of the day was:

*The Lord above, send down a dove,  
With wings as sharp as razors  
To slit the throats of bloody scabs  
Who cut down poor men's wages.*

The nature of the industry created the men and their unions. According to Tom Hills, the ship owners started off as pirates, and they never changed. They got rich on colonialism. They made their fortunes in India and China and Africa. They were in the slave trade. They paid their seamen bloody nothing, and they shanghaied them from the waterfront pubs.

“In most of the world they could get their ships loaded for almost nothing - some places they still can. You waited on them for work; they picked you up when they wanted you, and sacked you the minute it was raining so hard that it would damage the cargo - never mind about you! They only wanted you if you were strong and docile. If you got old or sick, they didn't pick you up. If you are militant they didn't pick you up. They gave you nothing.” Even the British Prime Minister, Gladstone said, “for money the shipowners would agree to land enemies in the Port of Heaven.”

It was casual work; few could count on a regular income. Shifts were often twenty-four hours straight and then nothing. One of Lowenstein's interviewees reported, “Waterside workers spent a lot of time just waiting for work” ... a ship would come in at two or three o'clock in the morning! Now the word would have gone around - “She's up at two o'clock in the morning! You'd get up in the dark, and you'd go down there, just on the chance of getting a job. And if you were

picked up, you had to go to the Company's yard and pick up your crowbars and six wheelers and all the rest, and drag them down to the job... best part of half a mile.”

My grandfather would have been twelve years old, learning about trade unionism at the knee of his father, as it was starting - experiencing the hardships of ordinary working people's lives as they tried to improve their lot. Everything had to be fought for. Many disputes were over unsafe gear which could lead to death and injuries. Shipowners resisted spending money or time on equipment, safety or working conditions.

Hugh would see his father, with six children, out of work for five months living on air, trying to forge a kinder life through hungry bellies, no food on the table, nothing to sell. Just poor people sticking together, helping each other survive the hungry times as they stood up to the rich and powerful shipping companies of the British Empire. He would see the strikes of 1890-94 by the early trade unions of wharfies, shearers and coalminers, put down by the state.

Archibald died in 1905 of stomach cancer and debility, Margaret in 1911. They are buried in unmarked graves.

My father's grandmother, Johanna Connor, was thirty-two years old when she married twenty-one year old Wally Elliott, the son of a local fisherman, at Port Melbourne Registry in 1888. Johanna couldn't sign her name. She'd been living at the Cross Keys Hotel in Essendon since she was about twenty-two, working as a charwoman (a woman hired by the hour or day to clean rooms) and had two young daughters, Mary, ten and Alice, eight, to the publican's son.

The publican, John Morgan, married Margaret Kelly of Tipperary (where Ned Kelly's family came from, before his



father was transported to Van Diemen's Land). Ned was born near the Cross Keys and Granny Elliot (as Johanna was later known) knew the Kellys and said they were a good family.

Johanna was born at Franklin in the Huon Valley, Tasmania, to Jane Cook, convict, and her husband, Owen Connor, convict. During the Irish famine Jane had stolen meat, left one of her two children and - on a three strikes you're out policy - stole a pot lid and was sentenced to ten years in Van Diemen's Land, arriving in 1850 with her ten-year-old daughter.

She met Owen at Franklin where they married in 1852. He came from Tralee in County Kerry, stole three cows during the famine, which he tried to sell at the fair, was caught and sent with his two brothers to Bermuda for their troubles.

Owen and his brothers were given Conditional Pardons in Van Diemen's Land when they arrived from Bermuda via South Africa, where they expected to be discharged; but being unwanted in South Africa their ship was forced on to Van Diemen's Land where they were discharged in April, 1850. There'd been a mutiny on board, which was hushed up, and a lot of controversy about where they could be dumped at the end of transportation days.

Owen and his brother seem to have kept their noses clean. Jane however was always in strife. As a young woman Jane was a laundress, literate and suffered from nervous attacks since the time of her first arrest in Ireland. She was the only woman - on a boat of two hundred Irish convict women, many of whom were suffering from hysteria - to be hospitalised and "treated" by the ship's surgeon, a man of dubious methods, such as causing burns that blister to reduce hysteria.

Drunk and disorderly, using obscene language, harassed

and arrested at every turn, a feisty woman, Jane spent thirty years on and off in the Female Factory in Hobart until her death in September 1890 age sixty-six, a pauper in the Female Invalid Depot. After Owen's death in 1871, she became homeless and destitute living in barns, wherever she could, stealing food and clothing to survive. No one wanted to know an Irish convict woman. Jane endured the unendurable for sixty-six years. She died of "heart disease" and Owen of "paralysis". They are in unmarked grave in Tasmania.

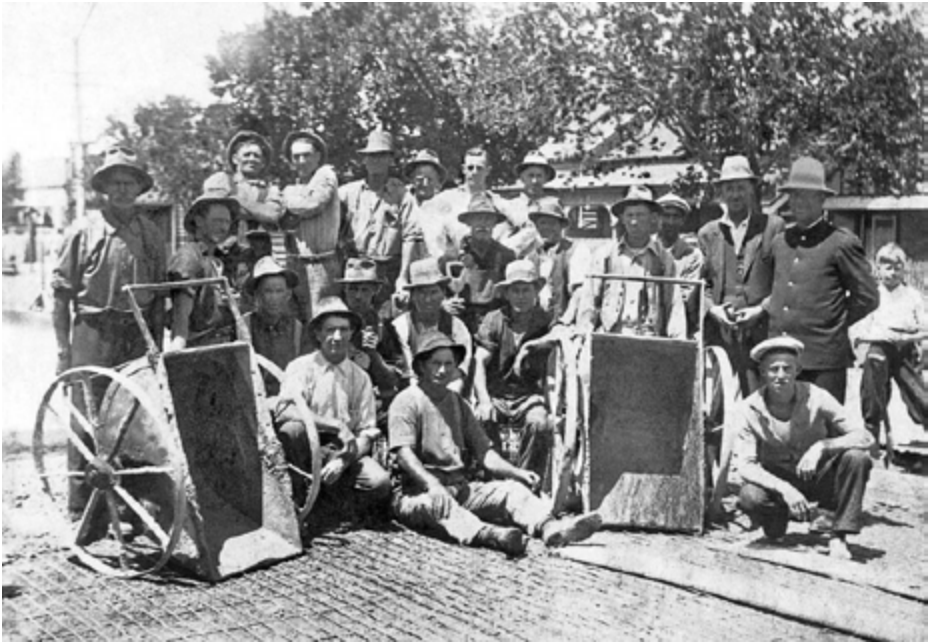
Convicts and their children were discriminated against in Tasmania for years. The divide between the landowning class and their slave convict labour endured longer there in its original form than anywhere on the mainland, so Johanna must have been pleased to get away from the horrors of her mother's life, the shadow it threw over her own, to the Cross Keys (a wild Irish pub by the sound of it) with a grocery store and safekeeping for gold for those on their way from the diggings.

After a few years Johanna's husband, Wally, left her (in the great Australian tradition) with four children.

Johanna's eldest child, Mary, married my grandfather, Hugh "Dodger" McLeavy, in South Melbourne in 1920 at the Registry Office. They had known each other since they were children when their mothers, Johanna and Margaret, lived side by side off Princes Street (now the trendy Beacon Cove) where I was born. Mary had seven children from a previous marriage (her husband deserting her around 1911). Mary, Catholic, Hugh, atheist, had another five children, my father, the youngest, born in 1922.

Working on the wharves was always a hard and dangerous

occupation. Casual work in substandard conditions with bad equipment. Men died. The British aristocrats that owned the shipping companies held working people's lives cheaply - profits were considered more important. It was their group of international monopoly shipping lines, led by the P & O Line, versus the poorest of the working class. Like today, the wharfies got bad press, because they fought to improve their conditions. It would have been democratic to allow them a legitimate voice.



Susso Men in Port Melbourne 1930s, PMHPS

My family spent these years evading eviction living in twenty-seven different houses, a jump ahead of the bailiffs; moving from one hovel to another, killing bed bugs and fleas with kerosene; the children stealing food. Mary and the children working when they could as casuals in factories, living in the Stevedores Club in Bay Street when they had nowhere else to go

Mary changed from a shy woman to an activist, helping other families, begging for food and clothing from factories and shops to distribute around, working for the Labor Party. She was friends with militant English suffragette leader Jenny Baines, smuggled out of England after a series of arrests and living in Port Melbourne. They and nine other women disrupted the Victorian Parliament when wharfies were shot by police in the 1928 strike, calling out from the gallery “We are the wives of the stevedores at Port Phillip, and our children are starving while the scabs are scabbing!” In Parliament the Country Party leader said, “If that's the way you train your women to behave themselves, I certainly think that the police were needed.”

My uncle told me Mary would pawn anything, including Hugh's tool of trade, the hook. “She'd say ‘Get your father's cargo hook. Wrap it up in the flannel.’ I think we get two-and-six. Then he'd get a job out of the blue and he'd say, ‘Cut us up a bit of lunch while I get me hook’. Mum would look at him. “Oh, Jesus. No hook here! Go and borrow some money somewhere, quick! Get the hook!”

At the end of the 1930s there was still no first aid, toilets, safety gear, change rooms, lockers, dining rooms, public holidays, sick pay or annual leave. There were still twenty-four-hour shifts. Wharfies went to work with empty bellies. “We'd cut up lumps of hessian and wrap it around our feet and wear our overcoats and scarves and work in freezers no more than about eight to ten degrees (Fahrenheit), paper in your hat to keep the cold out.”

Tom Hills, wharfie trade union leader said, “The war made a vast difference to the maritime industry, to Australian

waterside workers and seamen. It was the start of improved conditions. But we had to fight for them. There's never been anything on the waterfront - first aid, showers, canteens, lockers, smokes, gloves - not one of these things has been given to us by the shipowner without fighting. You can't name one thing he's given us voluntarily." The employers improved conditions in exchange for industrial peace during the high profit war years.

A doctor examining wharfies in 1943 said, "I have had many years of experience of workers in the shearing and timber industries. I can say without hesitation that neither of these industries can produce any comparable number of physical derelicts as I have encountered amongst the waterside workers... I examined men in the main who had been ruined physically by the intolerable anxieties of the Depression years. The endless search for the infrequent job, which would keep them and their families on the precarious borderline of malnutrition, had taken its devastating toll.

"The feverish high-tension work performed when the job is secured, in order to ensure its repetition, had been paid for at the shocking price of premature old-age and physical calamity."

When the war came there was work. War work. My father nineteen, and his brothers joined up "to get a feed and a pair of boots".

Michael Duffy, columnist for *The Australian*, wrote during the recent waterfront dispute that wharfies were unpatriotic during the Second World War; but others, like our first Australian-born Governor General, Sir Isaac Isaacs, wrote of his admiration for the wharfies as the conscience of the nation

in their opposition to Menzies selling pig iron to Japan, saying their opposition “will find a place in our history beside the Eureka Stockade, as a noble stand against executive Dictatorship and against an attack on Australian Democracy.”

After the horror of war, my twenty-year-old shellshocked father returned to the docks and I was born into this unequal battle between rich and poor. We had nothing. No one in our family had yet had an education past year 8. In the tiny condemned house I grew up in I learned about fascism and who supported it, who profited from the war and how trade unions were the first targets of Hitler and Mussolini. I learned of Gandhi and Paul Robeson as inspirations leading the way in the fight against slavery and racism, in South Africa, America and Australia.

There was no greater insult than to be called a scab, no greater crime than to take away the livelihood of marginal people, who for over a hundred years had been treated no better than cattle.

The wharfies identified with the poor all over the world and are famous for their generous support for people fighting oppression anywhere. They fought for unemployment benefits, rent subsidies for evicted families - their whole life was struggle.

Menzies haunted my childhood fears. He said we were communists and wanted to make us outlaws. If the Depression, soup kitchens, poverty, ill-health, lack of education and war didn't get you, Menzies would. (I dreamed of knocking on his door hoping he'd save me from the Communists). I tried to run away from the shame and prejudice of being a wharfies child, in the same way Granny Elliot tried to leave her convict

past behind. All my young aspiring capitalist ways disappeared when I saw the horrors of black slavery in South Africa when I was twenty-one and I returned to the fold and activism.

The clasped hands carved over the entrance to the Stevedores Club in Bay Street in 1922 symbolised Karl Marx's saying, "Workers of the world unite - you have nothing to lose but your chains." The saying does not seem to have lost its relevance in 1999, as Marx's predicted globalised economy puts wealth and poverty, and deteriorating working conditions, centre stage again, and not just for wharfies.

"Will the capitalist press print this story?" my elderly aunty asks, doubtfully.

Last year I went to Princes Street, Port Melbourne, to that little block where I was born, where my family have lived and died for over 130 years. Their spirits walked with me. I saw the expensive residences built there in the last few years, the old pier at the end of the street. "Beacon Cove" they call it now, but I see Port Melbourne.

## *Memories of Working at Riall Print*

*282 Bay Street Port Melbourne*

*1967 to 1974*

**Andrew Cook**

### *Introduction*

*Andrew Cook donated this text to the Port Melbourne Historical and Preservation Society shortly after it was written, about 2004. Within a few years of Andrew completing his apprenticeship all the processes he learned had been made redundant by the advent of computer technology applied to the printing trade.*

*In 2023, the building that housed the Riall Print is occupied by the St Vincent de Paul shop but much of its structure remains essentially unchanged.*



Riall Bros. Pty. Ltd. Printers, 282 Bay Street, Port Melbourne  
PMHPS Collection



In 1967, I obtained a 4-year apprenticeship at Riall Print, Port Melbourne, in hand composition (type setting). There was a fair amount of travelling involved in this, as I lived in West Heidelberg. Usually, I walked or rode my bike to Rosanna railway station, caught the train to Princes Bridge and changed to a Port Melbourne train at Flinders Street. After alighting at North Port station, it was a brisk walk to work and if the trains were late, Evelyn Stone (the office secretary) could be heard saying “come on Andy, I am about to rule the red line in the sign-on book “. That is, if your name was below the red line you were late, and had your pay docked. Later, due to the continual lateness of a letterpress machinist (from Yugoslavia) the good old-time book was replaced by a rather worker unfriendly time clock.

Rialls were commercial printers, both letterpress and offset (lithography). They had a large range of clients in Melbourne, especially from Port Melbourne and South Melbourne. They had 2 to 3 sales representatives who chased up the work.

The firm was called Riall Brothers Pty. Ltd., but when I was there, only Jack Riall remained. The name was changed to Riall Print when the McKay brothers Peter and Andrew (from Coburg), bought into the business. The office, separated from the printing factory, had a production manager, estimator, secretary, secretary's assistant, sales representatives and Jack Riall working in it.

The factory had frontages to Bay Street and Lyons Street, where trucks loaded/unloaded printing supplies, printing jobs and other requirements in the production process, usually by way of the bindery.

The factory was divided into various areas: the composing room, the machine room (letterpress), the offset department (lithography), a guillotine area (paper cutting) and a binding room. A huge loft above part of the central section of the factory contained old rat-infested type cases and some very interesting old ledger books with samples of Riall's past printing work, dating back to the 1890's. There was also an alcove for tea making and each section had a staff toilet which was very dated, although kept clean.

Some of the male office staff had to use our toilet (it was the nearest for them) and they would often pass by without saying a word or greeting. One particular sales rep. would pass by with his nose in the air looking straight ahead and would never utter a word. I think he may have also had a broomstick stuck up his backside as well!

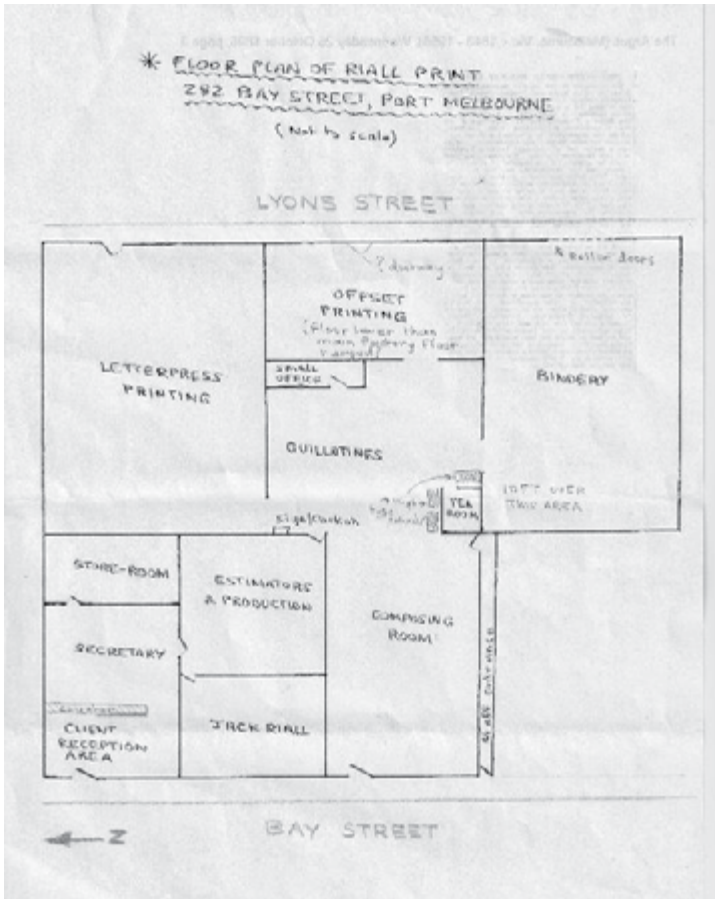
We did not have a meal room as such. Most ate outside, somewhere, or if it was a cold or wet day, at our work benches, making sure that we washed our hands thoroughly beforehand.

Sometime into my apprenticeship, I became concerned that I was not getting proper training from the tradesmen I was working with; especially the foreman, who did not trust anyone except himself. He passed on no advice or skills to me and when he did talk to me, usually complained about how bad the work done by others was. Only he could do a better job!

I actually ended up going in to speak to Jack Riall about this, but all I got was a pat on the head and told to go back and get on with my work! The only person that helped me learn my trade properly was Peter Lee, the linotype operator at

Rialls. Peter loved his job and was always most helpful. He later went on to be an instructor at the Melbourne School of Printing and Graphic Arts, North Melbourne. This may have been when Riall Print was on a downward slide to oblivion, brought on by the rapid introduction of new technology into the printing industry.

I shall now describe the areas within the Riall Print building, along with the people that worked there (during my time).



Floor Plan of Riall's,  
Andrew Cook, PMHPS

## **Staff Entrances**

Office staff usually entered from Bay Street. Others could enter via an extremely narrow walk-way, enclosed by massive brick walls on both sides, from Bay Street, or by entrances into the machine and binding rooms from Lyons Street.

## **Composing Room**

The composing room had two large stones capable of holding large formes for book printing. From memory, up to 16-page formes. There was also the usual sundry equipment, like a lead cutter, a mitre machine, cutting saw and some reasonably clean steel type cabinets. There was plenty of galley space for holding standing jobs and setting from the linotype machines. A model 8 and a model 78 linotype typesetting machine were placed near the wall adjoining the Bay Street footpath. These machines had type faces suitable for jobbing and book work setting, including Spartan, Caledonia and Baskerville. There was also a Ludlow 24 ems typesetting machine, which had some very nice type faces in its cabinets. The face Record Gothic stands out in my memory.

A huge un-motored, flat-bed press was used for pulling proofs. It was worked by turning a large wheel with a handle. This proof press (being a former printing press) was good at its job and was often used to pull 'repros' (reproduction) proofs for (in those days) paste-up for offset printing. One day, I was pulling proofs on this old press when I had not noticed Les the cleaner stooping down to pick up a box of unwanted paper at the end of the press. The bed of the press struck Les right on the forehead. Luckily he was that far back

that he only got a light hit from the bed. The press should have had a barrier at the end so nobody would be in danger of being struck by it. All the flat-bed presses in the machine room had this facility.

Down near the tea-making room were type cabinets stacked three to four high! If a job was marked-up in a face from one of these cabinets, often the one you wanted was 20 feet straight up above your head and a long old wooden ladder had to be climbed to stand on and set the line! The only person that liked these cabinets was the composing room foreman, who had a bizarre habit of selecting setting from these cabinets. Most of the type in the cases here was worn badly from previous printing (in other words, useless) covered in rodent droppings and urine, and when you went to set a line from them, you usually did not have enough characters in the case to finish setting one bloody line!

Later, the model 8 linotype typesetting machine was replaced by a 'Zenotron' machine. This was an interim machine in that period when cold composition was being introduced. The Melbourne *Age* newspaper had a room full of 'Zenotrons' which were tape fed. They did not last long, as they were quickly overtaken by photo composition. The one at Rialls was used for book work.

The people I worked with in the composing room were: Alf Hoffman (foreman compositor) Peter Lee (machine compositor), John \_\_\_ (compositor), Ron Miles (compositor) and Bob Martin (compositor). I later worked with Bob Martin in the Reading Room at the Victorian Government Printing Office in North Melbourne.

## **The Office**

The office was divided into various sections, comprising Jack Riall's office, the estimators, a storage room full of archived job bags and the customer area where the secretary, etc., worked. Some of the office staff considered themselves a notch above those outside, but there were also some really nice people that worked in there as well.

I remember Jack Riall; he was the owner; a fatherly figure you hardly saw - a sort of Mr Grace from the old TV show "Are you being served?". Jim Keens (production manager), who had a rutted face like a ploughed paddock, Phillip Graham (the estimator), Evelyn Stone (Jack Riall's secretary and the 'real' boss of the office), and the lovely Sharon from South Melbourne, who was the office girl. I also remember a Dudley Yates (sales representative), whose face would crack if he smiled and the McKay brothers of Coburg, who became part-owners of Riall Print some time into my apprenticeship. The McKays owned a dairy at Coburg and Rialls used to print a lot of the stationary, etc., for the dairy, and they were very nice people to talk to.

## **The Machine Room**

In my time at Rialls, letterpress printing was the main printing process employed. The presses in this room were: a Heidelberg cylinder, two vertical miehles, two small Heidelberg platens and a large Heidelberg platen. There were a few other presses mainly used for cutting forme work only, such as cartons and small boxes for various products. Later a 'Nebioli' flatbed press was installed. Surprisingly, towards the end of my apprenticeship, Rialls bought a hand-fed, Chandler and Price platen to print small jobs on thick card or

cardboard.

I vividly remember spending several hours making up a rather complicated seasons ticket for the Port Melbourne Football Club, which was comprised entirely of hand-set type and brass rules (this was 1970 not 1870). Once on the press, the operator (who shall remain nameless), managed to bash most of the type because the lays were set in the wrong place. All the type had to be replaced, but eventually Port Footy Club got their tickets!

Those that worked in the machine room were: Tommy Bindloss (foreman machinist), George Chumley (a Port local, machinist), who always had a cigarette hanging off his lip, Dennis Fechner (apprentice machinist), Fred Poderodecki (apprentice machinist), and a rather sultry Yugoslav (machinist), who was more trouble than he was worth.

## **Guillotines**

There were two guillotines at Rialls, the main one was near the composing room. This was operated by Ernie Murphy, a true gentleman, and a highly skilled tradesperson. I saw some fancy cutting done by Ernie. I don't think he ever mis-cut a job while I was at Rialls. There was a lot of responsibility with this job, as one mistake could ruin hours of prior work. One day, Ernie spun round to pick up his next cut, when the blade of his guillotine fell to the cutting stick! A spring had failed in the guillotine. Ernie could have lost both of his hands if he was knocking-up a job into it at the time. Luckily, he wasn't, and Ernie told the production manager that he was not happy with what happened at all!

Modern guillotines have sensors, the blade of which will not drop if the operator has hands near it. The other

guillotine was often used by Chris, from the offset department to cut up paper stock for that section. This gave Ernie a break from the heavy workload.

## **Offset Machine Room**

Offset printing was not as important as letter-press printing, in my time. Of course, everything is printed by this process now, although digital printing has also entered the scene as technology changes. There were a few machines in the offset room: A 'Solna' and (I think) an 'A. B. Dick '. There were also two small offset machines which produced a lot of good quality work.

There are only two people working in this area: a Canadian fellow named George \_\_ and Chris \_\_.

## **Bindery**



The binding room employed three people: Jean \_\_, Florence \_\_ and Wanita \_\_ (all Port locals). This area had the usual bench space for binding work and there was a large collection of binding equipment, including wire stapling machines,

Interior of Vinnies 2023  
PMHPS



stitching machines, drills and paper punches. There was also a marvellous old pin perforating machine that got occasional use. Later on, a large folding machine was installed in the bindery to handle book work. This machine caused the production manager a lot of grief to set up properly and was not particularly liked by the binders, who were used to hand folding. This machine was purchased to fold a lot of the books that Rialls were printing at that stage.

### **Some Funny and Not-So Funny Tales from Rialls**

- In about the first month of my apprenticeship, I was bending over to pick up a galley when all of a sudden my trousers ripped open from top to bottom at the back! I could not believe it. How was I to get home on the train with my undercarriage clearly exposed for all to see? Amongst much laughter, I handed my trousers to one of the binding ladies whilst hiding in the mens. Thankfully, Jean in the binders had them sown up quickly and with further laughter, was handed them back whilst bashfully hiding behind the door of the mens!
- Fred P. (the apprentice machinist) was a bit of a wag. One day he was asked to get rid of some printing ink rollers off a press that had perished. Fred got the clever idea that one of these rollers, if thrown vertically, would stick to the ceiling of the factory. In a rather clandestine effort (witnessed by myself), he managed to get one stuck to the ceiling immediately above the staff sign-on book. Nobody noticed it up there until about three weeks, when it started to slowly ooze downwards, putting nasty black droplets on the sign-on book. Evelyn S. was not impressed with this one bit as the stains got all over her ruler and hands when

she went to the book. An attempt to dislodge the bulk of the roller was partially successful but the oozing still continued for another six months! There was a witch-hunt on to find the culprit, but nobody ever owned up to it.

- There was a paper ruler up Bay Street who used to deliver pre-ruled jobs every week to Rialls for use in invoice and ledger books. I think his first name was Chuck. Chuck was a jovial character who used to like impressing us apprentices with his folder of rude and crude jokes. This folder usually contained a wad of photo-copied sheets, with this week's jokes and funny bits inside. Chuck always wanted to show us the lot and we often wondered where in the hell he got them from (definitely pre internet).
- One day, the production manager and his estimator mate got myself and one of the machine room apprentices to climb up into the loft and bring down two old type cases full of rat crap. The old type was then dumped into bins for melting down (along with the rat crap!). As there was more rat crap in them than type, I don't think Rialls would have got much monetary return from the melted down type. We later thought this may have been penance issued to us on the part of the production manager and whoever melted this stuff down at-the scrap-yard must have cursed him!
- The machine room foreman liked the staff Christmas break-up parties (and the beer!). A huge spread was put on in the bindery, which was a credit to Rialls. One break up, this foreman caused a bit of commotion when he snuck up behind one of the binding ladies and placed a cold

bottle of Victoria Bitter up against the back of her leg! The same foreman later woke up on top of the exit ramp at Frankston railway station to the sounds of the commuters hurrying to work! On another occasion, he woke up in the middle of the Flagstaff Gardens in central Melbourne, being greeted by a group of homeless men! Apparently, his wife was not amused.

- My foreman was a bit of a fuss-pot who worried all the time about the poor work done by others (except himself of course). He was often seen rifling over other people's work during his lunch break, trying to correct (what he considered was) poor make-up. He also told me once that he had worked out how to tackle a certain tricky printing job, whilst lying in bed one night at home!
- George C. of the machine room, usually greeted me with a saying "here's Andy, last of the straight backs!", usually when he visited the composing room. I often wondered what this meant. It could have been a term of endearment in regards to my posture or looking at it the other way, a derogatory comment on how crooked my back was! George, as a young man, used to get up to some capers with his mates around Port. One was to get a bunch of cans, tie them together with string and poke it into the Bay Street cable tram slots. They used to laugh their heads off as the cans rattled down the street of their own accord, with people looking around to see what the noise was!
- One day, Rialls took on someone in the small offset department who had told the management that he knew how to operate offset presses. Usual procedure for a new-start was that they got an 'ok' card from the Printing

Union before they commence a new job. This was designed to stamp out exploitation of workers and to put a check on people being under-paid their wages. As it turned out, Rialls put themselves in a very tricky situation, all of their own doing. After about 2 hours of duty, the new printer was seen walking into the office with one hand covered by a handkerchief. He casually pulled away the handkerchief exposing a hand with part of the index finger missing and blood spurting everywhere. One of the office girls fainted with shock! I was later shown the job this person was printing, which could only be described as abysmal. Apparently, a little knowledge is dangerous, as this person had started the press whilst he still had his hands near the paper grippers! Never did hear much more about that one, but I would have imagined Rialls would have been up for a big compensation claim and a dressing down from the Printing Union and the Union representative at Rialls would have been kicked right up the pants for not doing his job!

- One Christmas, a few of us got up to a bit of a trick involving our Christmas pay envelopes. What we did was to write some huge amount on our pay envelopes, remove the original contents (of course), re-fill them with old type and lead, re-seal them and place them one at a time on the footpath out the front in Bay Street. The doorway into the composing room was left slightly ajar so that we could see what went on! The first pay packet was swiftly picked up by a lady pushing a pram, never to be seen again. The next one was picked up, opened and then thrown in the gutter. The last pay packet had a shoe placed over it, a look around was made, then it was picked up and taken to a

parked car out front. Soon after, we heard heated language coming from the car, which soon drove off. On going outside, we noticed that the envelope and its contents had been thrown onto Bay Street!

- Whilst hurrying to work after alighting from the train at North Port, we were often provided with free entertainment in the form of wharfie punch-ups in Bay Street, near the Chequers Inn. Pausing to watch was out of the question, as we would have been late for work!
- One afternoon I was called to assist George the Canadian in the offset department. He was printing some 3- or 4-colour labels for dog food cans! The spray unit (containing ink drying powder) had failed and it was essential the powder was sprayed over each label as it dropped onto the delivery tray, otherwise the job would have been ruined. George the Canadian had done a bit of lateral thinking to get round the problem. He went up to the local hardware store and bought a tin fly sprayer, filling it instead with the drying spray. My job was to spray every label coming off a press doing about 5,000 impressions per hour! This worked out that I would have to spray a label every 1.4 seconds. Soon, the entire area was shrouded in a white mist and George the Canadian was getting very angry that I was not keeping up with his press. He then snatched the fly sprayer out of my hands and told me to go back to the composing room. As I headed back, the white mist had not vanished under George's experienced hands and I thought to myself that I knew what George could do with his fly spray unit!
- One morning, some proof reading of several galleys of

setting was required. The standard procedure for proof reading, when you have the luxury of a copy holder, is for the proof reader to look through the galleys for typographical errors, etc., then hand the copy to the copy holder to be read aloud. Syntax, missing or incorrect words etc., are then picked up by the reader as the copy is read. Not so, with my foreman, Alf H.! Because he did not trust anyone but himself, he got me to look at the copy whilst he read aloud off the galleys of setting. When I yelled out that something was wrong, he would snatch the copy off me and make sure it was wrong! He would not believe or trust anyone. On this morning, he came a big-time cropper when my eyes started to close, listening to his monotonous droning voice. I think I was asleep for about 15 minutes before he realised. As a consequence he had to re-read all the galleys he had in front of him once again. Even then still not trusting me to read the copy aloud. Is this time-wasting or what?

- The Yugoslav printing machinist (who nobody particularly liked) was always waiting at the time clock, with his card in his hand, just before knock-off time. He usually kept his Gladstone bag on a bench, ready for a quick exit from the factory. One day some wag tacked the inside bottom of his bag to the bench top whilst he was out for lunch! Upon his usual rapid departure from the building, he rushed over to grab the handle of the bag, only to find the bottom of his bag was missing, along with the bag's contents, which by then, was all over the bench and the machine room floor! Those that witnessed the bag ripping were highly amused!

I never really got much practical experience at Rialls during

my apprenticeship, basically because the foreman was an untrusting, selfish b\_\_ who was always far too busy keeping his eye on other people's work, to be concerned with the training of an apprentice. Most of my learning was achieved at the Melbourne School of Printing and Graphic Arts, where the instructors were most helpful. Peter Lee at Rialls was about the only one there that gave me a fair go in learning my trade. I don't think I was ever paid a visit by anyone from the Apprenticeship Commission and Rialls did very little to help out either. You were on your own as far as I could see.

The best move I ever made was leaving Rialls in 1974, for greener pastures and a brighter future. I went on to gain wide experience in my trade, working in commercial printers, newspapers etc.

Later I was fortunate to obtain a position at the Victorian Government Printing Office as a proof reader. I was given a fair go at this establishment and I learnt a lot in the time I was there. The working environment here was far superior to



Rear Entrance to Riall's former building  
- PMHPS

Rialls (they even had a staff canteen and an excellent social club) and there were some lovely people to work with too.

After leaving the Government Printer, I took a break and travelled overseas,

before coming back to Melbourne and finding proof reading work at several trade houses. Trade houses did a lot of work for printers, advertising agencies and graphic designers. The

last trade house I worked for was Trade Graphics in South Melbourne. They were a fantastic company and the partners that ran it were great to work for.

I am not sure when Rialls closed down, maybe in the 1980s. The old factory is now inhabited by a computer software company and the ghosts of old printers can still be heard shuffling around the place from time to time, usually with a mournful groan and late at night!

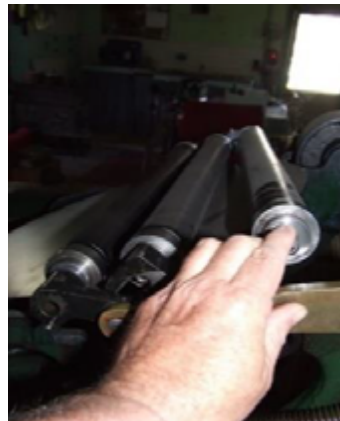
Andrew Cook,  
Bendigo,  
November, 2012

### **Printing a Business Card 1970**

When Andrew Cook donated the text of *Working at Riall's* he also gave the PMH&PS a series of photos showing how a set of business cards was printed before the printing trade was revolutionised by the introduction of computers. Today we can format and print business cards using our home computer and printer in three steps. Design the layout on the computer using an A4 paper size, print it on A4 card and cut it with scissors or a guillotine.



*Arab platen printing press  
patented 1871*

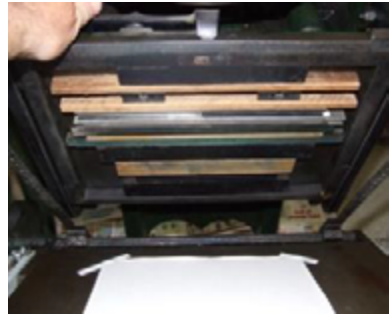


*Placing ink rollers  
on press*





*Locking up a cutting forme*



*Cutting forme placed into media*



*Printing job on a chase on a stone*



*Locked up job on a chase ready for printing*



*A4 card being cut*



*Cut cards for business cards*



*Job in Press ready for printing*



*Printed job with interweaving*



*Ready to be packed*

