

“H.M.A.S. PERTH”

1939 - 1941



*Through the eyes of
P.O. George Hatfield*



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1939 -1941

**From the diaries of
P.O. George Hatfield**

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Foreword

Of all the ships that have flown the ensign of the Royal Australian Navy, there has never been one quite like the first *HMAS Perth*, a cruiser of the Second World War.

In her short life of just less than three years as an Australian warship she sailed all the world's great oceans, from the icy wastes of the North Atlantic to the steamy heat of the Indian Ocean and the far blue horizons of the Pacific. She survived a hurricane in the Caribbean and months of Italian and German bombing in the Mediterranean. One bomb hit her and nearly sank her. She fought the Italians at the Battle of Matapan in March, 1941, which was the last great fleet action of the British Royal Navy, and she was present in June that year off Syria when the three Australian services - Army, RAN and RAAF - fought together for the first time. Eventually, she was sunk in a heroic battle against an overwhelming Japanese force in the Java Sea off Indonesia in 1942.

Fast and powerful and modern for her times, *Perth* was a light cruiser of some 7,000 tonnes, with a main armament of eight 6-inch guns, and a top speed of about 34 knots. She had a crew of about 650 men, give or take, most of them young men in their twenties. Her life began as the British ship *HMS Amphion* in 1936 but, with the clouds of war gathering, she was bought for the RAN by the Australian government and re-named, along with two sister ships, *HMAS Sydney* and *HMAS Hobart*. In 1939, a crew of Australian sailors was shipped over to Britain to collect her and bring her back. George Hatfield was one of them, and he sailed with *Perth* until the night they both died.

For security reasons, navy sailors were not permitted to keep a diary on board ship, but a lot of them ignored that rule and secretly wrote of their experiences and their thoughts in the privacy of the mess decks. History should be grateful that they did. As I have researched the story of *HMAS Perth* for a book of my own, I have read many of these diaries and have never failed

to be moved by them. Despite their often lowly rank, many of these sailors were well educated, observant and articulate and they have left us a priceless picture of their times. They were the best and brightest of a remarkable generation of Australians, ordinary men who performed extraordinary deeds.

George Hatfield's diary is special. He saw good times and bad. There were happy days and long months of great danger, and he wrote of them all with an acute eye for detail and the unusual, often expressed with a wry sense of humour. His humanity and decency shine from between the lines. In short, he's the sort of bloke you would like to have known.

I feel privileged that his son, George Jnr, allowed me to read them. Publishing them in this form means they will be a priceless heirloom for generations of Hatfields to come.

Mike Carlton
Sydney
2009

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Hatfield Family Tree

Photo of the five diaries on back cover

Preface

This is a book of my father's five diaries onboard HMAS *Perth*, covering two voyages at the beginning of World War II, while serving in the Australian Navy.

His first voyage (four note books) begins on the 20th May 1939 and tells of his cruise from Australia onboard the SS *Autolycus* to England for the commission and manning of the naval cruiser HMAS *Perth*.

After sea trials in England, they visited the 1939 World Fair in New York City and intended to return to Australia via the Panama Canal.

On the 3rd of September while travelling down the East Coast of America, war was declared against Germany.

Perth remained in the Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea guarding merchant convoys and hunting German ships from Nova Scotia, Canada, to Trinidad and Tobago, South America, with their main base being Jamaica, West Indies.

After numerous pursuits, but no contact with the enemy, *Perth's* crew arrived back in Australia on the 30th March 1940, 10 months after leaving on the *Autolycus*.

His fifth diary begins on the 15th December 1940 with the *Perth* convoying merchant shipping through Australian waters, then leaving Australia via the Suez Canal to the bloody theatre of war in the Mediterranean Sea and finishes on the 12th August 1941 back in Sydney, Australia.

His diaries are now seventy years old and becoming frail. I have published the diaries in an effort to preserve his experiences for his extended family and others interested in history.

His final diary, (I presume he had one), was lost with him on the *Perth* when it was sunk by a Japanese task force in the Sunda Straits off Java in the early hours of 1st March 1942.

As I never met my father, these diaries have left me with a window, not only into his experiences, but also his character and what type of person he was.

It took me ages to two finger type his hand written words and on occasions tears would come to my eyes as he spoke about his feelings for my mother and at other times I found myself smiling at his humour.

How times have changed over the last seventy years. The original dairies were hand written with an ink pen. I have now typed them out on a computer and while doing so, followed his voyages around the world on Google Earth. Who knows how they will be read, viewed or experienced in another fifty years from now!

Acknowledgements

I would like to give thanks to my cousin Robin Hatfield, son of Ray Hatfield, for kindly giving me permission to include parts of his father's memoirs.

To Susan Hatfield for her help and assistance in composing the Hatfield Family Tree.

To all the other members of the Hatfield family who have assisted with family photos and proofing.

To my wife, Lorraine Hatfield, for the proof reading of this book.

And a special thanks to Mike Carlton who kindly wrote the foreword to this book.

George Hatfield Jnr.

**THE DIARIES OF
GEORGE E. HATFIELD**

Book One (May 20th – July 14th 1939)

Rough Diary of Events during World Cruise per SS AUTOLYCUS and HMAS. PERTH

By Leading Seaman George E. Hatfield

Book 1 started at Melbourne, Australia on May 20th 1939.

Saturday 20th May.

Left Port Melbourne at 10.15 a.m. aboard *Autolycus* being farewelled by a large crowd of wives, sweethearts, friends and relatives. Mother and Charles arrived unexpected at Station Pier. Younger men were visibly affected at parting. Clearing Port Philip heads the crew listened to speech by C.O. Commander Harries in which he pointed out methods of overcoming physical and mental boredom. Crew were still unsettled and a certain amount of confusion reigned everywhere. Slung hammocks at night and found less room than HMA ships. Slept well.

Sunday 21st May.

At Sea. Hands called at 6.30 a.m. and comparing watches, found that clocks had been retarded ½ hour. Went to church and slept all afternoon. Exercised at night on deck to get rid of stuffy air in lungs. Ship rolling a little, O.D's sick everywhere. So far food is very satisfactory. Hot and cold dishes at each meal. Talk of a bob in all round appreciation for ship's cooks. Slept well.

Monday 22nd May.

At Sea. Started training classes in seamanship during forenoon. I am an instructor of ordinary seamen. Lecture by P.O. Walker on methods of controlling riots, street fighting, etc. Afternoons at sea are free for recreation. I am thinking of doing a bit of bayonet fighting practice which will require a quick eye and brain as a means of overcoming monotony. P.O. Don Walker is a good instructor in the art. A meeting decided to collect one shilling per man for cooks.

Tuesday 23rd May.

At Sea. Training classes this morning and demonstrations of bayonet fighting with P.O. Walker. Took charge of a squad for

rifle drill, a little difficult owing to a slight swell. Sea has subsided a lot. Canteen opened last night with Foster's Export at 9 pence per bottle. I am off beer for life. Collected the bob-in and turned it over to 1st Lieut. for safe keeping.

Wednesday 24th May.

At Sea. Called at Albany W.A. to land stoker stowaway. Landed mail as well, approx. 2 hour stop. A sunny day and light swell. Passed last lump of Aussie at 6 p.m., not feeling too good.

Thursday 25th May.

At Sea. A sore throat and slight temp. and the doc. has turned me in the sick bay. Guess I can't take it any longer.

Friday 26th May.

At Sea. Have developed all the complications of flu, a running nose, pains behind the eyes and dizzy spells. Was alright when I came in here but being herded together with pneumonia cases is not so hot. A gale was blowing last night so the skipper slowed to 2 knots just keeping her head into the storm. We have been doing same all day and now are 48 hours later than schedule. No sleep last night but hope to tonight.

Saturday 27th May.

At Sea. Still in the sick bay and cannot get out of the damn hole. My nose is like a woman's tongue, always running. Moderate sea, ship is doing 14 knots again. Ship's company were inoculated today, I saw them all done and watched their faces for reactions to the needle. This cot is getting very tiresome by now, I'll be getting bed sores before long. Hope to be out tomorrow. What hopes? Good night.

Sunday 28th May.

At Sea. And still in the sick bay. My temp. is like the cost of living, always going up. My writing is not improved writing in this cot. Ship has been doing a steady 15 knots all today. I am told it is a lovely night up top on deck. Being at sea seems to affect the bowels. Dozens of men have been in for "openers". No 9's today. In another 12 days we should reach Durban, South Africa for a 36 hour stop. The *Autolycus* is a coal burning ship and will coal at Durban. Being coal makes her more stable in a sea than oil which would roll in the tanks and coal remains stationary in the bunkers. Took some sweat medicine a while ago and will probably lose ½ stone tonight. Don't think I'll ever get

out of here, not worrying much now. Guess I am reconciled to my lot.

Monday 29th May.

At Sea. Temperature normal, discharged from bed. I have lost nearly a stone since leaving Melbourne. Most of it was fat. Tried a bottle of Foster's last night, stuck down in a dank hole in the ship, sitting on the floor to drink it. Every time I think of the "luxury cruise for sailors" as the newspapers said I have a good laugh. People said to me "I'd give my right hand to be going in your place" then they'd turn around and sue the doc for misrepresentation.

Tuesday 30th May.

At Sea. Feeling better today but stomach is sour. Sea and weather were good today but we are encountering squalls tonight and the ship is rolling a bit so that the portholes have to be closed, thus cutting off the largest supply of fresh air. We all suffer from "even your best friend won't tell you" (American Halitosis) if one can judge by the smell of the atmosphere. Apples I have discovered are very good food at sea.

Wednesday 31st May.

At Sea. A medical inspection of the ship's company this morning. The doc was looking for lice and other small parasites, several cases being reported previously. I have had no occasion to delouse myself yet. Weather and sea remains about the same.

In less than a week we should be in Durban, South Africa. A treasure hunt at night and we were a little unlucky.

Thursday 1st June.

At Sea. A sunny day today still with the high wind that has been with us all the trip so far. The windward side of the deck is constantly drenched with spray. Every night after supper I spend an hour up in the fresh air before coming down here to this dope den with its fetid atmosphere. Nights are cool but invigorating. There is not much gambling, the boys have their cash in safe custody until later on in the cruise.

Friday 2nd June.

At Sea. The ship develops a bad habit of excessive rolling at meal times. One is eating when a big roll comes and the plate of food finishes up at the other end of the table. Queer how she rolls usually at tea time. One's gut muscles should be strong by

now with continually bracing against the motion. A fine day today with wind and a choppy sea. We have not had a calm sea since we left Melbourne. Six days to Durban and the boys will hit it, high, wide and handsome.

Saturday 3rd June.

At Sea. One of the best days of the trip so far. The wind died down and the sea was nearly calm. I worked up a sweat pushing the rifle and bayonet around this evening. It is rather good exercise. Each night Nick Carter and Johnny Morrow and myself have an hour on the deck and exchange reminiscences. The bandmaster plays a piano accordion and being accompanied by 2 cornets the boys had a sing song tonight. Ballads vied with jazz and broke about evens.

Sunday 4th June.

At Sea. One of the bad days to date. Twice I was drenched by flying spray. Borrowed the ship's gramophone and a good selection of records. Nearly all the boys are Bing Crosby fans and nearly wore his numbers out. Had a pleasant 1 ½ hours up top this evening remembering old songs and had an impromptu dance between the 3 of us singing our own music. The morale and spirits of the lads are very good considering monotony and living conditions.

Monday 5th June.

At Sea. A very good day as far as the sea and the weather goes, but owing to being inoculated my arm is not bendable. This being the first shot of dope, with another one to come, I am wondering what the second will be like. We are going to arrive at Durban at 7 a.m. Thursday. They are going to send all the ships company ashore their duty or not to stretch their legs. I have been detailed for Royal Guard; it looks like I will not miss any more parades from now.

Tuesday 6th June.

At Sea. The boys are all planning what they will do in Durban. Unfortunately I am duty onboard 12 of the 24 hours we are there. I had a little sleep last night because I had to lie on my right side all night, my arm being very sore with the inoculation. People who have not been vaccinated during the last 7 years are to be done again tomorrow. I was done 7½ years ago when I joined the Navy so it looks as though I just can't take a trick.

Thursday 8th June.

At Durban, South Africa. Arrived at 7 a.m. and birth was at Point Docks. Landed the Royal Guard for practice and the remainder for a route march to stretch their legs. It was amusing to watch the natives who coaled the ship scrambling for pennies and cigarettes. Considering that we had leave only to 7.30 a.m. Friday they stretched the route march and guard practice out too far. Eventually we got ashore at 2.30. Everybody made a beeline for Cook's to change their money but we missed the crowd and changed to African money at a bank. Hence to a pub and a pint of Caste lager draught which was very welcome, the temp. being about 85 degrees. Dinner at a restaurant cost us 3 shillings and thruppence each, African. Soup 6 pence, meat & veg 1 shilling and 6 pence, bread & butter 9 pence, sweets 6 pence. A normal price for such a feed in Aussie would be 1 shilling and 9 pence. Trains & trams were free and we took a tram to Glenwood. Rents are very heavy for a decent house or flat. There are approx 50,000 natives in the town. A few more beers and we had to return to the ship by 7 p.m. where we relieved the duty watch. A dance which was free to sailors, but cost 1 pound and 1 shilling a double ticket to civilians was held that evening. From 10 p.m. till 7 next morning drunks were rolling back to the ship. One could hardly blame the boys for their exuberance. I felt like getting drunk myself but had to come back for duty. The cells were full of drunks in for the night. I had a sentry watch there from midnight till 2 a.m.

Friday June 9th.

At Durban. Owing to the delay in coaling the ship did not sail till 4.30 p.m. They gave leave from 10.30 a.m. after parading the guard. We walked to town and had a quencher when we got there, then dinner at a different place this time, cost 2 shillings. There are modern trolley buses, trams, double deckers and petrol buses. I took a trolley bus ride to Old Dutch Road via Marine Parade. It was a good run along the fore shore then into the native quarter. There were a lot of Hindus, the women being much prettier than the Zulu women. A large percentage of the European population are Dutch and signs, advertisements, tram destinations and goods were all in two languages, English & Dutch. I had a ride in a Ricksha cost me 6 pence per 2 ½ miles. Rather a novel if slow

method of travel. The Ricksha boys deck themselves out in gaudy headdresses with feathers and buffalo horns. They are very shrewd and will ask 2 shillings but a bit of haggles and the sight of a 6 pence and away they go. Numerous places of disrepute were posted on the notice board and placed out of bounds. Needless to say the boys copied the addresses down and made for them after dark. Souvenirs of beer mugs were plentiful. All hands got back in time before the ship sailed, some with sweet things on their arm. A fair crowd turned up to see us off and we pulled out into the river with a tug. There were many regrets at leaving, but I was too tired to worry about leaving there.

Saturday June 10th.

At Sea. A perfect flat sea and the ship is making good time. We expect to be around the Cape of Good Hope by tomorrow night. The boys are still talking about Durban and quite a few of them myself included are broke. I changed 1 pound and spent it all. 1 pound Aust. was worth 15 shillings African. Curiously enough the *Amphion* was attached to the South African station for 2 years. The people there all spoke of her. The ship *Amphion* is to be renamed *Perth* when we recommission her at Portsmouth. Whilst in Durban I was approached in the streets and hotels by numerous people who were Australian or had been to Aussie. Usually they would walk up and say "What does Manly look like now" or "do trams still run down St Kilda Road". They all seemed a bit hungry for news of Australia. My impression of Durban was a good Rexona town, very expensive, too many niggers, girls below Aussie standards and all right for a holiday.

Sunday June 11th.

At Sea. A good sea this morning but it has blown up a bit choppy tonight. Mountainous land is still in sight on the starboard side but we are nearly around the cape now. Tomorrow we will be heading up the West Coast of Africa. When we lose sight of Africa in a day or so we do not sight land until the Canary Isles in the Atlantic Ocean. Church in the forward well deck this morning and the O/C. read portions of a letter from the Commander of the *Amphion* which he received in Durban. We expect to arrive at Portsmouth June 29th or 30th. Arrangements are being made for the *Autolycus* to go alongside the *Amphion*. That will be the easiest means of transhipping the men. It is proposed to give 5

days leave to all men that can be spared. On July 10th H.R.H. The Duchess of Kent is to rename the *Amphion*, *Perth*, her Australian name. We have an extensive programme of trials & docking of which I shall write as they happen. A lazy day for me, just eating, sleeping and reading.

Monday June 12th.

At Sea. Rather a pleasant day at sea today. Not a very pleasant day for me because I received the inoculation needle for the 2nd time. The arm is very sore tonight. I am quite pleased to record on this occasion my taking of a bath today, the first since Durban. The bathroom usually resembles a rugby scrum down. During my Navy life there have been occasions when I have been obliged to go unwashed for days at a time so "happy but chatty" is nothing strange. I do not expect much sleep tonight.

Tuesday June 13th.

At Sea. A good sea and wind in fact a good day all round. We are making good progress along the west coast of Africa although we are out of sight of land, well out in the Atlantic Ocean. I am taking my 2nd inoculation much better than the 1st. The arm is only a little sore. We are going into whites in a few days. It is said that we cross the equator next Monday 19th June. We are in the tropical zone now, but as yet the weather is not very hot. The meat is getting a bit off lately & the Navy slogan is, "when the meat goes bad, curry it"

Wednesday June 14th.

At Sea. The good weather is still with us and a little drop of sunshine brought a lot of the mess deck habitués up into the open air. Lots of them wore bathing trunks, but late in the afternoon a cool wind drove them below again. We had a sing song community concert on top of No 1 hatch tonight with 2 or 3 rather good amateur solo items. They put over quite a few of the songs of 10 years ago with which I am more familiar than the jitterbug rhythm of today. I am giving the fresh air sleeping a fly tonight.

Thursday June 15th.

At Sea. Still the same fine weather but not very hot yet. The crew rigged a swimming tank, dimensions 14ft -9ft depth 7ft. I was one of the first in before the water got too thick. Later in the afternoon it was thicker than pea soup. It would be difficult to

lather B.O. soap in it. Of course it was salt, very salty. The tank will be used to duck the victims in the (crossing the line) ceremony. It looks as if we will have to call at Madeira to fill up with fresh water. Tea coffee and all drinks are tainted now and water on its own is undrinkable.

Friday June 16th.

At Sea. A touch of real tropical weather today, hot sunshine and calm sea. Dozens of the lads are a delicate shade of pink tonight. The hammocks were all taken up in the air this morning and left there all day to get the mustiness out of the bed clothes. We all have our own special boat to go away from the ship in if she were sinking and tonight they exercised "abandon ship stations". Below decks now at 9 p.m. the air is thick and the atmosphere sweaty. I am sleeping up on deck these fine nights and feeling fresher for it. The water is still nearly as salty as the sea outside.

Saturday June 17th.

At Sea. The weather is still very good and I had some more sunbaking. I am beginning to go that dirty brown colour as always I do. Hope to be tanned to a Kiwi Boot Polish colour by Portsmouth. They started a new water tank today and it is much fresher. A perfect night, "a night for romance" as the novelists say. Unfortunately for the boys we have no fair senioritas aboard, not female anyway. The beer has not run dry yet, but I have not had a beer onboard since 29th last month. Not bad going for me with beer at 9 pence per bottle.

Sunday June 18th.

At Sea. The hottest day to date, a real humdinger. I was in the tank about 3 hours all told today and am pretty sleepy now at 10 p.m. Also the shoulders are a little tender tonight, and my usual charmosan complexion rather baked. It is worthy of note that tonight we cross the equator. At eight bells (8 p.m.) King Neptune, his queen and all the royal court boarded *Autolycus* over the bow and held court on No 5 hatch. The proclamation of Neptunus Rex was read and thereby all longshoremen were summoned to undergo the initiation necessary to enter Neptune's realm. Said initiation to take place tomorrow at 2 bells (9 a.m.). The costumes and players were rather well got up I thought and I reckon that Neptune's wife was the genuine article and has been

masquerading as a man all the trip. The performance was well attended both by men and officers. The captain of *Autolycus* delivered the mail and a doz. bottles of Fosters to Neptune. I will describe the initiation ceremony in tomorrow's page.

Monday June 19th.

At Sea. Another fine day and we crossed the line at 6 a.m. At 9.a.m. King Neptune and his retinue ascended again and took up their court on No 5 hatch. Nick and I had a ringside seat. The Order of the Wallaby was conferred on Captain Herrington of *Autolycus* and the Chief Engineer received the Order of the Koala. Numerous other orders were also conferred. Then a number of people were charged with facetious charges. They were all sentenced to be thrown to the Royal Bears who were in the tank waiting for victims. Eggs were cracked on their skulls, Whitehouse forced down their throats and well daubed with paint. They were then taken up onto the platform of the tank and whitewash applied to their faces with a 6 inch brush and then shaved with a 4 foot wooden razor. On the completion they were tipped backwards into the tank where they were well and truly ducked by the Bears. All the charges were heard with the same result except the Engineer Lieut. who is very unpopular man. He locked himself in the refrigerator room and would not come out until the festivities were over, realizing that he would fare badly at the hands of the Bears. At finish of victims, Neptune and his whole court were set upon and soundly ducked. Then anyone who was handy went in whether they wanted to or not. Even one inoffensive chinaman found himself in the tank. A humorous day for all. I am tired and sunburnt, so good night.

Tuesday June 20th.

At Sea. Today has been a typical tropical day, with a steamy heat and sudden downpours of warm rain. I was in the tank in the rain and it was just like a hot bath. We do rifle drill everyday, that is the unfortunate ones who form the Royal Guard for H.R.H. Duchess of Kent at Portsmouth. One gets very sticky after a couple of minutes slinging a rifle around just near the equator. In nine or ten days we should reach England and I might say that everybody will be glad.

Wednesday June 21st.

At Sea. A fine day with showery interludes and it looks like more showers tonight. We are now in the Tropic of Cancer and are supposed to reach Madeira (Portuguese) by Sunday. We should only be a few hours getting water and there will probably be no leave. Portsmouth is only 5 days steaming from Madeira. I spend about 2 hours in the tank each day with the result I am always very tired each night. I am sleeping fairly soundly these nights. Tonight the wool cargo is starting to smell.

Thursday June 22nd.

At Sea. A fine day but a change in temperature tonight. We have been wearing tropical rig these last few days, white singlets and shorts, but went back to blues tonight. My nose is manufacturing gallons of mucus per hour and that tender thru blowing that I can hardly put a hand and handkerchief to it, but I will have to be carried before I go to the sick bay again. Today is the first day I have missed a dip in the tank since it was filled. I am taking things very quietly.

Friday June 23rd.

At Sea. Another fine day with a brisk hard wind. My nose is still churning out muck and it has been a real flu day for me. I have been lounging in a string hammock all day and have taken everything in an endeavour to shake it off. We expect to sight the Canary Isles tomorrow morning at dawn. The amateur photographers will be up with the albatross to snap the mountain of Tenerife which is 1200 feet high. I hardly slept last night, but hope to do better tonight.

Saturday June 24th.

At Sea. I added a little to my sunbaked complexion today, one must take advantage of the sun for one does not see much of it in Melbourne. We passed thru the Canary Isles today and Teneriffe reminded me very much of Mt Egmont, New Zealand except that it was not snow capped. We could see towns at a distance of about 15 miles. The general appearance of the Isles is very rugged, a mass of crags with little apparent cultivation. In my battle with the flu I have come out on top so far for I have managed to subdue it for the time being.

Sunday June 25th.

At Sea and at Madeira. A very fine day as has been the rule rather than the exception lately. Arrived at Madeira approximately 9.30 a.m. and being no harbour there we dropped anchor off the beach. There is an artificial breakwater of concrete at which a ship was tied up. A pinnace with the pilots came out but was not required. A fleet of small skiffs called bum-boats came out laden with ware for the tourist. Then began a procession aboard of multi-uniforms. There were soldiers in prison grey with bayonets at their sides. There were Policia Maritimes (marine police) in white uniform not unlike ours. The vendors came aboard and then began a battle of haggles over prices. What they asked 10 shillings for at first, they later sold for 4 shillings. They sold miniature rum casks, jewellery, fruit, bags, cloths and doilies. I saw some fine supper cloths for 2 pounds, but did not have the cash. We had a water boat each side of us pumping in 300 tons of fresh water. The island is very rugged, and is, I believe, an extinct volcano. All the roads seem to run uphill at 45 degree angles. The beach was composed of grey pebbles, a little hard on the tenderfoots I should imagine. The complexion of the Portuguese is light tan, as if slightly sunburnt. They were typically Latin, very excitable, and very voluble. The motor pinnaces that came out to the ship were large and comfortable, looking as if they would be good sea boats, and very clean. We left at 1.30 p.m. and watched the terraces on the hillsides which were cultivated, probably with white grapes for Madeira wines, fade from view. As we were leaving the Capetown Castle, a motor ship slid in to anchor. She was the smartest ship that I had seen, looking very clean and speedy. Clean because she is a motor ship and speedy looking because of her cruiser cut bow and stern. I tried to purchase an Escudo Portuguese coin, but they did not want too much Aussie money. The Aust. pound was only worth 16 shillings at Madeira, so that one would not want to spend too much at the rate of exchange. The nose is still playing up and I think that the antiums need attention. With Portsmouth as the next port, it is 4 days steaming, and "Good bye" *Autolycus*, "Hello" *Perth*, and start work.

Monday June 26th.

At Sea. There is a deck tennis championship being held on board but I have not mustarded enough energy to attend. The weather is wonderful and ideal for any sort of deck game. We are in the Bay of Biscay now and contrary to the song the thunder is not roaring nor the rain deluging but we have calm sea and Spanish sunshine. We are changing continents very quickly now. Yesterday we were 300 miles off the coast of Morocco, today we are off Spain, tomorrow France, and then England. Tonight in the after well deck, one of the Chinese brought out a Decca phonograph and Chinese records. Their idea of music is certainly weird compared to ours. I have a tuck box bought on the P.S. Weereona at Port Melbourne last year. I showed it to a couple of chinks and they said, "No good take him away, Japan", which shows the feeling of patriotism even this far from their native land. We had a community sing song tonight, music supplied by bandmaster and his squeeze box.

Tuesday June 27th.

At Sea. This weather must be some of the famous Mediterranean and Riviera sunshine. We are in a regular shipping lane now and frequently pass other ships. From Madeira we do not sight land until England. The spirits of the lads are considerably higher this last couple of days, now that they have visions of settling to a permanent birth in the *Perth*. I think that the chance of getting ashore would have a lot to do with the good spirits. On the trip over we have sung a parody on the song "Roll along covered wagon", to the words sung thus,

Roll along Autolikeus, Roll along
Roll along Autolikeus, Roll along
Every turning of the screw
Brings me nearer home to you
Roll along Autolikeus roll along.

Autolycus being pronounced Auto-like-us.

The next parody is,

"The *Perth's* in port again" from "Follow the Fleet"

Wednesday June 28th.

At Sea. We are just about in the English Channel tonight and I have just come down from the last sing song onboard *Autolycus*. Today has been fine in patches, and reminds me very

much of Melbourne weather, fine one minute rain the next. There is a very big day tomorrow, changing ships. It got dark just at 9 o'clock tonight with 1½ hours of twilight. Sometimes in England I believe the twilight extends till 10.30 p.m. I will probably have a big entry tomorrow.

Thursday June 29th.

At Portsmouth. At 10 a.m. we slid past the Isle of Wight and at 1 p.m. berthed at Portsmouth nearly alongside the *Hood*. The *Nelson*, *Ark Royal*, *Iron Duke* and the Royal Yacht *Victoria and Albert* are scattered around just in the immediate vicinity. The place simply bristles ships and there are more destroyers laying around than 18 footers on Sydney Harbour. I am too tired to write more tonight although I would like to.

Friday June 30th.

At Portsmouth. After a good night's sleep I felt better this morning. I have been ashore all day drawing stores from the dockyard and am very tired tonight. All the hands are tired because we are working 10 hours per day trying to clean the ship after the dockyard workmen had put in new guns and fittings every where. The time is 10 p.m. and it is nowhere near dark yet. They advanced the clocks 1 hour for daylight saving.

Saturday July 1st.

At Portsmouth. Went ashore for the first time to have a look at the town. On getting out of the dockyards I found that I had stepped ashore from the ship into the Navy. Every two yards was a sailor, besides miscellaneous uniforms of infantry, Scots regiment A.R.P. marines and sundry others. They have deleted trams and substituted trolley buses. I had a look around the town and its outstanding features were the fresh complexions of girls, the narrow 9 feet frontages of most of the houses, the variety of accents, and the cheapness of bus fares, about 2 miles for 1 penny. I had tea at a quiet little café, ordering tea, bread and butter as extras, also a bottle of beer (small) cost 2 shillings and tuppence. Wandering into the "Coach and Horses" I tasted some more ale at 4 pence per pint, but it was thumbs down, thick like syrup, and no spark. The girls walk into the public bar with their boyfriends and have their pint like a man. Women smoke everywhere in the street, trams etc. Each pub has its piano and player and there is a sing song going all the time. Hotel hours are

open 10 a.m. close 2.30 p.m. open 6 p.m. close 10.30 p.m. I got pretty full for about 3 shillings and despite the fact that there must be 5,100 beds for sale, they were all booked. Eventually I wandered into a doss house and fell into a bed tired out. After 20 days at sea and 2 days extra hard work I felt like a beer up so I had it and felt better for it.

Sunday July 2nd.

At Portsmouth. Woke up this morning with my head full of cymbals. "Never again" says I. Went to Southsea Beach about a mile away and spent 6 hours there. The promenade was lined with deck chairs at tuppence each. The sand consisted of pebbles about as big as a sparrow's egg. The saying goes "don't throw the sand about, you will give someone concussion". At a serve yourself snack bar I had 2 rolls, ham and tomato and a glass of squash, 8 pence. I left Southsea on a circular bus tour, 3 ½ hours for 3 shillings and 6 pence leaving at 2.45 p.m. Through leafy lanes with hedges and trees in lieu of fences. To Fishers' Pond and Fair Oak via Farham, Bishop's Waltham, Twyford and Botley. All the above mentioned places being tiny villages, some of the houses having thatched straw roofs. The scenery and county side was delightfully rustic and I considered my 3 shillings and 6 pence well spent. Back to the city, a feed of steak, egg and chips a couple of beers, then to the Royal Sailors' Club to turn in at 11 p.m.

Monday July 3rd.

At Portsmouth. A very good sleep last night with a little cabin to myself, hot and cold water laid on close by, and everything very clean. All for 9 pence which was thruppence cheaper than the doss house. We painted the ship's side today and all the hands were flat out. This is supposed to be England's summer, but according to our ideas the weather would make the proverbial brass monkey sit up and take notice. Food is dear, but clothes, beer and fares are cheap. The civilian population are all Army and Navy minded and the first thing a girl does when she sees you, is to look at your arm to see if you have as many badges as the boyfriend. There are A.R.P. (air raid precautions) notices every where, and air raid shelters all over the place. England is within a couple of flying hour's range of European countries and a bomb dropped on a city might kill 1,000 people. Defence work

is being carried on feverishly everywhere and I think that there is something in the air. Hitler's designs on Danzig have them all on the hop.

Tuesday July 4th.

At Portsmouth. Today were the usual showers that seem to accompany an English summer. We are working top speed to get the ship presentable for H.R.H. Duchess of Kent on 10th July. The *Renown* slid past the *Perth* today and she is simply bristled with guns. Just around from our berth the *Ark Royal* the new aircraft carrier is tied up. She has a flight deck as big in area as the Melbourne cricket ground for planes to land and take off on. In Portsmouth dockyard is HMS *Victory*, Nelson's flagship at the battle of Trafalgar. She is in dry dock and in a remarkable state of preservation. Visitors to the port always visit the *Victory*. I get 4 days leave on June 12th and should have 4 pounds. I shall visit London, and try and cram in as much sight seeing as I can. I stay aboard during the week and go ashore only weekends. There is not much to do in "Pompey" (as Portsmouth is called) of a night except drink beer, so I am saving a couple of bob to visit London.

Wednesday July 5th.

At Portsmouth. Some more liquid sunshine today. I am getting convinced that the Depot is not the only wet place on the map. Looking in my locker I discovered three daily papers and I don't even know the headlines of them, which means that I am pressed for time. Too much work for me I am afraid. Today the cruiser *Glasgow*, a recent ship with triple 6 inch guns and a big plane hangar, came out of dry dock near the *Perth*. I am still aboard and I have not weakened yet.

Thursday July 6th.

At Portsmouth. The weather today has been alike with one of Melbourne's worst days, rain and as cold as charity. Although not duty I am still aboard. I have two free invitations to dance ashore at "Pompey" tomorrow night, but do not think that I will go. The ship is looking a little better now with paint covering a multitude of sins. This weather is playing up with my nose and now I again have a constant snuffle. Reckon that I will turn in early, for with 5.30 rising one gets 7 ½ hours sleep.

Friday July 7th.

At Portsmouth. Still another day of honest toil and we are seeing results for our effort. Went ashore tonight with Nick and we did our shopping at Woolworths. I bought a lock for my locker, a memo book and an eversharp pencil, total cost 9 pence. Whilst in the 5 & 10 cent store I became acquainted with a rather nice blonde and made a date to visit the ship Saturday afternoon. Spent 4 hours and 2 shillings and 6 pence in the Yorkshire Grey pub playing shove ha'penny till 10.30 pm

Saturday July 8th.

At Portsmouth. I was duty today and worked from 6 am till 7 pm, rather a long day and very tiring. Our new motor boats arrived and will the Aussie sailors sit up and take notice when we get back. They are speedboats capable of about 25 knots compared to Aust. motor boats of 9–10 knots. The food is not too bad here now, but they are very lousy dishing it out. The ordinary seamen are taking quite a lot of breaking in, but they will learn.

Sunday July 9th.

At Portsmouth. A real fine day for a change. It was a treat to enjoy a drop of sunshine. I kept my appointment and the young lady turned up with a companion. I escorted them aboard, showed them round and gave them afternoon tea. They were interesting enough company and I am going to meet mine tomorrow night. All this is purely platonic as I have always preferred female to male friends. I am going to be perfectly frank, otherwise this would not be a true diary.

Monday July 10th.

At Portsmouth. Shifted over berth this morning to South Railway Jetty where apparently royal personages board HM ships. The ship looks like a picture in 7 days solid work. H.R.H. Duchess of Kent arrived and lunched with the captain and then renamed the ship *Perth*. A large crowd attended and as the day was fine the ceremony went very well. Loud speakers carried the speech of S.M. Bruce to the crowds. Went ashore that night to meet the young lady but in the way that women have she was late, so late in fact that she did not even get there. I had a couple of drinks and watched a game of darts for a while. Darts, I think must be England's national pastime at present. Each pub has its board and the players are usually very skilful. The pubs cater for

their patrons much more so than in Australia. Seats and tables and either a wireless or piano. There is always a sing song going, anyone who feels so inclined getting up and giving a turn.

Tuesday July 11th.

At Spithead, Portsmouth Harbour. We moved out to sea today to do gun trials with the twin 4 inch guns, and on completion anchored at Spithead which is the sea between Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight. Each year the king reviews the Royal Navy there in his Royal Yacht, *Victoria and Albert*. Went ashore tonight and had a couple of beers and tea costing 3 shillings and 8 pence for steak mushrooms and chips and 1 glass of beer. In Aussie that would be about 2 shillings and 6 pence at the most. Slept ashore at the Royal Sailors' Home Club.

Wednesday July 12th.

At Spithead. Left the ship on 5 days leave at lunch time and catching a fast electric train to London, arrived there at 5 p.m. I borrowed Johnny Morrow's civvies to wear on leave. Booked in at the Union Jack Club (U.J.C.) for 4 nights. Had a feed then wandered along to Buckingham Palace and saw the changing of the guard, via the Strand. With a band leading of over 80 men the bearskins and scarlet tunics, it was rather a spectacle. The precision of the men, all 6 foot was remarkable and well worth watching. I watched it from the fountain outside the palace gates. Colin Ebbels and I were much impressed, noting small points that the non militarian would not look for. Strolling back thru Hyde Park where the King rides in Rotten Row we saw the Yeomen of the Guard, all over 50 with their breeches gaiters and scarlet smocks making an old world picture. They were riding in horse drawn carriages with the prancing of the black perfection trained horses making the pavement ring to the sound of their hooves. I heard an old lady, English by her accent arguing with her crony whether they were Beefeaters or Yeomen of the Guard. It was then that I realised how ignorant, outside their own sphere the stay at home English really are. The old lady was about 80, yet did not know which was what. Back to the U.J.C. at 11.30 and to bed.

Thursday July 13th.

At London. We rose at 11 a.m. had a feed at the C.P.O. Café (Sausages Potatoes Onions) then walked to Westminster Abbey

via Trafalgar Square. The lions around the column were silent, not so the traffic that passed by. Seven streets intersect there and since there are no trams the big 2 deck buses obscured all else. What marvellous drivers those men must be to control a huge bus like a baby Austin. Traffic lights same as Melbourne are everywhere. On reaching the Abbey we wandered in and our nostrils were greeted with the dust of centuries. Facing the door was the Altar and in the alcoves all around were tombs of kings and men dating back to the 12th Century. Sculpture and architecture were superb, being exactly the same as when built. The Main Hall where the Kings are crowned is lofty with the sun coming in through fully glazed windows. I saw the Coronation Chair with the stone beneath simply covered with visitors. The place had the peaceful quietness peculiar to a church and nearby an old lady knelt on the flagstones and oblivious to the rest carried on her meditation. I saw the grave of the Unknown Soldier with wreaths, prominent among which was one from President Le Brun of France. We wandered through the cloisters where business girls ate their lunch and saw choir boys in their long cloaks and girdles. One could have spent a week in there and still not have taken everything in. Emerging from there we had our first look closely at Big Ben and heard the deep resonant tone of its chimes above the Houses of Parliament. We did not know what the buildings were so asked an old man standing outside. He was evidently a Londoner and had no idea that they were the Houses of Parliament. Just another instance of the average Englishman's ignorance and the slogan 'see your own city first' would do well applied here. We caught a tube train at London's underground Westminster station and after changing eventually arrived at Mark Lane and the Tower of London. There were hundreds of country visitors seeing the Tower and we made our way across the drawbridge over the moat and into the Tower. It is really a collection of buildings, all towers surrounded by the moat, now dry. We saw the spot where the scaffold on which Anne Boleyn, King Henry VIII's wife was executed. Then the famed Bloody Tower and its suits of ancient armour. There were ravens unconcernedly strolling between our legs as we reached the Jewel House where are kept the Crown Jewels. Admission 6 pence to see the most priceless collection of, Jewels in the world.

Guarded by men dressed not unlike the Yeomen but in black with red trimmings. The Jewel House is small and one files past and gazes at the marvellous collection. They have 3 lots of glass cages and a grille besides 2 attendants and is reckoned burglar proof. We saw the State crowns of King and Queen, the small crown of Victoria, the huge gold mace of the Sergeant at Arms, the sceptres blazing with diamonds and the numerous jewelled swords of the King's office. There were the insignias of the orders of the Bath, Garter and British Empire. To name them all I would need a catalogue. Wandering out past the Territorial's Sentry at the gate we found ourselves on the bank of the muddy Thames gazing at London Tower Bridge, just then lifted to allow a vessel under. The place simply reeks age and tradition. We went back to Mark Lane Station and saw one of the oldest churches in England called "All Hallows". Feeling pretty tired we went back to headquarters which is just outside Waterloo Station and had a sleep then a game of billiards in one of the best billiard rooms that I have seen. In contrast to Royal Naval House, it is one of the best appointed quarters provided for men of the Services that I have seen.

Friday July 14th.

At London. Rising at 8.30 a.m. we went to the palace to see the changing of the guards again but there was no band and the ceremony stripped somewhat of its glamour. Then came the Lifeguards in huge red cloaks on perfect horses flying just like on the condensed milk tin. They changed at Whitehall where the defence headquarters are. They were all big men each with the seat of a horseman perfectly controlling his mount. We walked into a museum in Whitehall which would take a year to inspect properly. There were collections of every medal in the world, thousands of medals and ribbons. Lord Nelson's cocked hat and sword, scimitars, cutlasses, bayonets and cold steel of every shape, size and description. Plans of battles in miniature, all types of planes old and new, models of ships, banners of long forgotten regiments and antiques dating centuries back. King Charles 11 passed through one door to his execution. Leaving there after a couple of hours we went by tube to Bakers St. Station and visited Madame Tuassauds Waxworks. I have a souvenir programme of the visit so am not going into detail. The startling reality of the

effigies would deceive the keenest observer were they in the street and not in the waxworks. The Royal group looked as if they would walk off the dais any moment and Chamberlain and his cabinet only lacked speech to be real. Mussolini, Hitler, Don Bradman, Jean Batten and "Bluey Wilkinson" were amongst those that caught my eye. In the Chamber of Horrors were depicted some of the tortures used years ago, among which was a Moorish torture of the hooks. A life size figure of a man hanging suspended in mid air by a hook in his stomach and blood flowing freely would curdle ones blood stream if encountered elsewhere. We spent 2 hours in there and it was well worth the 1/- fee. Coming back to life we spent a couple of hours riding on the Underground London Transport. There are about 8 different lines, 2 or 3 some times at the one station. The trains are electric with automatic doors and fares about 1 penny for 2 miles. They are all on different levels and escalators take one everywhere. There are slot machines for tickets, cigs, hot dogs, scent and everything excepting perhaps babies. 3rd Class travel is as luxurious as Aust's 1st class and most people travel 3rd. In the evening we had a feed of the best fish that I have tasted. Plaice fried to a butter melting point. Then we visited a series of pubs. The Bunch of Grapes, The Black Dog, The Coach House and the Fitzroy Tavern. In the last named we were perhaps the only two who were not homosexuals. Men with powdered and rouged faces, long wavy hair, plucked eyebrows, mannequins walk and some even with skirts and women's watches, drank with women with husky voices, close cropped hair men's ties and watches and handkerchiefs. A little world of topsey turvey, of masculine women, and feminine men. All the perversions of sex must have been congregated beneath that roof. The men had their bodies for sale and the women unapproachable caring only to caress their own sex. It is an education and eye opener to visit such a place as one never dreamed existed. Coming back to the U.J.C., I was approached by a dark eyed damsel with the invitation "to come for a taxi ride". Being curious I asked what she meant and was informed that for 10 shillings for her and 2 shillings 6 pence for the driver she would ride with me, a tour of back streets until as such time I knocked on the window when the taxi driver would take us back to Waterloo. Quite apart from the commercial side

of the question I failed to see how one could “operate” seated in the back of one of London’s taxis especially on the move. At my answer “no thanks” she just said “right o” and ambled along to the next prospective customer. Watching awhile the crowd of youthful looking women who had commandeered taxis, I saw a sailor and a man indubitably feminine enter a taxi and proceed on the same journey as the painted ladies. It set me thinking what a vast cosmopolitan crowd inhabits this, the largest old world city on earth. The city is old world and so are the habits of its inhabitants, was the only conclusion I could arrive at.

--- End of Book One.

Book Two (July 14th – October 2nd. 1939)

Being the continuation of the World Cruise per SS AUTOLYCUS and HMAS PERTH

By Leading Seaman George E. Hatfield

Book 2 started at London ENGLAND on July 14th 1939.

Saturday July 14th.

At London. Rose about 10 a.m. today and now paid our last 1shilling and 6 pence at the S.P.O. for a meal. Played billiards at the U.J.C. for a while and then caught a Southern Electric Railway train for Portsmouth, 74 miles away. The return fare 3rd class cost us nine shillings & ten pence which is reasonable. On the return journey I took notice of the country side which, I had failed to see on the up journey because I was asleep. Everything was emerald green and once out of the suburbs of London we encountered agricultural areas, small farms, growing dairy produce, the largest of which would be 10 or 20 acres. In contrast to the post and rail fences of Australia country properties they were bounded by green leaf hedges which added to the compact picture sequences of the scenes. As we tore along I glimpsed a portion of the famous Brooklands speed track. The window sill gardens are very popular due mainly to lack of space in yards. Reaching Portsmouth we booked in for the night and promptly proceeded to get our heads down which is the sailor's usual occupation in spare time.

Sunday July 15th.

At Portsmouth. A very lazy day, rose late, lolled about, dozed, and eventually went for a stroll to Southsea beach. As is usually the way on weekends the promenade was crowded with strollers. Girls with large feet, big hips and clear complexions, Marines from Eastney barracks, sailors flying innumerable different cap ribbons, and Scot regiment, Territorials and even women in khaki. Air raid shelters occupy all vacant land and aeroplanes flying overhead at all hours of the day and night are used as practice targets by anti-aircraft crews. If the German

Fuehrer gets funny I know that he will receive a red hot reception at English shores. Pictures, pubs and fairs being open on Sunday nights are a diversion for the work-all-the-week people, unlike Australian cities where unless one has a car the weekends are dull. "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" as the saying goes. I saw a Punch & Judy show in the streets, the first in my life. It amused the other kids as well. We turned in determined to have our last sleep in before returning from leave. Cost of bed, clean linen, no bugs, 9 pence.

Monday July 16th.

At Portsmouth. The *Perth* went to Portland and back to do her engine room trials and we picked her up on the return to dockyard. We expected her at 1600 (4.p.m.) but she was 2 hours late so to beguile the time we went on an inspection tour of HMS *Victory*, Lord Nelson's ship, which is in the oldest engraving dock in England in Portsmouth dockyard. She has been refitted and a lot of the original fittings of 150 years ago are still there. She has a small crew of sailors and marines onboard to keep her clean and act as guides to the numerous visitors. We saw the spot marked by a brass plate on the deck where Nelson fell and lower down on the gun deck, the spot where he died. Also on view was an array of the surgeon's implements of torture, looking more like a selection of carpenter's tools. The manner of carrying out an amputation in those days was to fill the victims with rum, hack off his limb, then dip the jagged edge in boiling pitch. What the reactions were I really could not say. Everything is handraulic and it took 140 men to man the capstan. A fiddler sat atop playing a lively tune to keep the men in step and to keep their spirits up. They also have a museum filled with interesting relics of figureheads, mascots etc. On approaching the *Victory*, one sees what appears to be a tangle of rigging hanging from the masts and yardarms. Hundreds of ropes run everywhere. One could visualize men hanging on by their eyebrows, furling sails in a roaring gale. As the old saying goes, them were the days of wooden ships and iron men, now we have iron ships and wooden men.

Tuesday July 17th.

At Portsmouth. We tied up alongside HMS *Renown*, a battlecruiser, last night and seeing that I was on watch for the middle watch I had a good opportunity to study this well “renowned” ship. She has been in dockyard hands for 18 months, and emerged a veritable floating fortress. There is that much room in her compartments that a dance can be held anywhere. 200 dockyard workmen are working day and night to get her into fighting trim. Just another indication that England expects this day that anything might happen.

Wednesday July 18th.

At Portsmouth. The *Perth* moved up the harbour to dry dock today to get the barnacles scraped off her bottom. The battleship *Queen Elizabeth (Q.E.)* is not far from us, stripped to the hull, and being recreated. The toil of the day does not cease at 4 p.m. as is usual these days. Work after working hours still goes on to get the ship in trim for America. I would put in for overtime but the Admiralty pays you for 24 hours per day, every day if the need arises, leave being only a privilege granted.

Thursday July 19th.

At Portsmouth. Today we had several bucketsfull of English sunshine. In America we can beer but in England we can sunshine. When going ashore one never knows when one will be drenched with concentrated sunshine. The Hatfield treasury has suffered severe setbacks in the week gone since last payday; hence the city of “Pompey” is seldom graced by my presence ashore. Borrowing means repaying, and that leaves a short pay for New York so I guess I will stay aboard repentant.

Friday July 20th.

At Portsmouth. The *Perth* is still in dock, but not dry dock, for she was flooded today. Tomorrow we move out to the Dolphins, which I believe is the anchorage allotted till we sail. There is some talk of a delayed sailing due to a defect detected in a dynamo. I bought an electric iron in Depot for 5 shillings and find it useful here. An ironed article of apparel is much more comfortable than one unironed as Al (Alma) told me, but in my 7 ½ years I have done practically no pressing.

Saturday July 21st.

At Portsmouth. For some reason or other we did not move out to the Dolphins but went into No 3 lock. Went ashore this afternoon and was conducted over Whale Island which is HMS *Excellent* the gunnery centre of the Empire. My guide was no other than P.O. Walker who is attached there on 2 years exchange service in the R.N. It really was excellent, the selection of guns and gunnery controls that they have there. How man can invent such intricate mechanisms for the destruction of man is beyond my reasoning power.

Sunday July 22nd.

At Portsmouth. Slept ashore last night at the Royal Sailors Home Club to have my last sleep-in this morning for a couple of weeks till America. I intended staying ashore all day, but could not imagine doing a 24 hour fast, not having the necessary to purchase some food ashore. Returned onboard for dinner not that it was a magnificent feed, but it filled up the vacancies in my bread basket. Went ashore again tonight for a couple of hours, took a walk to Southsea, then a bus back to Dockyards, and aboard.

Monday July 23rd.

At Portsmouth. We shifted berth today and went alongside the battleship *Ramillies*. Like the *Renown* she is a floating fortress, with quarterdeck as large in area as the main hall of the Brunswick Town Hall. This afternoon the Royal Yacht *Victoria & Albert* came into Portsmouth harbour and berthed alongside South Railway Jetty where we were lying, for the rechristening ceremony by H.R.H. Duchess of Kent. The Royal Train was waiting to convey their Majesties to London. The Royal Yacht is shiny with a duco that shines like reflected sunshine. The ornamental gold leaf chasing on the engraved bow and stern is an art in itself. A guard of marines paraded on the quarterdeck of *Ramillies* and *Perth* ditto only that they were seamen. The King and Queen went ashore down a red baize covered gangway and walked across a huge red carpet to the train. I had a bird's eye, if somewhat distant view of the whole proceedings. Tonight being our last in Portsmouth, (I breathe a fervent wish it is so) a large number of the ship's company are ashore. Myself I am duty aboard and am content that is so.

Tuesday July 24th.

Reluctantly at Portsmouth. Although we were supposed to sail for New York today at 11.30 a.m. we are still alongside *Ramillies* a Portsmouth. Due to a failure in one of the dynamo parts, the ship is without power. The crane, by which boats are hoisted in and out, is bereft of power and that is a big factor. This is the 6th ship *Amphion* of the R.N. and although renamed *Perth* lots of the lads believe that the ill luck which attended several of the former vessels, still hovers around this ship. Not being superstitious I cannot share that belief. Not many of the bygone sailors' beliefs survive in the Navy today. They used to say that a woman aboard a warship at sea, when the master's wife sometimes accompanied him, was an omen of ill luck. To lose the ship's cat overside also portended bad luck. The amusing belief that old salts after death took the form of sea gulls and albatrosses and followed their old ship. An albatross landing on the mast or spars at sea was no good either. I suppose that the nigger cook, if any, carried a rabbit's foot to ward off evil.

Wednesday July 25th.

At Sea. We left Portsmouth at 9.30 am and put to sea in nearly a flat calm and the sun was even shining. The temperature was 62 F. which is a good indication of what these ignorant English call summer. I myself believe that short of Arctic inhabitants and Englishmen, nothing could survive an English winter. The chaos onboard among the ordinary seamen has doubled now that we are at sea and as the greater percentage of ship's company are young in the Navy no one knows what they are doing.

Thursday July 27th.

At Sea. This forenoon we ran into a fog, and at time of writing, 1 a.m. Friday morning we are still in fog and rain. This is how stories of the Atlantic Ocean have always read to me. The King and Queen doing the same crossing as this recently encountered icebergs. Although we have seen none yet it is cold enough to be an icebox. The majority of men aboard were fed up with being at horrible Portsmouth for a month, and are rather glad that the ship's head is going Aussiewards.

Friday July 28th.

At Sea. The weather today has been as different as chalk and cheese. A cool breeze and sunshine, (not canned) I am a little earlier writing up tonight because I have not got to keep the middle watch. I have a secluded rendezvous in the diving room, where I spend a fair amount of my spare time. It is difficult on board a warship, to find a quiet haven of rest where a man can retire from the uproar of the messdeck, to do some quiet thinking. Next door to my retreat is the cinema hut and tonight they have placed loud speakers around the deck, and are playing records on the sound apparatus. The swing version of Alexander's Ragtime Band is now on the air, and I have to control this pen to stop it from "swinging" too. "Music hath charms" I have often heard people say. After a day's grind on the *Perth*, one can appreciate the charm, if only one were not so tired. Because we are now at sea does not mean that we have finished working overtime. The Simon Legree of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" could learn a few points here. And so to bed to the tune of "Lazybones" rather ironical I think.

Saturday July 29th.

At Sea. Another really fine day with rather a choppy sea and a strong breeze. So far I have eluded trouble aboard this ship, but one has to step very warily to avoid the pitfalls. Dodging the devil is not so easy when carrying the rate of leading seaman as it is when an A.B. my intentions are, on arrival in Australia to volunteer for service in sloops, which ships in my opinion are far superior to the cruisers. On a cruiser with the larger numbers of hands the scope for red tape is unlimited and "Flannel" otherwise bull, is greatly exercised. To the average civilian the Navy seems smart and efficient, but to insiders the regiment has more boloney than President Roosevelt and his United States. The difference in my opinion being, that the Yanks can uphold their Flannel. The general impression seems to be about New York that it will be very expensive. The captain told the ship's company that meals were expensive. The liquor to a large extent bad, being home brew, and certain quarters of the city dangerous to wander in alone.

Monday July 31st.

At Sea. We have been running thru thick fog banks all day and night. Our speed has been 16.6 knots instead of the usual 12 knots cruising economical speed. Leaving one day later than schedule from Portsmouth we had to clap on a few revs to get to New York per programme. The fog has slowed us to 9 knots so that whenever it lifts, if only for half an hour we shoot ahead. The siren is sounded every 2 minutes to warn any other shipping in the vicinity, for the fog prevents vision beyond 50 yards. The continuous bellow of the siren sounds like the cows at milking time.

Tuesday Aug. 1st.

At Sea. Still steaming along at a good speed and in weather almost devoid of fog we are making good progress at 16 knots. Hands are working flat out now and something resembling order has been restored out of the chaos and confusion among the younger members. Plans for making the ship conspicuous at night are out. She is to be illuminated at the name, the white ensign is to be floodlit and lots of other items to impress the Americans.

Wednesday Aug. 2nd.

At Sea. I felt very tired after keeping the morning watch this morning but was unable to get my head down till 1300 (1' o'clock). The sea and weather hold good and I really marvel at this Atlantic which is referred to by seasoned travellers as "The Pond". Rather a large pond I think, the distance from Portsmouth to New York being over 3,000 miles. Awnings are beginning to go up all over the ship and I suppose that when we get into real hot weather we will be in shadows.

Thursday Aug. 3rd.

At Sea. The day is beautiful and mild winds. We have encountered 6 steamers going our way today and one, the *Carinthia* passed across our stern at less than ½ mile. Sharks are numerous in this area. I saw several oversize ones cruising on the surface. Tonight at 4 p.m. we passed two vessels about 80 feet long with a man standing on the bow, harpoon in hand. Evidently a deep sea fishing venture even 100 miles from land. If it were sharks they sought they should have harvested well.

Friday Aug. 4th.

At New York. We arrived at 8 a.m. and with pilot onboard made our way up the Hudson River, through a pall of black smoke to Pier 53. I had a good opportunity to see the skyline of New York. The sky's the limit seems to be the rule here for 60 and 70 stories are quite common. The Statue of Liberty towering on the harbour is a very impressive sight and I shall probably visit it later. A crowd of gobs waited nonchalantly and took our wires to make fast. A motorcycle patrol man exactly as per movies with a gun and cartridge belt around his waist stood around and watched. We were working at 5 a.m. and continued thru to noon to get the ship looking flash. I went ashore at 6.30 p.m. and boarded an elevated train to Wall St. from 14th St. They have both subway trains and the "L". Streets are very narrow and traffic is slower than Melbourne.

At New York. I am continuing this narrative at sea between New York and Kingston, Jamaica West Indies. I have been in such a hustle these last 13 days that to continue the diary has been impossible. I intend to write down my impressions of New York irrespective of dates. I went along the Great White Way, otherwise Broadway, with its millions of globes midst jostling crowds and adenoidal chatter. The power in New York is 110 not 220 as in Melbourne, consequently twice as many globes are required to raise the desired illumination. It really is a spectacle, to stand in Times Square and look at the false daylight. Wandering thru the city one is struck by the absence of cool air which is accounted for by the buildings blocking the draught. The Yanks are very boastful of their buildings and everything else in New York. To walk down a narrow street and have 30 story buildings either side is a novelty to be found nowhere else in the world. To stand outside the Empire State Building and look up gives one a decided crink in the neck. 102 floors and 1258 feet high with lifts that travel at 1,000 feet per minute certainly takes some beating. The attire of the New York populace is entirely unconventional, dressing for comfort rather than style as they do. A thin open necked shirt and trousers seems to dress most of the men whilst girls' dresses are entirely unconcealing, weighing perhaps 3 or 4 ounces. The Statue of Liberty on the Hudson River is a gigantic and imposing structure, especially when floodlit at

night. The beer at 10 cents per small glass is served iced but not a bargain at 5 pence, with a $\frac{3}{4}$ inch collar on top of a small glass. In the city is a space called Central Park which must occupy 1000 acres. Thus one can get away from the roar of the multitudinous traffic. To sit there and watch the skyline at night gives one a rough idea of the gigantic proportion of the city. Strip tease shows are prominent in 42nd St. and are called Girlie Shows, 40 cents admission for about 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours. The orchestra plays and a girl saunters on to the stage and although she cannot sing or dance for nuts she assumes very suggestive poses and gradually disrobes to the intent gaze of the audience, mostly men, until she is clad only in a tinsel fig leaf the size of a tobacco tin. They are invariably encored. Instead of being dainty, they are built very much on the heavy side, especially at the bust. A fair sprinkling of women attend these shows which play to crowded houses at each performance. I attended a midnight show and got standing room only. Three short films followed by a $\frac{1}{2}$ hour interval during which time the salesmen (about 1 doz) assure the audience that they have wonderful gifts to give away absolutely free and that for 25 cents one can purchase a gift containing a genuine 20 dollar watch. There must be a million of these confidence-salesmen in this crazy city. The Paramount Theatre was free to the *Perth* and I saw Gary Cooper in *Beau Geste* and Phil Spitalny with his 30 piece all girl orchestra. Stores, theatres and practically all indoor places in New York are air conditioned and considering the very high humidity they need to be. One day I visited Coney Island and saw that many crazy ideas for amusement that my head was in more of a whirl than the loop-o-planes. The sidewalks were packed with people eating all manner of strange foods. The beach about 2 miles of it, held about 100,000 people packed closer than sardines. A 35 minute trip in the B.M.T. subway from Times Square over Brooklyn Bridge to Coney Island for a nickel, 5 cents or 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ pence in English. The average American's idea of Australia was a place where sheep grow up, and one girl asked me why we did not speak Austrian. The *Queen Mary* slid past our stern up the Hudson and I had a look at England's triumph of shipbuilding. My one idea was that it certainly would make the stay at home Aussies sit up and take notice. A few days later, in came the *Normandie* and of the two

she impressed me most. The gigantic proportions and stream line were wonderful. The *Perth* would look like a large motor boat on her boat deck yet despite our size we could sink her easily. We were hedged in by wharves at our berth and did not get a suggestion of breeze. To go below decks was to enter a steaming inferno and sleeping below was out of the question. I was on the whole glad when, watched by a small crowd we let go and sailed for Kingston, Jamaica. I was onboard only 3 nights out of the 12 so the cash went quickly and I had no time to wash my dirties, so I have about half of them clean now and will do the rest tomorrow.

Friday Aug. 18th.

At Sea. The *Perth* seems to be a fair weather ship with reasonably smooth seas between Portsmouth and New York, and now a very calm sea of a deep sapphire blue such as found in the Mediterranean. I am just about back to normal again now. Tonight the canvas swimming baths are rigged onboard, but they are a poor imitation of the one we had on the *Autolycus*. The picture "Submarine Patrol" is showing onboard this week and showing to full houses.

Saturday Aug. 19th.

At Sea. A beautiful day today and it seems that we will be with the sun now till reaching Australia. Tonight we passed the isle of San Salvador, one of the discoveries of Christopher Columbus. Today, much to the amusement and not the least to my discomfiture, I had my hair clipped off close to my head. Cries of baldy, hairless head, billiard ball etc rained at me from all angles. What decided me to take this step was the thick mat I had on top always felt lousy and hot and uncomfortable. Admittedly it looks rather queer right now but in 56 days to Sydney I should be able to part it and go ashore. Perhaps I may be able to train it without going to the hairdressers for a permanent wave as quite a lot of men do these days. Naturally there are a whole lot of comments coming my way just now but they are good natured and I do not get my hair off about them. I have a full night's sleep tonight, 1st time for a week, so good night.

Sunday Aug. 20th.

At Sea. It feels nice and cool with no hair but I am hoping to be a little bit presentable by Oct. 15th at Sydney. A real fine day again and nearly everyone appears to have been sunbaking. I had a pile of dohbeying as high as my head and sweated drops of blood doing it. Funds amongst the boys are very low but there are anticipations of Kingston, Jamaica tomorrow. Myself I am broke so will content myself with a walk around.

Monday Aug. 21st.

Arrived at Jamaica at 10 a.m. and was greeted by hordes of small dugout canoes manned by coal black negroes and their "flash Annies" soliciting business from the boys. If I know anything they will get tons of it tonight. Myself, I am duty in the pinnacle, the boat which takes the boys ashore, so will not finish till midnight tonight. It is a long day from 5.30 a.m. till midnight. A few of the lads came back aboard with poor opinions of the place. I will know tomorrow.

Tuesday Aug. 22nd.

At Kingston, Jamaica. Went ashore this evening at 7.30 and wandered around this town. It is well spread out with low built shops and houses. The average height of the buildings is about 2 stories. Almost exclusively the town is populated by coloured people varied in hue from a light tan to a coal black. A notice appeared on the board with information regarding Kingston. Apparently the negroes are in an excitable state and we are warned to avoid provoking them. Another serious warning was of disease. The city is rampant with syphilis. Before going ashore we have to take 2 quinine tablets to guard against malaria which is also prevalent. Tram, trains, picture shows, everything is operated by negroes. Although British, the place is ½ American cents, dollars etc. being current coinage, besides the English money. I went on a trip to a place called Spanish Town which was the original capital of Jamaica. It is a bit old in appearance with the narrow smelly streets, swarming with niggers in tattered clothes. They are very poor and to oblige everyone who came up for a cigarette, one would need W.D. & H.O. Wills behind one. The cathedral although renewed has graves in its yard of 16th century origin. The place is about 7 miles out by train and one passes thru malaria infested swamps to get there. The trip was

free and I was broke, so no complaints. I returned onboard with a poor opinion of the place as did others.

Wednesday Aug. 23rd.

At Kingston. Today we were supposed to sail for the Panama Canal and Balboa. Due to the international situation and Herr Hitler's funny business about Danzig, we were ordered to remain at Kingston indefinitely. I do not fancy the prospect of staying here for any length of time. I omitted to say that there is an English light cruiser, 6 inch armament named HMS *Orion*. The two crews do not mix, although no fights, they are not seen together ashore. Turned in at midnight, duty.

Thursday Aug. 24th.

At Kingston. 24 hours after scheduled time of sailing, we are still here awaiting developments. I took my towel and togs ashore and went for a trip by bus to Constant Spring Hotel a couple of miles out of town. Arriving there I found a large roomy hotel situated in centre of a beautiful green golf course. The building was of the Mexican hacienda type and closed till Xmas and tourist time. I found a small swimming pool, very well appointed, set in a coloured tiled courtyard. It was painted green and water flowed continuously at one end out of the mouth of a lion's head. About 20 yards long and 10 yards wide with a white diving tower and three boards. The water was very clean and invitingly cool on a hot tropical day. I spent a pleasant afternoon in and out of the water, and lounging in the shade of a huge striped shady umbrella. The pool was for whites only and apart from half a dozen civvies the sailors ruled the place. Returning to the city by bus in the cool of the evening I met Reg McManus and we proceeded to look over the town. Wandering into a drinking saloon we were commandeered by 2 girls and to the tune of an electric gramophone we proceeded to dance. The snaky, sinuous movements of the Cuban girls were sensuous and they promptly invited us to their rooms for a meagre 5 shillings the night. Although I admit that I was tempted. I said to myself "get thee behind me Satan", and just continued to drink beer. The natives are so poor that the girls have to sell themselves at night to eat and clothe themselves at all decently. The Chinese, as is usual where natives are concerned, have the corner on the merchant

business and I saw quite a few Chino- Jamaican strains. Leave was up at midnight and we returned aboard sober and very tired.

Friday Aug. 25th.

At Kingston wondering. I am duty in the pinnacle again today and every 2nd day. Leave is still only until midnight and we did not know anything about sailing. The boys ashore heard from the *Orion* lads that we sail tomorrow and they all went on what might be their last spree for some time. I finished at 2 a.m. Saturday and we were prepared to sail at 6.30 a.m. tomorrow. Working late and playing late makes Jack a tired boy and that applied to me tonight.

Saturday Aug. 26th.

At Sea. We sailed this morning for an unknown destination and spent the day getting live ammunition in action stowages and cleaning everything away ready to go into a fight at any moment's notice. Drill, drill and more drill till a man begins to look like a gun. Of the actual war situation we know nothing. The Captain this morning told us that the R.A.N. had requested us to be used by the Royal Navy and we are now heading for our war station, which is somewhere in the West Indies. Contrary to our usual cruising speed of 13 knots we are going somewhere in a hurry at 25 knots. There is a fair sea and the whole of the upper deck on the weather side is constantly being washed down by flying spray. All sorts of wild rumours "straight from the horse's mouth" are running around the ship, but I am not interested. I am now turning in, feeling a little unsettled in the stomach.

Sunday Aug. 27th.

At Sea. Quite contrary to the usual quiet Sunday in the Navy, today was spent at gun stations. We are now cruising at about 15 knots on West Indies patrol work. According to today's press news received by W/T, Hitler has reduced his demands but the position is still intense. Letters onboard may be posted with no stamps and must be put in the mail box unsealed. They are scrutinised by a censor officer and any article which may give away the name of the ship or any information as to our whereabouts is struck out. The shipwrights are making false flaps for the funnels, which is a form of war camouflage to deceive enemy gunners. Although all this may lead to nothing, it gives one an

idea of what war time conditions aboard one of his Majesty's battle wagons is like. The lads are facing things philosophically and think that Hitler should be taught a lesson.

Monday Aug. 28th.

At Sea and at Trinidad. Today at 4 p.m. we dropped anchor at Port of Spain, Trinidad Island. Until we asked the natives who came out to the ship we didn't know where we were, although we had been steaming at 23 knots since last Saturday. Trinidad is a British possession and Port of Spain is the principal town. It looked rather good from the anchorage, rather better than Jamaica but we got no leave so had no opportunity to study the place. We were embarking provisions until well after dark, and topped up the oil fuel from a Trinidad tanker. On reading the Trinidad Evening News I discovered that Hitler and Chamberlain are still speaking, so I still do not know where we stand. The lads took the opportunity of getting fresh fruit which is badly needed by trading thru the portholes. The natives not being allowed onboard. The picture "Tailspin" was shown last night onboard but I was unable to look at a glamorous blonde because I was in the boat.

Tuesday Aug. 29th.

At Port of Spain and at Sea. After provisioning and fuelling we put to sea again at 3 p.m. During the Spanish War the passage into this port was believed to have been mined so as a precautionary measure we towed Paravanes, which cut mine moorings and then the mines float to the surface where they can be destroyed. The isle of Trinidad is just off the coast of Venezuela, a South American Republic a few hundred miles south of the Panama Canal. During the pirate era, when Spanish galleons were raided and looted, the island of Trinidad figured prominently. Perhaps some Captain Kidd or Long John Silver used it as a treasure base, who knows? The water hereabouts is a dirty brown hue which, if my theory is correct, is caused by the waters of the River Orinoco which enters the sea not far away. Whither we are bound now only the big chief and the Lords of the Admiralty know.

Wednesday Aug. 30th.

At Sea. Today we have just been gliding along on a glassy sea making about 4 ½ knots all day. The sun is extremely hot

these days which perhaps accounts for the coal-black colour of the people who inhabit the islands around here. We still do not know the position of affairs in Europe, except that all hands seem to think that the tension has eased. Last night I had the middle watch, midnight till 4 a.m. and lying flat on my back on the upper deck under a moonlit sky on a perfect night with a cool breeze fanning my cheeks I felt that it was truly a night for romance. I thought of a certain little lady in Sydney and how I would have liked to have her there with me in the tropical night, just for an hour. That is not an expression of homesickness just a kindly thought directed to one whom I treasure dearly. Tonight is a replica of last night but I will be in bed by midnight, so goodnight.

Thursday Aug. 31st.

At Tobago Island. Cruising slowly till midday we dropped anchor at the Island of Tobago, which is a short distance from Trinidad, also British. It is almost entirely covered with banana trees etc. we spent a pleasant 2 hours plunging into the breakers that pounded the shore. The water was delightful and we were loath to leave. Scarcely had we returned aboard than anchor aweigh and we set sail for Trinidad at 20 knots. Arriving there we dropped anchor and prepared to fuel from a tanker. I saw the picture "Tailspin" which I missed the other night and rather liked it. Of future movements I do not know and have reached that stage where I do not greatly care. If there is to be a war one may as well be here as elsewhere. The very unusual exertion of swimming this afternoon has taken it all out of me so I guess I will get horizontal somewhere.

Friday Sept. 1st.

Time marches on, here it is September already. Before we know where we are it will be Xmas time, this year however I do not know whether I will get any nuts or not. Having fuelled we are out to sea again once more on a mystery hike. In the special edition of Port of Spain newspaper the headlines were large and read "Germany attacks Poland" it looks as if things may come to a head pretty soon now. The crew is split into three watches that means that there is one third of the armament manned all the time in event of trouble. They could open fire before the remainder got to their guns, thus we are not caught unaware. Silhouettes of

German merchant ships in the Atlantic Ocean are supplied and our lookouts are supposed to be able to recognise them by shadow pictures. Middle watch again, crash.

Saturday Sept. 2nd.

At Sea. Still cruising around, we had a shoot today with 6 inch and 4 inch guns. Quite a large percent of the ship's company had never been on a firing ship before and had yet to be tried by gunfire. The young ordinary seamen on my gun were very skittish until the first round went then all was ok. We have no news on the lower deck of the international situation and although it is only one week today since we left Jamaica for our war station it seems like one month. Perhaps it is because we have been working about 18 hours per day. Should war be declared and we are left on the West Indies station we should be a good way from scenes of action. Not that we would not do our bit but no sensible person shoves his head into the mouth of a lion. I have the middle watch again tonight and my eyelids are heavy from lack of sleep.

Sunday Sept. 3rd.

At Sea. Today, almost exactly 25 years but one day, one month, since the last declaration of war by England war has again been declared. Lying in my hammock half asleep at 6. 45 a.m. the voice of the boatswain's mate on the bridge came over the speakers saying "War has been declared against Germany" I was half asleep but the news woke me fully. It was received in various ways by the ship's company all around the ship. Some cheered, others like myself were quiet and thoughtful, realizing that war is not a Sunday School picnic. Between this time of writing and conclusion of this last sentence, I had to run away to my gun for we were rapidly overhauling a ship. Every ship sighted by us must be investigated and her neutrality and bona-fides proven. We were all ready to open fire if the need arose but she proved to be the Dutch ship *Rodas* from Willemstad. This morning at prayers the Captain told us officially that war was declared at 5.15 this morning (our zone time). He warned us of the seriousness of the situation, principally for the benefit of the younger men. Our job at present in the West Indies is to protect the oil supplies which come largely from this vicinity. Instant action may be required. A particular danger to us in these waters

are submarines and mines. We all gave 3 cheers for His Majesty at the conclusion. Steaming along under a hot sun at 10 knots everything is peaceful, and nearly nude bodies lying around all over the deck absorbing the sun, make it hard to realize that in Europe there are bodies absorbing shrapnel instead of sunshine. This afternoon we sighted 5 all told of the same class of tanker as the *Rodas*, all Dutch. We also ran thru a school of sea pigs (porpoise), hundreds thick, jumping like steeple chasers. Monday Sept. 4th.

At Sea. Yesterday we thought we had a victim. Sighting a tramp steamer we ran up the signal to "heave to". She still kept going on her course and flew no flag and refused to answer all signals made to her. She looked a bit like the *Horn*, a German armed merchantman in these waters. Drawing close we dropped a seaboat with armed boarding party to board her, after we had fired a shot across her bows to halt her. She proved to be the *Chica* an American owned vessel from Colon, Panama. After investigation she was allowed to proceed on her way. We are constantly sighting vessels every hour in these waters. Today we learned that France, Australia and New Zealand had declared war against Germany. I can just imagine what rushing around and panics there are at home in Australia. This afternoon we steamed past the Dutch Island of Curacao and looking shorewards about 3 miles away I saw what appeared to be a large group of mushrooms but in reality they are oil tanks. At least a dozen ships were there and looking thru the glass I discovered one to be the *Consul Horn* one of the ships we seek. Being in neutral waters she is temporally safe, but I believe that she can only stay 24 or 48 hours without being interned. Now I suppose we are like a cat outside the mouse hole. Whilst cruising past Curacao we passed a Dutch submarine on the surface. We interrogated her and she proceeded to Willemstad, the city of oil wells on Curacao. Each night now from 6 p.m. till 6 a.m. we do at least 4 hours alongside the guns just waiting for an emergency to crop up. Sometimes we doze off and a practice alarm is sounded. All hands come to with eyes full of sleep and grab the nearest thing available. Sleep is precious so once again good night.

Tuesday Sept. 5th.

At Sea. Cruising along today at about 10 knots we did not see many vessels and boarded none. The sloop *Penzance* Royal Navy, was with us today for a while and then disappeared I believe that we have a rendezvous with her tonight somewhere. All day we pass different islands and see lighthouses flashing at night. Apart from the West Indies we have no idea what these islands are. The troops I mean.

Wednesday Sept. 6th.

At Sea. This morning we again sighted the royal Navy sloop *Penzance* probably by arrangement. We steamed side by side for a little while, then *Perth* dropped a seaboard which went across to *Penzance* to collect confidential papers. At 3.30 this afternoon we sighted a smart looking vessel and proceeded to overhaul her. She had no means of ascertaining our nationality at a distance so clapped on all speed taking no chances on us being an enemy raider. It was an easy job to slap on a few extra revs to rapidly overhaul her. She proved to be the United States ship *Santa Paula*. After an exchange of signals she was allowed to proceed. I'll wager that these ships that we pull up are all of a dither until they find out that we are British. Since leaving Kingston 12 days ago the times have absolutely dragged by. It seems like 12 months. If we are to remain at sea without leave for 6 months or more the crew, will be at each others throats. I can see. We are lucky to be on a good station where the sun shines and the sea is calm. If we where patrolling in Australian waters the weather would be cold in September and usually rough seas. In a couple of days now we should put in somewhere for fuel and provisions if available.

Thursday Sept. 7th.

At Sea. Today has been a very quiet day just cruising. We frequently pass islands but I have no means of finding out their names to put in the diary. We passed close inshore to an isle that looked ex-volcanic today. It was barren and very precipitous with a stunted tree growth. On our starboard side now is a row of electric lights some miles long on the foreshore, but what foreshore I really could not say. It was payday today and after paying my debts, I still have a couple of English Bradburys left. This I think is a good opportunity to start a bank account. Diaries

are forbidden onboard, but I have managed to keep going. Each man has been issued with an identification disc which he wears around his neck on a string. Name, Official No., rank, Religion is stamped on the disc which is about the size of a penny made of fibre.

Friday Sept. 8th.

At Sea. Another quiet day today with a portion of the armament manned all the time in case of subs or aircraft. At last we have a means of obtaining news. The loud speaker system which repeats all over the ship for orders to the crew has been connected to a 12 valve short wave radio owned by a telegraphist who bought it in New York. Each evening at 6 o'clock we listen to the day's news from the B.B.C. even men in the turrets can listen.

Saturday Sept. 9th.

At Kingston, Jamaica. This morning at 7 o'clock we arrived back at Jamaica to find truckloads of stores on the wharf awaiting us. At 1 p.m. I went ashore with my tongue hanging out and enjoyed a couple of ice cold beers, then away to a swim in the salt pool at the Bournemouth Club. It is well appointed and one can hop in for a dip then sit back in a chair on a shady balcony and quaff ale. The music plays and one can look out over the palms to the placid waters of the harbour. On the wharf are two Sea Fox seaplanes belonging to the *Orion*. She arrived back here today from patrol work probably. There is an English regiment stationed here and they provided a guard for the *Orion's* planes. Everyone is taking advantage of our stay to procure fresh fruit. Very little fresh vegetables are provided onboard these days and people are covered in boils and skin troubles.

Sunday Sept. 10th.

At Kingston. Yesterday the R.F.A. tanker *Orangeleaf* oiled us alongside. I believe that she was manned by Chinese prior to the declaration of war, and then they refused to serve any longer. Having a war in their own country, they probably reckon that two conflicts is too much. They were replaced by Negroes. She had a 4 inch gun on her poop deck and carries paravanes for mines. There are 7 tankers lying out in the stream and there is a belief that we may be doing convoy work in the near future. According to B.B.C. broadcasts and the Jamaican Standard this war is

predicted to last three years or more. The boys are all wondering if their girl friends will be married when they get back, if they do. Myself I have no doubts about the matter. She has waited 6 years already and that is conclusive enough proof for me. I am staying aboard tonight trying to regain lost sleep.

Monday Sept. 11th.

At Sea. We put to sea from Kingston at 9.30 a.m. today leaving HMS *Orion* there. As we were leaving the harbour we passed two Canadian destroyers, *H48* and *H83* on their way in, thus the three divisions of the Empire were represented. Tonight the show "Tailspin" is to be shown under cover for we steam every night with no lights showing. There are aluminium flaps called "deadlights" which fit over the portholes and shut light in. As usual our destination is not known to the troops.

Tuesday Sept 12th.

At Sea. Same old thing, just cruising along getting nowhere fast. Praise heaven that we break the monotony before the three years predicted for the war to last. In the B.B.C. broadcast tonight it was stated that the Poles are still valiantly defending Warsaw. Also that the French are still steadily advancing into Germany. So far England has had no military engagements but troops have now landed in France. Looks like some action soon.

Wednesday Sept. 13th.

At Sea. We have not been within sight of land since leaving Kingston on Monday. We may be going Trinidad way again but I do not know. Whilst in these waters we have contacted a lot of ships, amongst which were a good number of Norwegian and Swedish vessels, tankers and timber freighters mostly. If the Germans could get Dutch oil supplies in the West Indies they could establish a powerful U-boat base. Tonight in the recreation room "Tombola" better known to civvies as housie-housie is being played. It is the only legal gamble on board. The machine which turns out the soda drinks better known as "Goffers" is a veritable gold mine in this warm climate. It turns out more gallons than Young & Jacksons per day I reckon. By the way a nice cool pint of Carlton Export at Young & Jacksons would not be a miss right now.

Thursday Sept. 14th.

At Sea. Today was still another fine weather day, marred by a rather serious incident. This afternoon a tramp steamer was sighted and we drew up a little and signalled her. While this was going on, despite the 14 lookouts on watch and the submarine detector being manned, a French submarine sported about us at a very close range. Eventually she lit a smoke flare to attract our attention and then informed us how long she had been sticking around. Had she been an enemy our chances would have been nil. The visibility today was perfect and with a few feet of periscope showing above the surface, at close range she should have been seen. Lookouts are provided with glasses and 14 men is a large number to have on watch. They are all young seamen and to my mind do not realize that this is no picnic but stern reality. The fact remains that my life and the life of everyone on this ship depends on those fellows. The ship's complement of seamen consists of about 80 percent untrained ordinary seamen and we will need a hell of a lot of luck to win an action if we strike one. I said to one chap that after the war my mother would point a finger at him and say you are my son's murderer because you did not keep a good lookout, but it was water on a duck's back.

Friday Sept. 15th.

At Sea. It seems that my information re. the French submarine is erroneous, and that there was a doubt about a sub. At the same time it is true that the lookouts keep a very poor watch, a few of them being caught asleep. It is rather a strain on a man's eyes to keep looking through a pair of binoculars for a couple of hours into the night looking for shadowy shapes that might be a submarine. So far there have been only shadows.

Saturday Sept. 16th.

At Sea. The announcer tonight of the B.B.C. broadcast stated that the Germans have delivered a 12 hour ultimatum to the Poles to vacate Warsaw. The French are hammering at the German Siegfried line. Here in the West Indies things are really peaceful so far. We are patrolling the Caribbean Sea "where the flying fish play" all the same as "on the road to Mandalay" so the song goes. Turning in now for I have a watch to keep.

Sunday Sept. 17th.

At Sea. Tomorrow forenoon we berth at Kingston oil wharf to top up with fuel. We are nowhere near empty yet so I think that we must be going some place some distance away when we leave Kingston. B.B.C. tonight said that Russia, a new factor in the war has crossed the frontier of the U.S.S.R. into Poland allegedly to protect Ukrainians and White Russians in Poland. Whether she is hand and glove with Hitler remains to be seen.

Monday Sept. 18th.

At Kingston. Back to Harlem again today and was surprised to find upwards of 30 ships lying at anchor in the harbour. Some were camouflaged and others painted Navy grey. HMS *Orion* went in just ahead of us to the oil wharf. I went ashore at 5 p.m. with Nick Carter for a swim and a quiet evening. Constant Springs closed at six and the Bournemouth Club pool closed for cleaning, so we tried a new one to us, the Springfield Beach club pool. Although not so elaborate as the others it provided good swimming facilities. We stayed till after dark then went to Esquires Café and had an excellent meal of tender steak, tomatoes, chips and onions for 2 shillings and 6 pence, it was a decided change from the usual hash served up onboard. From there we went to the "Coronation", an open air dance joint and drank beer and danced with sloe eyed damsels until 10.30 p.m. leave was up at 2300 (11 p.m.) so we returned to ship.

Tuesday Sept. 19th.

At Kingston and at sea. We oiled this morning and whilst doing so quite a few of the ships around left the harbour. One ship, a cargo packet at anchor carried 10 planes on her decks but on closer inspection as we went past they proved to be dummies. With what object I do not know. At 2 p.m. we steamed out to find approx. 20 ships and tankers. The *Orion* came out and the whole squadron formed up and steamed away. *Perth* leading and *Orion* was bringing up the rear of the line. This is obviously a convoy with our 2 ships providing protection to the unnamed merchantmen. We picked up speed and left the rest behind and in the dark tonight I do not know if they are in sight. Single submarines do not usually attack merchantmen being convoyed by cruisers. Yesterday the Daily Gleaner at Jamaica had headlines

saying that HMS *Courageous*, one of Britain's plane carriers had been sunk by torpedoes from a German U-boat. This is a big injury to avenge. The loss of life there has awakened quite a few people aboard here that this could and may be our destiny. That this war is no picnic is quite obvious. I think that if England dropped her mercy tactics and played the game as the Germans do we would be much better off.

Wednesday Sept. 20th.

At Sea. Looking around the horizon at dawn this morning I saw no signs of the *Orion* or the ships that formed the convoy yesterday. Apparently the *Orion* is shepherding them alone. We are still cutting Caribbean Capers, for how long I do not know. Each day it is brought home more clearly to me just how highly untrained the bigger percentage of this ship's company really is. A few staid hands can be relied on but apart from that they panic easily because they have not had the experience backing them up to think quickly and clearly. As far as manning the armament, practically none of them can do their job efficiently, lack of experience again. It is a beautiful night tonight brilliantly illuminated by the moonlight. We would make a clear silhouette to shoot at with the moon as a background. I am more or less getting accustomed to getting along with reduced sleep these days.

Thursday Sept 21st.

At Sea. It is becoming a little difficult to fill up a page with this patrol work. We are keeping out of sight of land these days in the Caribbean Sea and only occasionally stop ships. This evening at dusk we investigated a tanker. I did not see her at close quarters because I was at my action station. If we stay here a few weeks more, the monsoonal season will arrive and our days of calm seas and sunny skies will be over.

Friday Sept. 22nd.

At Sea. Today was not exciting and nothing of importance occurred. Quite a large number of the men now have hairless heads and it is amusing to note the different shape skulls. Derision in my direction has died down somewhat. The only nickname referred to me now is "loconut". The hair is growing quickly, in 34 days it is well over half an inch long and I have had one trim and need another one now.

Saturday Sept. 23rd.

At Sea. Last night after having written up the diary, bathed and turned in, I was soon sound asleep. About 11.45 I was awakened deep from the arms of Morpheus to the tune of "Alarm Action". Strange coincidence was that I dreamed it an hour before it occurred. I fell out of my hammock and scrambled into my overalls. Still half asleep I ran to my turret and found myself first there. Action after working hours is usually for practice but means that an enemy has been sighted. After I reached the gun, word was passed "for exercise only" which means a dummy run. Imagine the ship's company asleep, barring one 6 inch crew and one 4 inch crew, and the ship darkened. Suddenly "Action Stations" sounds and half asleep men fall out of their hammocks to hit the deck running. Others, sound sleepers would not wake easily and arrive at their stations after this ship has been hit or we have hit the enemy. It will give readers of this humble effort of mine an idea of how organisation must count under those conditions just mentioned to get the armament manned in less than five minutes. According to B.B.C. tonight 2 unidentified submarines are reported in the Gulf of Mexico not many miles from here. The German's Siegfried line is supposed to be in a bad way due to living conditions. A personal item of news was that the Royal Australian Navy is now commissioned in full strength. I suppose that Ray (George's brother) is somewhere at sea.

Sunday Sept. 24th.

At Sea. Really a very fine day today and I have just seen the most colourful sunset that I ever witnessed. According to an American broadcasting station the Australian ship *Perth* which visited New York recently, has chased all German merchantmen in this area into neutral ports and is now known as the "Terror of the Caribbean". Just another piece of Americanism, it pays to advertise. The food is still not so hot, no variety and very meagre supplies.

Monday Sept. 25th.

At Sea. Today we have been cruising along the coast of the island of St Domingo. Pre-war practice of the navigator was to put an old chart on the board and draw our course marking our position at noon each day. Since war has been declared he has discontinued this idea until today. All along the coastline are

towns, some big and modern, others merely villages, but all seemed to have their oil tanks. Also passed today was the island of Puerto Rico. Both of these islands are republics I think, but will find out later. They are North East of Jamaica a couple of days steaming. Few people in civilian life have watched a movie from behind the screen I think, but on board here the audience is split up each side. Whilst in New York we got a few films and intended getting more in San Francisco. They are "Tailspin", "Submarine Patrol" and "New York Sleeps" and have all been shown numerous times by now. "New York Sleeps" was shown tonight, a typical newspaper wise cracking murder show. The brilliant moon these last few nights, could be put to much better use in a different setting by myself I reckon. Somewhere around Sydney Harbour for instance. Since I rise early 0400 (4 a.m.) tomorrow I will pack up for tonight.

Tuesday Sept. 26th.

At Sea. We have been cruising close inshore all day presumably looking for shipping. A feature of the British West Indies is the ruggedness of the land, and the large areas uncultivated. Another noticeable feature is the absence of sandy shores. All one sees is usually a rugged cliff straight from the water's edge. It is rumoured that we return to Kingston on Friday, but these days I believe none of what I hear and only half what I see.

Wednesday Sept. 27th.

At Sea. For once rumour was correct, for it is official that we berth at Kingston tomorrow. Perhaps I may get a letter, it is ages since the last one arrived. I suppose the folks at home are all right, no news is good news, but I like to know for sure that all is well. I suppose that my pre-war motorbike will only do eighty m.p.h. mere snails speed to the 1944 post war models in use by then.

Thursday Sept. 28th.

At Kingston. Berthed this morning at Kingston, Jamaica. A hellish hot day but I had the afternoon off and went to the Bournemouth Club pool. A plunge into the cool water and then a shady balcony and a couple of bottles of icy Red Stripe Beer and who gives a damn about Hitler. The saying "eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow ye may die" seems to be the rule on the

Perth. Each time ashore we all treat it as the last time and “whoopee”.

Friday Sept 29th.

At Kingston. Lying at No 1 wharf we miss the breeze which always springs up of an afternoon here. The heat is stifling and comes out of the deck right through leather soles. In letters from Melbourne yesterday, I read that they have had extremely cold spells there. Right now a cold spell here would not be a miss. We sail tomorrow and do a gunnery firing when we get clear of the harbour. Pan-American Airways run 4 engine clippers to Jamaica. They pass overhead a couple of times a day and maintain a 5 hour service to Miami Florida I believe. From here to Trinidad and Venezuela, South America. Tonight's B.B.C. broadcast stated that Russia has delivered a one week ultimatum to England. Looks like a Russo- German alliance to me. We can still stoush them I reckon but it makes the job a little harder.

Saturday Sept. 30th.

At Sea. We slipped wires at 9 a.m. today and proceeded to sea. A small marking party went aboard the military tug *Smaland* which towed the target at which we fired. They were there to record the accuracy of the shots, marking by the splashes. The sea was flat calm and conditions ideal. In practice shoots a smaller gun is shipped inside the big gun called the parent, the small one being the sub-calibre. Being small the ammunition is easily carried and the same results are obtained as with full calibre firings. Records of these practices are analysed and sent to England to be compared with records of English ships of the same size guns. Just before we left a cargo vessel commenced loading bananas opposite us. A horde of blacks waited to commence work. The bananas were in railway trucks on stalks containing roughly 50 bananas. The niggers carried them from trucks holding them on their heads. Just passing a nigger with a 3 foot knife who lopped off extra long stalk ends with an amazing sureness of eye. I expected to see a few ears lopped off but this fellow was sure fire. The carriers then passed a tally clerk who handed them a disc and pressed a bundy to count the bunches. I believe they get half a shilling per stalk and believe me the cargo very rapidly was transferred. Women and boys all carried bananas. These people are very poor and glad to get a few pence.

Sunday Oct. 1st.

At Sea. Under normal conditions today would be a perfect specimen but war routine mucked it up. The wooden Chinese slippers or clogs that cost me 1 shilling on the *Autolycus* are still going strong and are a real bargain. The B.B.C. broadcast tonight that England had a large army in France and the Allies were preparing a big offensive. We are steaming North East at 23 knots and rumour has it that 2 submarines in the Gulf of Mexico are our objective. Up top with the bayonet again tonight, first time since *Autolycus* days. A large number of men have discontinued shaving and are growing beards. Fitting the crew with cutlasses and skull and cross bones, they would be an unkempt and rascally looking crowd. Tonight I feel like a rip snorting time somewhere, the more snorting the better I would like it. A pair of shorts is a very good rig to wear in this climate.

Monday Oct. 2nd.

At Sea. Here beginneth the last chapter of Book No 2. In just 12 more days we would have been back in Sydney, had not this nasty war occurred. Tomorrow we arrive back at that monotonous place Kingston and probably sail on Wednesday. We are ripping along now at over 20 knots. B.B.C. tonight broadcast that a ship had been sunk by an armed merchantman in the South Atlantic Ocean and the survivors reached a South American port in lifeboats. They described the enemy as a cruiser. My surmise is that we will top up with oil at Jamaica and possibly in company with *Orion* go south to seek her out. It looks like a bit of action at last. This is getting monotonous and I am just spoiling for a fight. Just how many more of these notebooks will fill up before this is over? The tropical sun and wind is making my whiskers like a wire scrubber. Going around all day in just a pair of shorts no boots or singlet, a man is practically gone native. The living conditions here are just suitable for a native I may add. Tomorrow I plan to go to the Bournemouth Pool, thence to a picture show. Living this semi monastic life becomes boring and one longs to have a chat to a decent white woman once in a while.

--- End of Book Two.

Book Three (October 3rd. 1939 – January 5th. 1940)

Continuation of events during the War onboard HMAS PERTH

By Leading Seaman George E. Hatfield

Book 3 started at Kingston, JAMAICA on Oct. 3rd 1939.

At Kingston. We arrived at Kingston approx. 1530 (3.30 p.m.) and anchored in the stream. Never have I seen so many ships lying at anchor together at one time. Tankers predominate with a few timber ships and an odd cargo tramp here and there. I estimated the number at 50. At 5.30 following my usual routine I went ashore, had a swim then a square meal and thence to the Palace Theatre, admission free to *Perth*. Whilst swimming at the Bournemouth Pool in the dark Nick and I discovered the water to be phosphorescent. As the body moved through the water it left a silver wake, clearly seen from the side even though one could not see the swimmer. I think that phosphorous is unknown in N.S.W. and Victorian waters. The feature film at the Palace was Brian Aherne in “Captain Fury” with V. Mclaglen. Strangely enough it was about the pioneers and convicts in N.S.W. Received 4 letters posted in July on arrival back to the ship.

Wednesday Oct. 4th.

At Sea. This afternoon at 1.30 we left Kingston Harbour and made for the horizon, against which could be seen myriad streams of smoke. When finally we steamed along the south coast of Jamaica, there were 46 ships in close formation. It is a convoy and the *Perth* is the guardian. I had seen all these ships gliding past us in the forenoon but had no idea that we were convoying them. A couple of them are armed with 4 inch guns but they all rely on us to keep the raiders away. They put their trust in the *Perth* and providence. Providence may be all right but what do we know of the *Perth's* prowess? A couple of times a day I slice a couple of limes and getting half a jug of cold water from the brine cooled tank, add sugar to taste. It is a delicious drink,

cheaper than soda drinks at the canteen. Good limes cost us thruppence per doz. at Jamaica.

Thursday Oct. 5th.

At Sea. I am extra tired today for in the last 24 hours we have spent twice as much time at the guns than usual. This convoy is a big responsibility and the Captain doubled the number of guns manned at once. We have circled the convoy, gone up amongst them and are now zigzagging in front of them. How far we are to escort this convoy I do not know. Some say as far as Nova Scotia and Halifax.

Friday Oct. 6th.

At Sea. I was up at 0400 this morning after having turned in at midnight and looking astern was struck by the impressive sight in the breaking dawn of our charges, 46 of them steaming in lines astern. Today we dropped a seaboat which had the quack in it. An operation had to be performed aboard one of the tankers. I believe, judging by the usual run of naval surgeons I would not like to be sliced aboard by them. I would not let one of them cut my toenails. A seaplane would be very useful for reconnaissance purposes. We have a catapult mounting but no plane till we get one. The *Orion* has 2 Seafox seaplanes. If we do go to Halifax it will be a change to mingle with people of ones own colour for a change. Jamaican negroes although well civilized, still retain that peculiar odour common to all black people, however clean.

Saturday Oct. 7th.

At Sea. We are still at sea with our convoy, like a hen with a crowd of chicks fussing around. Perhaps we do right to fuss around for B.B.C. repeatedly state that enemy craft are in the South Atlantic Ocean. I have a little job that I must do when I muster enough energy. The mattress in my hammock is made of horse hair and after a number of years, wears into the shape of one's hips. I must take it to pieces and tease it, then I will sleep a little sounder I hope.

Sunday Oct. 8th.

At Sea. Today started off just as quiet as any other Sunday, but in the afternoon we had several items of interest occur. The tanker that we sent the quack to on Friday was again visited by the doc and the patient was brought aboard us in the sea boat. Whilst this was taking place a signalling lamp was seen

flashing from the horizon. Coming closer it resolved into an 8 inch cruiser *Australia* and *Canberra* class with new modifications. She has the alterations that the *Australia* has been getting these last 2 years. A hanger for planes and 2 cranes instead of one. She is also fitted with multiple Pom Pom guns each side. These guns have 8 barrels in one mounting and fire 2 lb. shells at a fast rate. I think it is a very effective anti aircraft gun. The cruiser is now with us and the convoy. Her name is HMS *Berwick*. Seeing her away on the horizon last night reminded me of manoeuvres on the Australian station with *Canberra* and *Australia*. We should not be far from Bermuda now but whether we will call in ?

Monday Oct. 9th.

At Sea. As we go farther north each day the temperature is gradually getting cooler. Tonight it is cool enough to be a spring evening in Melbourne which means almost shivering. We are still with the convoy and *Berwick*. During the peace time our gas masks had a filter container but since war has started they have all been replaced with war time containers. Apparently the latter are more effective in gas. Doing patrol and convoy work as we are, a gas attack by the enemy is practically impossible. We could run out of any gas screen they put up. To carry out a gas attack at sea, one must be sure of the wind to blow it down and the tide to drift the gas floats in the right direction that is at anchor. On looking up the entire diary I find that of a total of 142 days since Melbourne we have been 90 days at sea.

Tuesday Oct 10th.

At Sea. Today the breeze was decidedly cooler and at this rate of progress we will be wearing blues soon. The *Berwick* and convoy are still with us, *Perth* and *Berwick* steam about 10 miles apart and 5 miles ahead of the convoy, flanking them on each side. This morning the plane from *Berwick* flew around this ship and dropped flares which are calcium smoke by day and flame by night, floating on the surface. Being a reconnaissance plane she does not carry heavy bombs. The flares are to indicate to us the position of a submarine sighted from the air. As soon as the flare is sighted our anti-sub guns are trained on the spot. Probably we would steam over the spot and drop depth charges if it were

suspected of being an enemy. The submarine detector apparatus has oscillating sets for communicating with submerged subs.

Wednesday Oct 11th.

At Sea. I was going to write a couple of pages on the submarine detector apparatus but that is a jealously guarded secret in the Royal Navy. Germany's main sea power lies in her submarines. Therefore it behoves England to keep confidential detector apparatus. Today is still the fine sunny weather with a nip in the air, popularly known as "Scotchman's weather". In ships at home I have noticed the prevalence of cockroaches, but so far they are in comparatively small numbers in the *Perth*. When one is seen it is not uncommon for a cry of "fresh meat" to go up. As we are eating frozen meat and canned food most of the time, this is a little bit humorous. Tonight I have the first watch, 8 p.m. till midnight and at the time of writing am sitting behind two 6 inch guns in a turret, just waiting for something to pop out of the now black night. "Ready aye Ready" Boy Scouts' motto is applicable here.

Thursday Oct 12th.

At Sea. Our position on the chart today, according to my own calculations, is roughly halfway between America and England in the Atlantic Ocean, latitude about 37 degrees North. I mentioned in this chronicle some distance back, the superstitions old time seamen had. Present day sailors apparently are still superstitious, onboard the *Perth* anyhow. Everybody I met today reminded me that tomorrow is Friday the 13th, added to which a chinaman being aboard is extra bad luck. We will wait and see what the morrow brings forth, shall we? The chinaman, incidentally is the patient brought from the tanker 4 days ago. A lame duck was seen dragging behind the convoy this morning, so back we went to investigate. Apparently she was all right for we semaphored then took up our position again. The *Berwick* is over on the port horizon flashing occasionally. From time to time as we have been going along ships have been dropping out of the convoy to complete their voyages in different directions. At noon today we had 30 out of the 46 ships left with us. Various parts of the ship are to be painted a darker grey as we present too obvious a target at night. I have a poisoned toe but will discuss that tomorrow.

Friday Oct. 13th.

At Sea. Quite contrary to the very superstitious beliefs of quite a few of the lads today, Friday 13th passed without ill-luck. That is, all excepting myself who is not superstitious. My infected toe becoming worse I went to the sick bay where they gave it a saline bath and hot foment. They then wrapped a gigantic bandage around it. I am getting along Hopalong Cassidy fashion now but with no six shooters, they are too small for me to handle. Six inch guns are more in my line. If we had adhered to schedule, today would have seen the arrival in Sydney Harbour of HMAS *Perth*. Perhaps I might even have been out at Glebe to see Al. Although I did not see them, the Northern Lights were on display in the sky tonight at 8 o'clock. Quite a beautiful sight I believe. At school I learnt about them but this is the first time that I have had the opportunity to view them.

Saturday Oct. 14th.

At Sea. And still with the convoy. Friday 13th was unlucky for England. HMS *Royal Oak* a reconditioned battleship was sunk by German submarine action and 800 lives lost. Germany certainly has the art of underwater craft fighting. A submarine is very hard to see, usually only a couple of feet of periscope protruding above the sea. Its drawbacks are limited distance without refuelling or rearming.

Sunday Oct 15th.

At Sea. This morning at 10 through the grey mist we saw the dark shape of a cruiser, painted dark or home fleet grey. Somewhere in the background probably lurked a destroyer flotilla. It was the *Effingham* come to take our charges the rest of the way to England. We were glad because the weather lately was too suggestive of an English winter. Round we turned and headed back the way we came, bound for Bermuda, *Berwick* and *Perth*.

Monday Oct. 16th.

At Sea. Contrary to our speed of 10 knots these last ten days, we cracked up 23 knots when we left the convoy yesterday and have been around the twenties all day today. A fairly heavy sea is running but the *Perth* is a better sea ship than the *Sydney*, nearly the same class ship. We are steaming abreast the *Berwick* 2-3 miles apart. Intermittent rain and fog are a direct contrast to sunny skies in the West Indies.

Tuesday Oct 17th.

At Sea. Last night heavy sea lashed itself into a severe gale during which time the *Berwick* took up position ahead of us. Watching her being buffeted like a cork I knew that we would have a tough time if we got out of her leeway. During the night a ship, running before the wind, cut in between the two ships and we had to put the wheel hard over to avoid ramming her. A few seconds delay and a collision in that weather would have inevitably meant death for a lot of people. Tremendous seas coming right over our bridge and blinding rain driven by a howling wind demon which only registered 150 m.p.h. because the indicator was not marked any higher. I was in my hammock when a noise like a gun shot brought me leaping out; a 1 inch glass scuttle had been smashed as with a sledge hammer by the pounding seas. The port sea boat was torn from its lashings and bashed itself to uselessness against the side. A gigantic wave carrying all before it, swept the quarter deck; sweeping away our depth charges, a few big lockers and bending 1 inch steel stanchions into fantastic shapes. During the night we nearly went aboard the *Berwick* and had to alter course to avoid a collision. After that we lost her and have not seen sight or sound of her all day. The sea changed to our quarter and the wind abated this morning, we surveyed the trail of wreckage. Water swished from one side to the other on all our mess decks and we had to bail the ship out. Instead of reaching Bermuda by noon as scheduled, we are still at sea and will probably get there tomorrow 24 hours late.

Wednesday Oct. 18th.

At Bermuda. At 8.30 this morning on a fairly calm sea we came alongside at Bermuda. Ahead of us was the *Berwick* our companion of the gale and between the two ships a small French sloop the *Valuer* with a heavy list to port limped in. Bermuda is a series of small islands on one of which is the Naval Dockyard. The *Perth* and *Berwick* lie bow to bow and just astern of the latter is a large floating dock big enough to take an 8 inch cruiser. The water surrounding Bermuda is of the palest blue- green and coral reefs abound. Reference to the map shows the island to be about 600 miles S.E. of New York. Hamilton, the chief city is a tourist resort in winter time and is patronised mainly by Americans, consequently the prices of everything are exorbitant. The

dockyard is self contained with a canteen, cinema and swimming facilities. A railroad connects the various islands but there are no motor cars apart from those in HM Dockyard. Methods of transport are "Shank's Pony", bicycles and horse drawn buggies. I cannot get a boot on but will go off on Friday night if we are here. Out in the stream lies HMS *Despatch* a "D" class cruiser of the same class as the *Dunedin* and *Diomedes* ex New Zealand cruisers. She mounts 6 – 6 inch single guns and torpedo tubes. All ships are looking the worse for wear.

Thursday Oct. 19th.

At Bermuda. Today, early we moved out into the stream about 2 cables lengths from the *Despatch*. Shortly afterwards both cruisers put to sea. The anchorage at Bermuda is not very sheltered and a basin formed by an artificial rock breakwater is the dockyard moorage. A sleeve target towed by the *Berwick's* seaplane was fired at by our anti aircraft guns. *Berwick's* 2nd plane flew behind marking our shots. A fuse is set to ignite after a certain time from the moment of firing. The fuse going off ignites the explosive and the shell is blown to pieces. In practice the shell is filled with a smoke composition which leaves a white ball in the sky. Thus we are able to see how close or otherwise our shot went. Today's shoot was terrible, the morale of the younger ratings under gunfire being shocking. They dropped shells in their panic and cowered away from the guns. The captain addressed them later, and asked them what they thought they would do if someone were firing back at them. We returned to harbour to find the *Berwick* in the floating dock getting her bottom scraped. Last night a lot of the lads went to the canteen and filled up, English beer at 8 pence a small bottle. Others went to the pictures and saw "Dodge City". I stayed aboard and tonight I am duty so am not spending much dough. Bank account 4 pounds.

Friday Oct. 20th.

At Bermuda. The whole outward showing structure of the ship is now the darker grey colour, and looking at the ship from a distance she looks quite different and spick and span. Owing to the war quite a lot of cleaning work has been sacrificed for gunnery drills with the result that the ship is now a proper stinking bug hutch inside and out. This is of course quite necessary for a man cannot work 24 hours a day.

Last night I went off in blues to Hamilton. The launch *Coralita* calling at Somerset and a couple of other stops eventually took 1 ½ hours to get there, perhaps 5 miles away. Hamilton is built of the soft sandstone that composes a lot of these islands. The colour scheme is varied, yellow, white and blue buildings predominating. The hotels are large and well appointed but very expensive. Well-to-do Yankees and Canadians have their own secluded rendezvous at Bermuda. Last tourist season 50,000 tourists visited the place, including Roosevelt's son, Bing Crosby and dozens of other film stars. The money flows like water then, but the war has stopped tourists. U.S. passenger steamers have ceased running, but next week the *New Amsterdam* is commencing the run. It is only 2 days from New York. The streets are silent with no trams or cars, no blinding headlights to dazzle one's eyes. People from American cities which are regular infernos of noise, especially New York, come down here to get away from the blare of the city din. The ban on cars and no trams just suits them. Bicycles in hundreds are found all over the place, fines for no lights being 1 pound, no excuses accepted. I had a couple of bottles of Trommer's Beer at "El Morrocco" a flash hotel then slept on top in a double-decker berth at the Sailors' Rest.

Saturday Oct. 21st.

At Bermuda. Today we went out into the stream from the wharf preparatory to sailing early tomorrow morning to do the 6 inch shoot that we missed out on Thursday. I went to the Naval Dockyard Cinema tonight, seats at 6 pence, 9 pence and 1 shilling and 6 pence. The show was "The Flying Irishman" a picturization of "Wrong way Corrigan's" flight from New York to Ireland. Second feature "Backdoor to Heaven" was rather a good show too. The theatre in daytime is a sail loft and converted, seats about 500 people. They were still working on the *Berwick* at 11 p.m. as I was returning onboard. They were singing songs then as they worked. I can not by any stretch of the imagination see this ship's company doing that cheerfully. I turned in knowing that I had to get out again at 4.45 a.m. it is remarkable how little sleep a man gets by on these days. We are to return to Bermuda on completion of the shoot.

Sunday Oct. 22nd.

At Sea. We put to sea at 6 a.m. but not to do a practice shoot. On clearing the harbour we slapped on 25 knots bound northward. All the practice shells had to be replaced by explosive genuine ones. The reason for this, the commander told us in an address is that a German warship is in the Atlantic and we are hurrying in that direction now. This diary may get interesting later.

Monday Oct. 23rd.

At Sea. The Atlantic Ocean is living up to its name of one of the dirtiest stretches of water in this universe. It has bared its teeth at the *Perth* since we left Bermuda yesterday morning. We are still cracking along at good speed probably to a rendezvous with some other of H.M. ships. Slowly but surely all my latent ailments are coming to light. I am just falling to pieces. Perhaps a little bit of action is what we want, not so much talk.

Tuesday Oct. 24th.

At Sea. Somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean. The turbulent waters of this angry ocean have been on good behaviour today. We have been getting along at good speed all day and another 24 hours on this course should see us nearer to England than America. As regards the reported enemy craft we have no further information. Secrecy is essential in war, even an amateur knows that, but in this ship the information vouchsafed to the troops is absolutely nil. The closeness of the clam is as the looseness of a housewife's tongue compared to the bulletins onboard here. Shells are all on top line these days, that is anti-aircraft shells. Our 6 inch guns are able to elevate to a greater angle than the 8 inch guns. When an anti-aircraft barrage is put up all guns that can fire at high angle are brought into play. That is, 4 and 6 inch guns, .5 machine guns and aircraft Lewis guns.

Wednesday Oct. 25th.

At Sea. By good luck. Last night's orders were received in the ship that the German cruiser *Emden* was in the Atlantic. We were ordered to hunt her up and engage her in conflict. She has 5.9 guns so there is not much difference in the calibre of both ships' main armaments. At 8.30 p.m. we went to our "action stations". There to remain vigilantly all night long. In contrast to our spell of Jamaican weather, the temperature is well down in

the 60's. We were just going below for breakfast when the alarm came through, a genuine one and we stood by to load the guns and to give back as much as we received. Our guns trained around on to a dark musky shape in the gathered fog. At 6,000 yards she was just visible, I was all set and raring to go, "away with talk, lets have some action at last I thought." But no, it resolved into a British tanker. Tired and weary we came down to breakfast.

Thursday Oct 26th.

At Sea. In the last 24 hours the temperature has dropped to 42 degrees and it is expected to be much lower tomorrow. We arrive at Halifax, Nova Scotia on Saturday morning, how long to stay I do not know. At the moment of writing I have three jerseys on and feel like putting on three more. I am sitting on the mess deck so one could guess what it is like up top. Nova Scotia is north of New York and south a little of Newfoundland.

Friday Oct 27th.

At Sea. This temperamental ocean has finished its passionate outburst and subsided to almost a flat sea. The wind has also taken itself off somewhere else, for the time being. Not so Jack Frost, he hovers around nipping bare ears and noses with his chilly grip. The English ratings can be distinguished in the bathroom as those being wholly undressed. For me it is only "tops and bottoms" until the temperature rises. The modern idea for married people, that of occupying twin beds is not in vogue in Nova Scotia I believe. There a man marries a woman for the same reason that he buys a blanket, to keep him warm. The old saying "tuck more flannel around it" certainly applies. Perhaps us warm blooded Wallabies cannot stick it. I suppose that I will have some writing to do on Halifax.

Saturday Oct 28th.

At Halifax, Nova Scotia. Through a real pea soup fog, visibility about 5 yards we arrived at Halifax, Canada. The first glimpse showed the rugged coast to be covered with rising fir trees. The houses painted white and red looked very picturesque against the fir background. Across the mouth of the harbour stretched a boom consisting of buoys chained together with steel nets slung beneath. Such is the anti-submarine defence. Sydney harbour has the same, tended by HMAS *Kookaburra*. We tied up

at the Imperial Oil Co. wharf at Dartmouth for a couple of hours, and then moved to the Royal Canadian Naval Dockyard wharf. Scattered around the dockyard wharves are plenty of small minesweeping armed trawlers. It rained continuously for 3 days here the people said and is still pouring at the time of writing. Besides being up half of all the nights at sea lately, I was unlucky enough to be Quartermaster last night and only got 3½ hours sleep. This morning at 4.30 the temperature was 37 degrees, I read the thermometer myself. The milkman arrived clad in a thin shirt and coat and said that it was nice and warm. What a Briton. I have said nothing of the city yet but will be going ashore tomorrow. Since New York, Halifax is the largest city we have visited.

Sunday Oct 29th.

At Halifax. Today at 4.p.m. I stepped ashore to take a look at Halifax. I found my impressions of the place quite wrong. It is for the most part composed of shabby houses, and hordes of dirty faced kids running everywhere. A great proportion of the streets are cobbled and old time electric trams run. The Canadian accent is half Yank and half English, not too unpleasant to the ear. The girls looked clean and had natural roses on their cheeks due to the freshness of the climate. Sunday night was something like Melbourne, rather dead. So I got me into a bootleg joint for the province of Nova Scotia is dry. Canadian ale at 50 cents per quart bottle, 9 percent alcohol and applejack and rye whisky are the main drinks. Canadian money is in dollars, cents, quarters and nickels, almost like U.S. money. We received \$4.42 for the English one pound note.

Monday Oct 30th.

At Halifax. We filled up every vacant corner with stores today. All around the R.C.N. wharves are armed sub-chasers and armed mine-sweeper trawlers. The Royal Canadian Navy is filled up with reserves, some of them over 60. They wear the cloth caps, black hats I call them. I saw members of the R.N.W.C.M.P. but they were not mounted. I went to the Capital theatre, orchestra stalls at 45 cents, and saw Charles Laughton in "Jamaican Inn" a real fine picture. The city is overrun at night with sailors and soldiers of every regiment. Like all barracks towns it is not a good time place. I sent Xmas cards and bought a

few necessities such as gloves, thick socks etc. it is rumoured that we sail tomorrow as usual for an unknown destination.

Tuesday Oct 31st.

At Sea. Today early we went to sea in company with HMS *York*. She is a cross between an 8 inch and a 6 inch cruiser. Built the size and shape of the *Perth* she has 3 eight inch turrets and exceptionally tall masts as the *Aussie* has. Yesterday morning the “tankie”, ship’s water caretaker, had to get a mallet and go along the hose breaking the ice inside before the water could flow thru into the ship’s tanks. The temperature was 30 degrees. The rain was almost incessant during our stay in Halifax, not just rain but torrents of water. The boys speculated dollars in heavy serge lumber jackets mush gloves and bootleg whiskey. Halifax is about the size of Northcote, Victoria. The fogs are almost permanent and are they thick! Visibility at sea is limited to about 50 yards. Middle watch tonight so signing off.

Wednesday Nov 1st.

At Sea. Today the sea has sprung up until the motion onboard is most unpleasant. It is just choppy enough to roll around a bit. The last I saw of the *York* was away on the horizon, heading back to Halifax. Just as we went to action stations tonight at 5.30 an American twin engine flying ship circled overhead. She was quite low and one could easily distinguish the stars and bars of the U.S.

Thursday Nov 2nd.

At Sea. Bowling along at a good speed on an almost calm sea today, the rise in temperature was distinctly felt. One by one my jerseys are coming off until soon we will be wearing tropical dress again, that is singlet and shorts. We are headed for Bermuda once again arriving Saturday I believe. The short wave radios that the boys bought in New York are rigged up all over the ship and are getting American stations very plainly. It was payday today and I had a few little debts to pay so I will let the bank book stay closed till next pay day. The commander published the steaming times of the *Perth* for October.

Hours steaming: 23 days 12 hours.

Distance run: 7,779 miles.

Average speed: 13.8 knots.

Distance travelled since war began: 15,783 miles.

War declared 60 days ago.

Friday Nov 3rd.

At Sea. Tonight at 6.p.m. we increased speed to about 25knots and altered from our Bermuda course to a course East, out in the Atlantic. We were to have been in Bermuda tomorrow forenoon. On the forward and quarter deck of the *Perth* are two pieces of board, one forward, one aft about 30 feet long and 4 feet wide. They are identification marks for aviation and painted white, are easily seen from the air. Each day at G.M.T. they are changed to a different position thus the aircraft must have the key to the code to identify us. A draft of 50 men joined us at Halifax from Depot and Australian ships. They came thru the Panama and travelled in the *Remuera* an armed merchantman. After an easy time in Depot and on the way over they are finding life aboard the *Perth* not so easy.

Saturday Nov 4th.

At Bermuda. Much to my surprise we arrived at Bermuda this morning. The weather around the Atlantic is gradually getting worse as winter approaches. Jamaica reports a bad hurricane which took toll of the island. We are chock a block full of stores for Jamaica, loading more today. Seeing that it is my birthday I went ashore to Hamilton and had a couple of drinks together with Nick Carter. We bought flocks of postcards and sent them home. We paid 4 shillings for 2 rissoles 2 eggs and a cup of coffee dregs. That is an indication of the prices in the tourist centre of Bermuda. We intended yesterday to visit the crystal caves but the inclement weather was against it. We went to the Playhouse and saw Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers in "Mr & Mrs Pernon Castle" and voted it a good show. I saw them doing the "Castle Walk" in Brooklyn, New York when I was there. The Playhouse is one of the nicest little theatres that I have yet seen.

Sunday Nov 5th.

At Bermuda. The day had better be called Black Sunday everything I touched turned to the opposite to gold. I thought that I would have a quiet rest before going to sea tomorrow but no, a drum of paint dropped over the side and we had to get suits and helmets out and salvage it. Least said about that the better. I was working for 6 hours on a Sunday even though a war is on. What for?

Monday Nov 6th.

At Sea. We left Bermuda about 11.a.m. today and put to sea to find a gale blowing. Slowly but surely my self restraint is vanishing and I am bubbling up inside until before long I will boil over and something will burst. I know that I will not be a Leading Seaman too long now for they can put it on the next man's plate. The root of the trouble is the childish incompetent nincompoops that rule this floating cauldron of trouble. A man is not allowed to use his initiative, and is spoken to as a naughty schoolboy. The food supply is rotten, ill cooked and insufficient. When I think of all the petty tyrannies that I have to put up with in the name of discipline, it makes me boil. Me, a man of 26 summers treated as a child.

Tuesday Nov 7th.

At Sea. Nothing of any very particular interest occurred today. The weather is getting sultry which indicates tropics. We ran a sweep aboard on the Melbourne Cup, collecting 2 shillings per man each pay. It was drawn yesterday and who should be the lucky man but the canteen manager, 35 pounds being the prize. I am going ashore in Jamaica where we arrive tomorrow and get me dead drunk and relax from this ship.

Wednesday Nov 8th.

At Sea. I miscalculated, for we arrive at Kingston tomorrow. I am duty, but Friday is my night to howl. The issue of limejuice at midday in lieu of rum has begun again today thus denoting that we are again in the tropics. I expect to find the *Orion* at Kingston tomorrow for we have a large consignment of stores for her. Tombola or housie is being played again now that the decks are clear of rain and spray.

Thursday Nov 9th.

At Sea. Kingston today, still the same old place. When we left Bermuda the boys said that we were going "home", by that they did not mean Australia or England but Jamaica. This place extends a welcome to us as a direct contrast to the aloofness of the other places. One rules the city of Kingston when one is here. One can roar about the town and forget the concentrated worries of the war.

Friday Nov 10th.

At Kingston. Seeing how I was duty last night I went off today, first for a swim at Constant Springs then filled up to the eyes with beer and broke my promise to Al. I have no excuses to offer simply saying that it was an escape valve for the suppressed feeling of sea time. Suppose I should not have done it, but who knows that we may go out and be sunk tomorrow.

Saturday Nov 11th.

At Kingston. In direct contrast to last night I went with Nick to Bournemouth pool, then for a feed and the Palace pictures. Main feature was Enrol Flynn and Bette Davis in "The Sisters". Although I had seen it once, I enjoyed the show again. Apart from selling poppies there was no indication that it is Armistice Day. Perhaps we would not mind if it were the Armistice Day of the present war.

Sunday Nov 12th.

At Kingston. Duty today and feeling tired. I am not looking forward to being up half the night. Two American tourist ships tied up near our berth but did not seem to have many travellers aboard. The war has certainly killed the tourist trade of the West Indies for the present anyhow. Constant Spring Hotel opens 15th December, so that finishes sailors swimming there.

Monday Nov 13th.

At Sea and Kingston. We went out today early in company with the *Orion* to do a practice shoot. Carried out aircraft firing at a sleeve target, then a 6 inch throw off shoot at the *Orion*. She had a shoot at astern of us, then tonight we fired star shells but they failed to explode and thus no illumination. Perhaps the charges got damp being in the weather.

Nov 14th – 17th.

At Kingston. I am going to put the next 4 days in one, because I have been so darn busy that I just could not find time to write it up. We returned to Kingston after the firing and there was no leave because we got in so late. I went ashore a couple of times and went swimming amongst other things. We had a couple of days diving Nov 15th and 16th. There are holes in the ships bottom which are outlet valves for pump discharges. In dry dock the valves on the inside can be stripped and overhauled. In the water the holes have to be plugged to stop the compartment being

flooded. We plugged a few of these then examined the propellers. Diving in the tropics is very hot and strenuous even below the surface, for the water temperature is around the 90 degrees. I had a dip of 46 minutes and should collect a couple of bob extra for that. I saw "The Confessions or a Nazi Spy" at the Gaiety Theatre, a picture exposing a German espionage circle in the U.S.A. with Ed. G. Robinson, a good show. Today Nov 17th, we shoved off from Kingston, destination unknown.

Saturday Nov 18th.

At Sea. Today we learnt that we are bound for Curacao, Dutch West Indies to relieve HMS *Hotspur*. There have been some German ships in their ports and due to the present German Dutch tension we may catch one slipping away. Caribbean weather at this time of the year is very sudden, electric storms burst without warning and everything.

Sunday Nov 19th.

At Sea. Reading the Commander's promulgation of orders for the morrow called "night orders", I discovered that we arrive back at Kingston tomorrow and sail same day. We are constantly encountering heavy rain squalls, it rained heavily intermittently today. Our destination after leaving Kingston tomorrow is a matter for surmise.

Monday Nov 20th.

At Kingston and Sea. We got in early to Jamaica and made haste to get stores and oil fuel. During the 1st Dog Watch (4 p.m. – 6 p.m.) we up anchor and sailed from Kingston for quite a while I believe. According to the night orders we pass thru the Panama Canal on Wednesday for a short visit. Unfortunately as the place is a neutral country no leave is to be given. The orders all read "the ship is not going to Australia".

Tuesday Nov 21st.

At Sea. Today has been uneventful except that we are making a few preparations for transiting the Panama Canal tomorrow. The weather surprisingly enough has become cooler and we are having a peaceful passage so far. B.B.C. reports tonight that upwards of 10 ships have been sunk by German mines placed regardless of neutral shipping in navigation routes.

Wednesday Nov 22nd.

At Sea. This forenoon about 0800 we entered Gatun Lock, the first lock on the east side of Panama Canal. As the ship approached the city of Colon, U.S. Navy planes buzzed overhead everywhere, big silver bombers and small fast fighters, 3 submarines slid out to sea past the breakwater as we came in. Looking right ahead the way seemed barred by a gigantic staircase. We entered the canal to be taken in tow by 3 electric mules either side. They look like double ended old fashioned trams. After we had got into the first of the Gatun Locks and the gate closed behind us, the water rose at the rate of about 1 foot per 14 seconds for 24 feet bringing us to the level of the next lock higher up. One had the sensation of rising in an elevator so fast did the water rise. Then the gate in front opened and the procedure repeated several times until we reached the inland lake. Leaving Gatun behind, we carried on taking this short cut across America. The canal has 2 waterways, one for eastward traffic and one for westbound. Marine sentries were placed at close intervals and garrison buildings showed all the way through. The thick jungle grows right to the water's edge and at places the canal is only 100 feet wide. The mules run on rails and have unbelievable power. They can climb like a caterpillar, almost vertical. We passed a couple of patrol vessels of U.S.A. and numerous ships on the way thru. The scenery is rugged and verdantly green but one could imagine alligators lurking in the swamps. Negotiating two more locks we eventually came thru the Pacific Lock into the Pacific Ocean, having in 8 hours saved a voyage of thousands of miles around Cape Horn and South America. On the Pacific side we saw Balboa the city where, had not war occurred we would have spent 2 days. Judging by the look of it they would have been a good 2 days. The principle of the canal is that by putting a ship in a lock, then pumping that lock to the higher level of the next, the ship is enabled to climb as on a stairway to the lake at the highest level and then to descend the other side the same way to the sea level again. It is a marvellous piece of engineering and must cost millions for upkeep but shipping dues pay that. The country either side is the Panama Republic and north of that the Nicaragua Republic and south is Columbia. Due to malaria and fever thousands of lives were lost during its construction. Being a

keynote to Pacific – Atlantic shipping it is a strategical stronghold during such times as these. At Balboa end I saw several large guns about 14 inch – 16 inch covering the mouth of the canal so the Yanks make sure of no interference.

Thursday Nov 23rd.

At Sea. Today has been nearly like an Australian summer day at sea. The sun shone with a dry heat quite unlike the sticky humid weather of the Caribbean Sea. We are just ambling along at about 8 knots on a good sea. Tonight the moon illuminates the scene as if it were day. In the Pacific there has been no sea activities as in the Atlantic so we are in comparatively peaceful waters.

Friday Nov 24th.

At Sea. Another perfect day today and we near our destination. In an address by the Commander over the loud speakers, he informed the ship's company that tomorrow the ship will arrive at an island, not British, and would oil 2 Canadian destroyers. When referred to, this island is to be known as "X" mainly because it is a neutral country and its use as a rendezvous by England must be kept secret.

Saturday Nov 25th.

At Sea. We anchored at "X" this morning early and shortly afterwards there hove 2 destroyers in sight, the *Ottawa* and *Restigouche*, H.M. Canadian ships. We oiled each in turn and I discovered that they had come down the west coast of America from their base at Esquimaet, Canada. The island of "X" turned out to be Cocos Island, a possession of Costa Rica, a South American Republic. It is a mere dot in the Pacific, rising almost perpendicular from the water's edge. The steep slopes were covered in dense green vegetation. We were lying in a small deep cove. I was struck by the cleanliness of the Canadian destroyers in contrast to this bowl of dirt. Finished oiling at dusk and the destroyers disappeared quickly from view. As we got under weigh I saw several large fins cutting surface so was glad that there was no swimming leave.

Sunday Nov 26th.

At Sea. Today about 3.30 p.m. we drew in close to several freighters lying anchored off Punta Arenas, Port Rica in the harbour of San Jose. We inspected them per glasses and appeared

to be keeping outside the neutral zone of 3 miles. What I saw of the town thru a turret periscope was a couple of oil tanks, a few spires and several large buildings also a railway train pushing a string of trucks along just inshore. Of course there is probably a town hidden behind the trees a little inland. Just idling along, we are going south tonight. I usually make my weather report, but must describe tonight as a "True Romance Story" night, full moon on silvery waters etc. For the first time since war started hands have been allowed to smoke out in the open on the upper deck. Match flares and burning cigarette ends can be seen long distances at sea on black nights, hence the no smoking rule. I have mentioned before that we steam with no lights showing, not even usual navigation lights. Such is the good visibility and brilliance of tonight's moon that the rule has been relaxed and I enjoyed a smoke in cool air.

Monday Nov 27th.

At Sea. Today very little of interest occurring, we were cruising slowly south along the coast towards the Canal. Weather was usual *Perth* style.

Tuesday Nov 28th.

At Sea. We had turned around during the night and are heading back north close in. Tomorrow about 9.30 a.m. we enter the canal for passage back to the Caribbean.

Wednesday Nov 29th.

At Sea. This morning we commenced to pass thru the Panama Canal. We anchored in Panama Bay where a guard officer of U.S. Navy came aboard. Later the pilot arrived and we commenced our passage. I described the canal when we last came thru. The gulls here seem very voracious and were very swift on the wing to catch pieces of bread thrown them. They are smaller than Australian gulls and coloured.

Thursday Nov 30th.

At Sea. Back in the Caribbean again and our spell of flat seas and sunny skies in the Pacific is interrupted by a rainy sky and windy sea. Tomorrow we make Kingston once again. Today and tomorrow night I presume that quite a few quid will be exchanged for Red Stripe Beer after a thirsty 10 days of no leave. My nasal trouble is acute tonight, after a spell.

Friday Dec 1st.

At Kingston. We met the *Effingham*, 6 inch cruiser outside Kingston Harbour this morning and the latter followed us in. She was the ship that relieved us of the large convoy in the Atlantic a while ago on Oct 15th. I went ashore and bought a photo album, a camp stretcher and sundries. Usual routine, Bournemouth pool, a feed, then to the Gaiety Theatre to see Vic McLaglin in "Full Confession" rather too slow and religious for me.

Saturday Dec 2nd.

At Kingston. This morning I found that besides *Perth* there is the *Effingham*, HMS *Hotspur* an English destroyer and the *Octavia* and *Restigouche*, H.M. Canadian destroyers, our friends of the island of "X" on the other side of America. The pool was well patronised by a league of nations. The members of the various ships' companies keep pretty well to themselves when ashore. I prefer the Canadians myself.

Sunday Dec 3rd.

At Kingston. Duty today on that most detestable job of Quartermaster. This afternoon two sister ships from New York arrived and departed same day for South America ports. The recall was hoisted aboard the *Effingham* and she sailed some where late tonight. Several of her men arrived back too late to catch the ship and spent the night aboard us. Then they go ashore to await the return of their ship.

Monday Dec 4th.

At Sea. Today we shoved off to patrol the Caribbean for the German merchant ship *Columbus*, who is reported to have loaded with oil and may attempt to slip out to Germany. If we sight her, we will board her with a prize steaming crew to take her to a British port. We did a star shell shoot (4 inch) against the *Hotspur* and later did a shadowing exercise with her.

Tuesday Dec 5th.

At Sea. There is a certain amount of running around making preparations for boarding the *Columbus* should we catch up with her. It is well known that these German merchant ships invariably endeavour to scuttle themselves rather than let the ship be passed into enemy hands. Britain needs these ships, so every endeavour is made to prevent the German crews from scuttling. Riddling their lifeboats is one method of stopping them.

Wednesday Dec 6th.

At Sea. Rather to my discomfiture the old nasal trouble is recurring again. My snozzle churns out gallons of goo and is my liver upset. The Russo-Finn war is putting another aspect to the Russian German maybe alliance. Official reports of sea warfare from the Admiralty, free from newspaper propaganda, are broadcasting over the ship's speakers by the Commander from the microphone rigged in his cabin.

Thursday Dec 7th.

At Sea. Just where the ship is now I cannot say, but I think that we are in the Gulf of Mexico. The weather lately, though not violently bad, is cool, usually with choppy seas. We are still wearing singlets, shorts and white shoes and socks, a comfortable rig. My hair unmentioned the last few weeks is now 2 inches long and looks quite presentable when groomed.

Friday Dec 8th.

At Sea. A rather amusing ½ hour was spent today when the prize crew practised their drill for boarding an enemy merchantman. A party scattered around the ship represented a German crew and our prize party armed with .45 pistols hunted them down and bailed them up, whilst another section went to examine the cargo. The pseudo Germans showed fight and had to be shot. We had the old German ensign flying and a detail went to haul that down. It looked queer flying alongside the white ensign of England. Another party went below to the engine room to prevent the sea cocks being opened and the ship scuttled. The engineers showed fight and had to be shot, meanwhile the cutter alongside had to return the fire (with blanks) of the Germans firing at them from the upper deck. All this playing around gives one the idea that a bit of spilt blood is not impossible yet. It was rather a coincidence that while we had the Nazi flag flying, a United States coastal patrol plane should fly low and circle us close in, then rejoin its fellows higher up. Tonight over the air from the States, a broadcast announced an enemy unidentified warship off the coast of Florida. I have started a photo album to try and tell the story by pictures as well as words.

Saturday Dec 9th.

At Sea. Today marks the arrival of another weekend which seems to arrive with monotonous regularity. The climatic conditions these last few days have been pretty good. We have seen neither sight nor sign of our objective, the German ship *Columbus*. The U.S. patrol planes are seen each day as we steam about the Gulf of Mexico. I still have a dip in the tank each day and that is my main form of exercise.

Sunday Dec 10th.

At Sea. Today passed quietly with a short service on the quarterdeck. Just as we had darkened the ship and it was dusk, a row of lights in line ahead was observed about 7 miles away on our starboard beam. A single ship was a similar distance on the port side. Pretty soon they started flashing to us with the U.S. Navy two lights flashing. We identified ourselves and they continued on their way.

Monday Dec 11th.

At Sea. Yesterday I got my mattress from my hammock and pulling it to pieces teased the hair until it was free of all knots. After 8 years sleeping on horse hair it had become as hard as steel. Whilst I was working on it a couple of chaps came along and suggested starting a "bed picking firm", 5 shillings per mattress. I agreed and with a bit of sales talk, customers rolled up. We picked 3 beds yesterday and 3 today. Just in spare time. There is 30 shillings for 6 hours work for the 3 of us. Next payday I should collect 30 shillings and am going to put it in the bank to buy Al her promised engagement ring, God and Allah willing. I have a slide shown on the screen tonight advertising

Hatfield's

Hygienic

Hand picked

Horse Hair

Hammocks

New York taught me that it pays to advertise.

Tuesday Dec 12th.

At Sea. We are probably turned towards Kingston tonight. Another uneventful day and I am sure that a little excitement now and again would be welcome by the boys. A New York radio is playing right near by and is tuned in on X.E.A.W. Dallas, Texas,

U.S.A. and the ear is treated to a nasal discord. A Hillbilly is playing right from the home on the range, Texas.

Wednesday Dec 13th.

At Sea. Weather fair and cloudy, moderate sea. Over the air tonight, American radio, came news of a naval action in the South Atlantic between the Nazi pocket battleship *Admiral Von Scheer* and HMS *Ajax* and HMS *Achilles*, NZ division RN both 6 inch cruisers. Both sides were reported hit but not sinking. At time of broadcasting were still fighting.

Thursday Dec 14th.

At Kingston and Sea. This morning early we arrived back in Kingston. Oiling rapidly we put to sea 4 hours later. News had come through that the *Columbus* had sailed from Vera Cruz in Mexico. We left Jamaica at 20 knots and gradually increased. I wish to correct the name of the German pocket battleship in action yesterday. Not the *Von Scheer* but the *Graf Spee*. We had some news tonight of the naval engagement off Montevideo, South America. The *Ajax* was convoying a ship when the German attacked. The *Ajax* engaged her and wirelessly the *Exeter* (8 inch cruiser), and *Achilles*. Between them they forced the *Graf Spee* to run into Montevideo Harbour. If she does not leave there within 24 hours the Uruguay Republic will be bound to intern the crew. Outside, the *Ajax*, *Achilles* and the battleship *Barham* are waiting to pounce on her. Truly Germany's sea power is subdued now.

Friday Dec 15th.

At Sea. Though we steamed at a good speed everywhere last night, we failed to discover the *Columbus*. It is reported that the *Revenge* battleship, aircraft carrier *Ark Royal* and French battleship *Dunherque* have joined the forces awaiting the German pocket battleship at Montevideo. It is also reported that a German sea force is almost surely making in that direction. There may be a battle royal down that way yet.

Saturday Dec 16th.

At Sea. No sign of the *Columbus* today and I assume that she has run in somewhere or has been stopped. Tonight the destroyer *Hereward* was seen making towards us with an American destroyer hot on her tail. She made arrangements to oil from us, then we parted company still with the U.S. destroyer on

her tail. The Yank was numbered 78 on the side and was an old 4 funnel coal burner, reconditioned.

Sunday Dec 17th.

At Sea. This morning we made preparations to oil the *Hereward*. She appeared on the horizon with her faithful shadower, the U.S. 78 still on her tail. The *Hereward* came up alongside and we shot lines with wires attached to her. The crane hoisted a long length of flexible fuel pipe over to her and steaming about 60 feet apart we continued on our way whilst passing oil to the destroyer. A flying fox was rigged and bread and etceteras passed over. Destroyers as a rule do not have bake houses. Whilst all this was taking place the Yank was trailing astern. When we cast the *Hereward* off the Yank continued to trail her. The B.B.C. tonight announced the *Graf Spee* had scuttled herself at Montevideo, first transshipping most of her crew to a German collier.

Monday Dec 18th.

At Sea. Whilst cruising today we were investigated by a U.S. cruiser and destroyer. They stuck around all day just keeping tabs on us. The B.B.C. tonight announced the success of the submarine "Salmon" in destroying German U-boats and cruisers. Taking it all around this has been a very successful week for Britain in sea warfare.

Tuesday Dec 19th.

At Sea. Today we learnt that our objective, the *Columbus* escaped past the *Orion* via the Florida channel from the Gulf of Mexico. She was 300 miles off American coast when she was intercepted by a British destroyer from Bermuda. She scuttled and set fire to herself. 33000 tons of German ship went down. We have been steaming at 25 knots to catch the German freighter *Auraca* since noon today.

Wednesday Dec 20th.

At Sea. It was learnt today that we are now bound for Kingston, arriving tomorrow. There should be a fair amount of mail awaiting us there, for it is a month since we had any Australia mail. We are well down on our fuel by this time. The capacity of our tanks is 1600 tons. A diesel engine ship carrying 1600 tons of fuel could run much further than us.

Thursday Dec 21st.

At Kingston. We arrived early today and proceeded straight to the oil wharf. I am duty today and probably will not feel like going ashore tomorrow. The radio stations that the boys get on their sets are mostly American and their talk is almost exclusively about people having a Merry Xmas and all that. I am thinking that our Xmas will be at sea.

Friday Dec 22nd.

At Kingston. Outside the entrance to Kingston Harbour, about 400 yards from the lighthouse, a British freighter the *Houston City* was stranded hard and fast on the sandstone bottom. *Perth* went out to tow her off or help the tug already towing. After about 8 hours of useless work the 5 ½ inch wire we had to her as a tow, parted and we came back into the harbour. I saw "Fast and loose" at the "Carib Theatre".

Saturday Dec 23rd.

At Kingston. I did not want to go ashore today especially after a little bed picking but was talked into it. Saw "Bulldog Drummond's Bride" at the Palace. The Xmas shopping night saw Jamaica at its gayest, like a fair. I saw a little nigger boy looking longingly at a toy motor and I am sure that Father Xmas was not coming to him. I bought it for him and the Crown Jewels could not have pleased him more.

Sunday Dec 24th.

At Kingston. Contrary to expectations we will be in harbour Xmas Day. I hope that for the people at home Xmas has lost none of its usual flavour. Naturally I would like to be there and try to score a threepenny piece from Mum's plum duff. Duty today again, and a rest up tomorrow. The "Carib theatre" is enclosed but air conditioned and equals theatres in much larger cities than Kingston. Saw a *Graf Spee* Movietone there.

Monday Dec 25th.

At Kingston. Today being Xmas Day and *Perth* being in port we had some nuts. An elaborate menu was issued to each man plus a card bearing King and Queen's signature and photos. We had nuts and turkey and ham, a bottle of beer each and fruit and Xmas pudding. Some of the messes looked very tastefully decorated and others did not trouble to adorn the place. I wrapped a few flags about the mess to add a little colour. Quite a few

private drinking parties started obtaining supplies through the portholes. Not wishing to participate I took a skiff and sailed to Bournemouth Pool. A couple of drinks, then back to the ship and turned in early for a good night's sleep. It was more or less an open gangway for the troops and those who did not use the gangway went over the side. 90% of the ship's company were ashore.

Tuesday Dec 26th.

At Kingston. Today being Boxing Day, I again took the skiff in company with Nick and Snowy Somerton and down to the pool we did sail. A nice breeze was blowing and we got along quite nicely. In the night I went to the "Carib Theatre" and saw "Goodbye Mr Chips" quite the best show for a while. Total cost of the night's entertainment about 5 shillings. I find these quiet nights best in the long run.

Wednesday Dec 27th.

At Kingston. Nothing startling happened today. HMS *Orion* arrived early and looked to be very empty of oil. Being duty I did not go ashore. There are still a few empties lying around, relics of Xmas Day. I have rather a thirst at time of writing so a refill would much appreciated. I was hoping to have a rest up tomorrow but we are going out to do a shoot accompanied by *Orion* and the Canadian *Assiniboine*.

Thursday Dec 28th.

At Sea. Early today we left Kingston accompanied by HMCS *Assiniboine* and carried out a shoot at a target towed by a Jamaican vessel. The weather got pretty choppy in the afternoon and the targets overturned so we continued shooting astern of each other. Tonight, both ships spread out and then in darkness converged on each other and with star shell and searchlights carried out a night encounter.

Friday Dec 29th.

At Sea. I am just starting to get my sea legs again after a spell of a few days in port. We left Jamaica after the gunnery exercise, bound for Curacao the commander said, to keep an eye on German shipping. The Caribbean is not the quiet placid sea it was a couple of months ago. It has been choppy with a vigorous breeze sending spray right over.

Saturday Dec 30th.

At Sea. In one of his periodical speeches over the *Perth* network, the Commander gave his views of the situation regarding the much discussed question of America's 300 mile neutrality zone. He also told us that we have been ordered back to Kingston arriving Monday. This afternoon the sloop *Penzance* came close up and we sent a sea boat to her, for what?

Sunday Dec 31st.

At Sea. We arrive back in Kingston tomorrow for a short stay most likely. Tonight a sing song was held and it was a pretty good impromptu turn. The band gave some excellent swing music and everything was o.k. One drawback was that it was held under cover, no lights are still shown at sea. Therefore the sweating crowd stripped to a minimum.

Monday Jan 1st.

At Sea. Last night at mid-night, the bell was struck over the speakers just as I commenced a midnight watch. Rather an ominous way to start the New Year. At last night's concert we sang Auld Lang Syne a few times, very differently than my previous New Year's Eves. Tonight I went to the "Carib Theatre" and saw Irving Berlin's "Second Fiddle"

Tuesday Jan 2nd.

At Sea. We left Kingston at 1600 and put to sea for patrol work. Whilst in Jamaica we were tied up across the way from the German freighter *Düsseldorf* flying the white ensign over the Nazi flag. She was captured by the *Despatch* and her crew interned, the vessel being taken over by a prize crew from *Despatch*. This is a vessel to be disposed of by a prize court. A new ship, she is a good prize.

Wednesday Jan 3rd.

At Sea. It is a better spell of weather at sea this time. The sun is shining and the sea moderate. The *Orion* has gone for docking and maybe to change crews. Her crew has been on the West Indies Station 2 ½ years so are entitled to a relief. We become the senior ship on this station now. My hair has reached that stage again where it is hot and uncomfortable so that I may have it all off again soon.

Thursday Jan 4th.

At Sea. Today, much to my surprise, I was rated confirmed Leading Seaman having done my 12 months probation satisfactorily. By a coincidence I also received my 2nd good conduct badge. It is awarded 8 years from time of commencement of man's time. Man's time starts at 18, just 8 years today since I went to Port Melbourne Depot to join F.N.D. It has not taken so long to pass now that I look back.

Friday Jan 5th.

At Sea. We are around the Republican island of Haiti and Cuba patrolling. Expect to reach Kingston about next Thursday. I started this book 3 months ago at Kingston and we are still at war. The bed picking firm is still going, bank account now 5 pounds. I am aiming much higher than that, but time will tell. So far as we are concerned now it is not a bad war.

--- End of Book Three

Book Four (January 6th 1940 – March 30th 1940)

Events onboard HMAS PERTH During the War 1939 - 1940

By Leading Seaman George E. Hatfield

*Book 4 started at sea in the Caribbean Sea, WEST INDIES on
Jan. 6th 1940*

At Sea. It begins to look as though I shall soon have a travelling library in my locker, if these diaries keep accumulating. Today was a beautiful day as regards weather and it really seemed a pity to be wasted. We're cruising close in to the shore of western Jamaica, passed Montego Bay, the famed tourist resort. In a broadcast tonight the Commander described the sinking of the German liner *Columbus*
Sunday Jan 7th.

At Sea. In the British press news tonight was a paragraph reading that a research party had discovered in a cave at Cocos Island, Pacific Ocean, west of Panama 18,000,000 pounds of treasure. Readers will remember that Cocos Island was our island "X" for a rendezvous with Canadian destroyers. Imagine being so close to all that treasure without knowing it. Nobody landed at "X" whilst we were there so we were not in the race.

Monday Jan 8th.

At Sea. There should be a good mail awaiting us in Jamaica when we return this time on Wednesday. Lack of green vegetables is telling the tale by the biliousness and stomach trouble of the lads. My photograph album is progressing favourably but I am not yet up to date. There is money and lots of it being coined by the photo-firm's onboard.

Tuesday Jan 9th.

At Sea. We have been circling Jamaica and another small island about 15 miles away this last 48 hours. Tomorrow at 0815 we berth at Kingston unless otherwise ordered. In the press news today, I read that the Finns have administered a crushing defeat to the Russians. Those gallant people although heavily outnumbered

and out-armed are more than a match for the inferior Soviet troops, at present.

Wednesday Jan 10th.

At Kingston & at Sea. At 0800 today we dropped anchor in Kingston Harbour. We expected a stay of a few days but after a swift 3 hour oiling we put to sea again. After 10 days at sea, I was looking forward to a swim and picture session. The Commander told us tonight over the air that the German freighter *Consul Horn* had left Aruba and we are trying to intercept her. The *Consul Horn* is mentioned in my diary in the early days of the war.

Thursday Jan 11th.

At Sea. Although a vigilant watch was kept for the *Consul Horn* we saw no sight or sign of her since leaving Kingston yesterday. In the mail I received a letter from Al telling me that a baby boy weighing 6 ½ lbs was born to Cec on Cup Day Nov. 7th. By calling it "Robin Raymond" they have introduced a new Christian name into the family. Al was all wrapped up in the kid, she wrote.

Friday Jan 12th.

At Sea. Early today the visibility was very bad with rain squalls. It is possible that she, the *Horn*, could have slipped us. Three American coast patrol planes circled us close in, and provided exercise for our anti aircraft twin four inch guns.

The bed picking business is helping me to put away a couple of pound per pay. Bank balance now 7 pound. A plane is badly needed to assist us in ship searching.

Saturday Jan 13th.

At Sea. Still loafing around the ocean looking for trouble and finding none. We can kiss the *Horn* goodbye by this time I reckon. The weather has treated us kindly this last week, not that it is ever very bad around here. The United States are taking no chances with their Canal, for we continually sight planes of the U.S Navy. Our war correspondent, the Commander, lectured on magnetic mines.

Sunday Jan 14th.

At sea. Time slouches on, and we had an expectant thrill this morning when a vessel answering the *Horn's* description was sighted from the crow's nest. Drawing up to about 1 mile we altered course and steamed away. I made her out to be a Blue

Funnel ship, through the turret periscope. That brought back reminiscences of *Autolycus* days. Due Kingston Tuesday.

Monday Jan 15th.

At Sea. I have omitted to write that for the last 5 days I have not used a razor. To be precise I am growing a beard. Naval regulations state that a full set moustache and beard only is allowed and the minimum time of growing is 3 months. Right now I look rather disreputable. Last night a U.S. destroyer put a searchlight on us. The skipper gets rather annoyed at U.S. planes and ships flying round us impudently.

Tuesday Jan 16th.

At Kingston. Back among the darkies again, rather to my regret. I received a greeting card with 3 kookaburras on it from Joyce and a nice little note inside. Also letters from Al and mum so that part of it was ok. But I got ashore and started to drink Planters Punch, a deadly potion, each bucket a thunderbolt. Needless to say I was over then.

Wednesday Jan 17th.

At Kingston. Today the naval supply ship *City of Dieppe* lying across the wharf from us, warped over and transhipped quite a few stores to us. She has 26 Lascars onboard and they are Mohammedans. At sunrise this morning I saw several of them facing the East and bowing and kneeling, touching the ground with their foreheads. This continued for some time until their god was placated I suppose.

Thursday Jan 18th.

At Kingston. This morning I again saw the Lascars at their devotions, also at sunset last evening. Having a "make and mend" I took the skiff with a couple of my "wingers" and we sailed down harbour to Port Augusta. An old fort now deserted, it has dungeons, dark and damp, and old magazine rooms. It is a couple of hundred years old and was extremely interesting. I will describe it later.

Friday Jan 19th.

At Kingston. I have lost my job of quartermaster in harbour and consequently get a little sleep these days. Last night I went the Movie Theatre and saw Jackie Cooper in "What a life", just a Yankee college show. On arrival back aboard I found that the

ship is sailing tomorrow to do a practise shoot at a Pattern 5 target towed by the *City of Dieppe*.

Saturday Jan 20th.

At Sea. Though not scheduled to leave Kingston till 9.30 a.m. today, we left hurriedly at 3.30 a.m. and have been doing over 20 knots till time of writing, 10.p.m.

In a broadcast tonight the Commander told us that we are bound for Aruba, West Indies where the German merchant ship *Heidelberg* 6,000 tons is likely to make a dash for Germany in accordance with Hitler's orders for all Germans to return home.

Sunday Jan 21st.

At Sea. Before dawn this morning the twinkle of the lights of Aruba were visible to us, due mainly to an increase of speed to 30 knots during the night. There were quite a few ships tied up inshore among which is the *Heidelberg*, our objective. We have been cruising along the coast keeping outside the 3 mile neutrality limit just watching and playing the cat and mouse game. This afternoon a warship on the horizon on closer inspection proved to be an old acquaintance of ours, the French cruiser *Jeanne De Arc*. She was in Australia at time of Sydney's 150th celebrations, and in Hobart with us. Quite a good looking speedy craft with four 6 inch turrets and four 3 inch guns. A bow wave painted on her side gave a false impression of speed which is what it is meant to do. A control officer of gunnery must be able to estimate an enemy's speed to be able to correct his table for firing. The *Jeanne De Arc* also had 2 motor cars on her upper deck and a big seaplane. For her size I consider her poorly armed. She was a cadet training ship when she visited Australia but I suppose they are all trained by now.

Monday Jan 22nd.

At Sea. Today has been really uninteresting. Nothing worth mentioning having happened. It seems that our moon light flit from Kingston on Saturday has availed us nought. There within our sight inside the 3 mile limit at Aruba lies our prospective prize, quite safe from us, as long as Germany does not invade Holland. Of course "Fearless Frank" our Captain, could take us in and capture it, but the far reaching international difficulty is too great.

Tuesday Jan 23rd.

At Sea. The sea today has risen to “rough” from “moderate” but there is not much effect onboard *Perth*. The situation re the German shipping at Aruba is that, should Germany and Holland assume a state of war, those ships would be given 24 hours to leave or be interned. Aruba be it remembered is Dutch. The alternative, knowing British cruisers to be awaiting them outside would either be scuttling or internment I think.

Wednesday Jan 24th.

At Sea. I have just come in from the upper deck where there is a lot of excitement. When we got to Aruba from Kingston last Sunday there were three ships anchored in there. By day we left Aruba and came back each night to check up. Tonight on going close in only two ships were seen and a light away on the horizon. Immediately we speeded up to 30 knots and chased her. Ten minutes ago we caught her up but just flew past without slackening speed. She was a small freighter of about 4,000 tons with all lights burning. The boys were all up top and very excited at the prospect of a capture. Everone is of the opinion that we ought to be lucky enough to be able to do something to justify our existence. We are still pounding along at nearly top speed. I have the middle watch so will turn in and see what the night brings.

Thursday Jan 25th.

At Sea. When I got on watch for the middle watch last night, we had slowed down to cruising speed and were heading back to Aruba. A message was received that the “fugitive” had shifted to berth in another harbour in Aruba, leaving us ploughing the ocean at 30 knots. A shell in the mushroom growth of oil tanks at Aruba would cause a gigantic bonfire.

Friday Jan 26th.

At Sea. Today being A.N.A. day we stopped the war yes, no. This morning an American cruiser and 4 destroyers crossed our bows at close range, while away on the horizon I picked up another half flotilla of Yankee destroyers. They were the old wartime 4 funnel types. The cruiser had 3 triple 6 inch gun turrets and 2 planes. Jamaica papers announced the Caribbean cruise of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet.

Saturday Jan 27th.

At Sea. Each morning and night since we have been watching Aruba the first sight is the lighthouse which is right on an elongated point of land. Today we were well within the 3 mile zone, indeed only about 1 mile from 2 Germans anchored. What an easy thing it would be to land a silent boarding party in the dark, take possession and steam them away.

Sunday Jan 28th.

At Sea. We are on our way back to Kingston now and before going in we carry out a full calibre reduced charge 6 inch firing at 2 patterns 6 targets towed by the *City of Dieppe*. I recall that the last time we left Jamaica this shoot was to have been done but our "hurry" call at 3.a.m. finished all that. A large island was passed today and we tried to do 30 knots for a couple of hours but failed.

Monday Jan 29th.

At Kingston. At 9.a.m. we fired at the target and then carried on into Kingston. I have had another change of jobs and am now known as 2nd Captain of the Fo'castle division. The main advantage is that now at sea I get all night in my hammock instead of having to get up at all hours to keep a watch in the 6 inch gun turret. A disadvantage is that I have to wear whites where formerly it was blue overalls.

Tuesday Jan 30th.

At Kingston. Being duty last night I decided to go off today. Nick and I took the 12 foot sailing dinghy and sailed to Bournemouth. While we were in swimming the wind died altogether and we started to pull back to the ship. A motor launch, rod trawling for Tarpon passed by and we thumbed a passage back to *Perth*. In the harbour a large barquentine named *Capitata* from Boston was anchored. A world cruise would do me aboard her.

Wednesday Jan 31st.

At Sea. Today at 4.30 p.m. we sailed, destination not known to me. Two large turtles were brought aboard for the "Old Man" who has a taste for turtle steaks. Listening in to a set rigged in the diving store, I discovered that it was President Roosevelt's birthday. Every Yankee station was all about the Preso. We had a

few hours rain last night and it seemed very strange to be in an almost unknown element.

Thursday Feb 1st.

At Sea. Flash. Tonight the information that we are relieving the HMCS *Assinaboine* at Aruba, was posted on the board. This month's information is as follows.

January Steaming Days at sea – 27 days, Distance travelled – 7,969 miles, Average speed – 14.1 knots, Total distance to date – 36,877 miles. Referring to these monthly steaming timetables will show one that we must take our recreation when we can.

Friday Feb 2nd.

At Sea. This morning we sighted the *Assiniboine* and she steamed along for a while with us, and then disappeared, probably for Kingston. This afternoon Aruba was in sight with the three Germans anchored in the same spot. I still have my grapefruit each morning and often after looking at the offal called food have only grapefruit to eat. Delicate stomachs have no place aboard the *Perth*.

Saturday Feb 3rd.

At Sea. Today passed uneventful except that I was constantly running to the "heads". In civilians' parlance "head" means Latrine. Every week or so lately the ship's company are subjected to violent griping of the stomach at all hours of the day and night. Many races have just been won, to the heads. I myself have runs and find it painful and inconvenient at times.

Sunday Feb 4th.

At sea. There are two or three small islands in the Aruba area and we visited one of them this afternoon. Crossing *Perth* in the opposite direction was an English sloop the *Penzance* or maybe the *Dundee* I was told. A talk on the German method of extracting valuable information from prisoners of war was given by the Commander last night. Cunningly concealed microphones in special rooms, and "planted" fellow prisoners seem to be very much in use.

Monday Feb 5th.

At Sea. I have not written down the various "buzzes" that have from time to time been current in the ship. A "buzz" to the unenlightened is a rumour. The latest buzz and pretty popular one is that we leave Kingston Monday 12th, go through the Canal 14th

and relieve the *Despatch* in the Pacific for 7 weeks then home to Australia via Tahiti and Wellington. Personally I place little faith in that buzz.

Tuesday Feb 6th.

At Sea. Today just for exercise, we streamed paravanes, those machines that cut mine moorings and float the mines. It is some months now since we had them out. They are no good against the magnetic mine menace, for they, the magnetic mines explode below the surface when in the vicinity of steel hulls. England seems to have a counter for magnetic mines.

Wednesday Feb 7th.

At Sea. I have not yet been able to discover whether we are on the inside looking out, or the outside looking in, at those Germans just over there off the shore of Curacao. I have had a couple of wins at 1 pound per time at "Tombola" but I reckon that the game owes me a few quid yet. It is a diversion to gamble a little in this semi-monastic life.

Thursday Feb 8th.

At Sea. It is rumoured onboard that the *Diomedé* and *Dunedin* "D" class cruisers ex New Zealand station, are on the West Indies station to relieve a couple of ships here. Tonight away on the horizon the sloop "*Dundee*" was flashing to us. It was her and not the *Penzance* that I saw 4 days ago. I have a suit length of tropical cloth in my locker to be made up on Saturday.

Friday Feb 9th.

At Sea. During the last few days our German objectives have painted their vessels all black, preparatory we think, to making a bold dash for freedom one black night. Our arrival in Kingston tomorrow is cancelled and we are to stay on patrol here as long as the oil lasts or until relieved. Butter, eggs, onions and potatoes are nearly all gone, so we will be living out of the tin entirely for a week I suppose. We are not too badly off so why grumble.

Saturday Feb 10th.

At Sea. We are still here off Curacao and those blasted Germans have not made a move yet. The B.B.C. has nothing very startling to broadcast these last few nights and the interest of ship's company listeners has waned. The Commander told us that *Assiniboine* has gone back to Kingston to refuel and will relieve

us today week, making this patrol 18 days for the *Perth*. We will be pretty empty by then.

Sunday Feb 11th.

At Sea. Tonight the P.B.C. (Perth Broadcasting Company) held an amateur hour over the ship's network. There were 3 prizes of 1 pound 1 shilling – 1st, 12 shillings and 6 pence – 2nd, 1 shilling and 6 pence – 3rd. with 24 competitors rendering songs, parodies, back chat and recitations it was not a bad effort for a start. A 10 minute cross fire of back chat won 1st place. I think that the performance will be repeated when the talent scouts get going.

Monday Feb 12th.

At Sea. Yesterday after prayers I had my photo taken with three of the young lads of my acquaintance. Having upon my face a mass of black beard, inter- sprinkled with grey hairs, and a briar with a crooked stem, set in a swarthy sun tanned background of face. I guess I will look like an old shell back. I just will have to show Al, although I know that she will hate that snap of me.

Tuesday Feb 13th.

At Sea. This patrol has been about the most boring of any which we have yet done. 18 days of just steaming around with no excitement and these last 3 days out of sight of land and our German "friends". There is an endeavour being made to overcome this boredom apparently for we had the "broadcast" a couple of nights ago and now a whist drive is to be held tomorrow night.

Wednesday Feb 14th.

At Sea. With the shortage of vegetables and meat, the housewife's pet, a can opener, has made its appearance, tinned bully beef, tinned peas and rice. To be followed by canned peaches, pears or pineapple. Rice covered with thick chocolate cocoa made its appearance and although I have never had that kind of duff before it was not too bad.

Thursday Feb 15th.

At Sea. I am getting quite a good collection of photographs these days, and will have to buy another album soon, more money. Our midday issue of limejuice still continues because of course we are still in the tropics in the Caribbean Sea.

The temperature these days is just right. Usually a cool breeze is blowing and spindrift comes aboard.

Friday Feb 16th.

At Sea. A quiet day today, until this evening when the hands were exercised as if at a real action. The decks were wet down and imaginary breakdowns were taking place in the gun turrets' machinery. Then we received a torpedo in the port stem. A collision mat was placed over the aperture and it apparently did no good, for hands prepared to abandon ship getting boats and provisions ready. At both mastheads were unfoiled battle flags, big white ensigns. We are now on our way to Kingston arriving tomorrow. I suppose that it will be a few hours in port then out again for another patrol, shorter next time I hope. The latest buzz says that we transit the Panama on March 3rd reaching Sydney on 1st week in April. Who knows between now and then?

Saturday Feb 17th.

At Sea and Kingston. We arrived at our station port today at 11.00 after an absence of nearly three weeks. A few trucks of stores were waiting on the wharf for us. Tonight I took my suit length ashore and was measured for a suit. I picked out the style I liked from an American fashion book, from there to Bournemouth with Nick for a couple of hours swim, then to see "The Man in the Iron Mask" at the Palace.

Sunday Feb 18th.

At Kingston. The weather continues in its own Jamaican way, very fine indeed. This afternoon I went ashore and had a try on for my suit. I was very pleased. Last night I had a feed of chicken. Tonight Nick and I went to see Bing Crosby in "The Starmaker" with the new juvenile singer Linda Ware, of course after a swim.

Monday Feb 19th.

At Kingston. I drew the rest of my bank balance out today even though I was saving for a certain something for Al. Duty tonight and early to bed for me. The naval store ship *City of Dieppe* came alongside today and we took a goodly amount of stores. Tonight I watched about 10 Mohammedans at their devotions facing the East, kneeling on a mat with their shoes off and caps on.

Tuesday Feb 20th.

At Kingston. The non delivery of my suit has me a little worried, so off I go to collect it personally. It would be a terrible thing if we were to sail at short notice leaving 4 ½ quid's worth of suit behind. I go off and get it then I am swimming at Bournemouth pool followed as usual by a picture show at the Gaety Theatre, admission 6½ pence. Ginger Rodgers in "5th Avenue Girl", 3 star.

Wednesday Feb 21st.

At Kingston. Being not only badly bent, but broke to the wide, I stopped on board tonight. I tried to get a blue working shirt to wear with a pair of blue overall trousers, but had to get a grey one. A 3 inch packet of navy dye and I boiled it in a bucket for 15 minutes. Afterwards I soaked it in sea water and it is now drying. I will see the results of my labours tomorrow morning.

Thursday Feb 22nd.

At Sea. The "D" class cruiser *Despatch* came into harbour this morning with 2 Nazi flags flying at her fore lower yard. This indicates 2 Nazi prizes. We sailed at 0930 and headed away for Aruba till Sunday when *Despatch* relieves us. We are due back in Kingston next Tuesday the Commander told us. The dyeing experiment turned out very successfully, I have a job on hand to dye half a dozen for a chap who patches.

Friday Feb 23rd.

At Sea. The buzz merchants are very busy mapping out our return to Australia. According to them it is Kingston Tuesday, leave there Thursday through the Panama Saturday, then 10 days to Tahiti, Suva and finally to Sydney. I shall write on the accuracy of this buzz from time to time. Although there is practically no motion on the ship tonight, I am feeling queer, due to a crook stomach.

Saturday Feb 24th.

At Sea. Just now about 3 miles on our port side there are a myriad of lights denoting Aruba. There were 3 ships plainly visible at sunset, lying at anchor. The Commander gave a broadcast tonight on magnetic mines and the German Reich member, Himmler. He also advised all ratings who have gear ashore in Kingston to get it aboard because we probably will not see the place again for a long while, if ever.

Sunday Feb 25th.

At Sea. Today has been a real day of rest for me, as the bible says. Six days shall ye labour, the seventh ye shall rest. Since 1000 today I just relaxed on my stretcher and between dozes read Zane Grey till 1800. Tonight the *Despatch* is suppose to relieve us and we make our way back to Kingston. Press news today reads like Russia invading Turkey and the Balkans. Looks like a scrap.

Monday Feb 26th.

At Sea. We are on our way back to Kingston today and for once I am really stumped for something to write about.

Tuesday Feb 27th.

At Sea and Kingston. Arrived in Kingston today to find the "D" class cruiser *Diomedé* and Canadian destroyer *Assinaboine* in harbour. Went with Nick to the Palace tonight and saw "Tarzan Escapes" usual impossible film.

Wednesday Feb 28th.

At Kingston. Stores have been coming in to the ship today in very large quantities. Looks like supplies for a long voyage. The natives ashore all tell us that we sail tomorrow for Australia. The Spanish Jar Club has been taken over by a Jamaican Social Committee and is now known as "The Naval Club". One can drink beer at 7½ pence per bottle and light refreshments are available.

Thursday Feb 29th.

At Kingston and at Sea. The sister ship of the *Diomedé*, HMS *Dunedin* arrived this morning looking worse for wear and a modified version of what she was on the N.Z. station. We have the ex N.Z. squadron complete with us now. At 5 p.m. we slipped wires and slid out stern first into the stream. Following our example *Diomedé* tailed us until we got out of harbour then took the lead.

Friday March 1st.

At Sea. We are making S.W. towards the Canal in good weather. The *Diomedé* carries a Commodore therefore being senior ship she leads. We do not get much practice at night encounters so the *Diomedé* steamed beyond the horizon then circled round and made an attack on us. Although it was pretty

black we saw her and opened fire with starshells. Then we reversed the order attacking her.

Saturday March 2nd.

At Sea and Panama. Arriving in Colon early we dropped anchor till our turn came to pass through Panama Canal. Soon *Diomedes* entered first lock then we followed when she passed to 2nd locking. There was a constant stream of ships both ways. Bolivian, Peru, Chile, French and Panama nationalities. Transiting the first locks we anchored in Gatun Lakes and after dinner hands were swimming over the ship's side. Quite soon a few were in difficulties swimming with the stream and then being unable to combat the 4 – 5 knot current to swim back. Our skiff picked them up. A balloon repair ship. U.S. Navy with a tall 100 feet mooring mast, 2 seaplanes and a gun forward and aft dropped anchor near us. At 3.15p.m. we proceeded and at 8.15 we were still going through the locks. The screen had been rigged and we had a show onboard called "Invitation to Happiness" starring Irene Dunn, Fred McMurry. The canal workers and mule crews were walking along the banks keeping pace watching the film. Arriving in Panama Bay we dropped anchor for the night. Captain and officers went ashore to a ban-yan. *Diomedes* carried on to her Pacific patrol relieving *Despatch*. A small mail arrived onboard.

Sunday March 3rd.

At Sea. Yesterday we each received a package from the Victorian division of War Comforts' Committee. They were very acceptable, containing 1 cake, 1 pudding, 1 tooth brush, 1 tube paste, 1 Kraft cheese, 2 tins of sweets, 1 Reader's Digest, 1 tin of peaches, 1 tin of cream. We all feel very thankful to the senders. Mine came from a Mr. Bird of South Yarra. At 7 a.m. we up anchor and on a flat sea and cool weather, our first hop. It seems strange that I forgot to record the Captain's speech on Thursday night. We are on our way to Australia calling in at Tahiti and possibly Suva arriving Sydney approximately April 1st. Needless to say we are all pleased with the prospect of getting home for a little while. The skipper also said that we would get some leave, but being wary, he would not say just how much leave.

Monday March 4th.

At Sea. Today was as hot as hell, and are my shoulders red. The calm, flat sea continues and we are making a lousy 12 knots. A new swimming tank 5 feet deep was rigged yesterday and I was well into it. We rigged a few small wing awnings today, ones that do not obstruct the guns. A sunbake with an occasional wet down with the hose and it is a good sort of war.

Tuesday March 5th.

At Sea. Yesterday I mentioned sunbaking, today I detest that word. My back is the colour of a well boiled crayfish and it's a case of sleeping face down tonight. On Thursday we recross the line nearly nine months to the day. There is to be another ceremony for uninitiates and I predict some fun. A dip in the bath where I found that Pacific salt water is not as salty as the Atlantic.

Wednesday March 6th.

At Sea. Today being another edition of yesterday, I took good care to keep a singlet over my sunburn. Last night my back was stung by a thousand scorpions each time I turned. Tonight a broadcast from Neptune's Court on the sea bottom, summoning victims to the Royal Court tomorrow. I am a royal bear this time so will be right in the front row of the ceremony.

Thursday March 7th.

At Sea. - Across The Line.

Elaborate preparations were made for King Neptune, a deep bath and the microphone with amplifiers. I had a strenuous time attending to criminals when they were thrown to the Bears. I am not going to describe in detail the ceremony as it was a replica of the *Autolycus* except that I consider it not as good or as funny. During the proceedings my beard was daubed with an emerald green paint. Applications of "shale oil" (torpedo fuel) did not do much good except to sting excessively. I went down to the Commander's cabin and explained the situation to him, mentioning the shale oil. He agreed about the sting because he had to use it to get paint off his chest when the Port and Starboard lights had finished with him. Just before I shaved it off I had a snap taken with Carl Burnongh, our Jamaican Canteen assistant.

Friday March 8th.

At Sea. It feels strangely bare and cool about my chin today. The sunburnt outer skin on my back has formed dozens of little water blisters that are so itchy that I feel like scratching my back until it is raw. It seems like, looking through my writings that there is a continual current of ills. Al always used to reckon that I was a moaner, but I nearly always have something to moan about.

Saturday March 9th.

At Sea. Last night while sleeping peacefully on my stretcher, I was nearly washed out by a tropical down pour. It is raining like blazes now, so I will sleep in the diving store, my coat of tan on the back is now piebald peeling off in large patches. A number of dart boards have made their appearance on the ship and one has to be careful to duck at the right time when walking about the ship.

Sunday March 10th.

At Sea. We are in the Tropic of Capricorn now, and rain squalls are frequent. It has been pouring, off and on all day. There is to be held tonight the first games of a dart championship. The deck hockey interpart championship game is to be played next Wednesday. With 2,220 miles to Tahiti, from noon today we are more than half way from Kingston. We had a lecture on magnetic mines and Herman Goering last night by the Commander.

Monday March 11th.

At Sea. We were issued with an individual life jacket at last payment. It is a rubber bladder covered with navy blue stockingette and fits across the chest and has rubber arms that lead under one's arms and to the middle of the back. I think that it is very effective, easily inflated in less than 1 minute by blowing up through a teat in the centre of the chest.

Tuesday March 12th.

At Sea. I am writing today's entry between whizzing darts, which craze is more popular than was Minnie Golf in its day. Six days from now we tie up at Tahiti and speculation is rife onboard as to the exchange. Tonight there is a debate going on over the ship's mike as to whether the ship's company would have preferred to remain in Kingston rather return to Sydney.

Wednesday March 13th.

At Sea. A notice giving of information re the city Papeete, chief city of Tahiti was displayed. It is reputedly a very beautiful scenic island surrounded by coral reefs. Population 5,000 of which 2,000 are French. The natives are classed as immoral and untrustworthy. We reach there on Sunday a.m. early instead of Monday 18th. What the exchange in Francs will be I do not know.

Thursday March 14th.

At Sea. It was a boiling hot day today and a dip in the bath tonight was very welcome. As a diversion I got a diving helmet, connected a 45 foot length of air hose to it and the pump then putting the helmet on sat on the bottom of about 3 foot 6 inches of water. Pretty soon I had quite a few of the boys having a go at it. I intended at some future date to don a helmet without dress and descend to 20 feet or so.

Friday March 15th.

At Sea. We had a practice shoot today with 4 inch and 6 inch armament firing. A small raft target was the objective of the 6 inch sub-calibre fire and smoke bursts for the 4 inch guns. Conditions were ideal for firing but there was a certain amount of confusion in the control personnel. My grapefruit supplies will just about last till Sunday and Tahiti. I trust that I can obtain replenishments there.

Saturday March 16th.

At Sea. The final of the deck hockey took place this afternoon and provided a thrilling game. There was a broadcast by P.O. John Wardell who gave a running description of the game, very much like Cyril Angle's broadcasting wrestling at the Rushcutter's Stadium. This was followed by a boxing exhibition under Service rules. Then 3, 2 minute rounds by Jimmie Bond and "Abo" Croft. A dip in the pool and my afternoon was full up. I am thankful there is always something to do.

Sunday March 17th.

At Papeete, Tahiti. This morning the dawn from behind craggy peaks leading upwards from the surf rushing over coral reefs was a thing of beauty. We are at Tahiti and with pilot aboard to navigate the difficult passage we came alongside the wharf wondering where the town was. A couple of tall red spires

surmounting white buildings hidden in the thick green foliage was all we could see ½ mile from shore. When we got closer a fair crowd of nut brown Polynesians watched us from the shore, clad mostly in blue and white garments. Passing a magnificent schooner we sounded off the “Marseillaise” as a salute to the Governor. Sprinkled among the crowd were beautiful girls clad for the most part in simple dresses with long hair down to their middles and flowers in their ears. Being duty tonight I will leave my descriptions till tomorrow. The Captain told us at sea yesterday that red and white wines and sweet champagne were cheap ashore in Papeete but were not designed to be consumed by the pot. Carver, a native root drink is deadly in effect. The population is immoral with beautiful girls and indeed today several of the boys complained of blood pressure when they saw some of them. The exchange is 176 francs to the English pound. 2 pounds will see me over till Wednesday when we sail.

March 18th, 19th, 20th.

At Tahiti. Once again I find that owing to shore time I shall have to write up several days at once. Went ashore on Monday and along with Nick who had gone off earlier and changed the money and hired a car, we toured the island. It cost 300 francs for the afternoon. The scenery consisted of coconut palms, pineapple plants, custard apples, mangos, bananas etc. it was very beautiful. Coming to a mountain stream we just simply took off all our cloths and plunged into the crystal clear water, mountain spring water by the taste. Our driver, nicknamed “Froggie” stripped off with us, modestly being unknown amongst us. Pretty soon several carloads arrived and we had photos taken. A pomegranate tree bearing fruit overhung the stream and we swam over and picked one as desired. We were unable to penetrate inland at all because the island rises almost precipitously from the shore. It is about 70 miles in circumference. We passed several wayside drinking places such as Blue Lagoon, Lido, La Fayette and stopped to try out the beer. We tried beer from Holland, beer from Marseilles and Resch’s Pilsener from Sydney. Arriving back at Papeete we had dinner, soup brought in one bowl with broken bread in it, Spaghettis in one dish, veal and chouchettes (choko’s) and fruit to follow. Cost 15 francs. Feeling fine we went along to Lionel’s place and to a native string band started dancing and drinking.

Some of the dusky belles were passionately beautiful, their main feature being long jet black hair to the waist. If there were not enough partners inside, one just walked out and selecting one from the crowd of 100 or so outside took her in and carried on dancing. Admission of course is free. Migrating to Quinn's Saloon we saw a Polynesian girl and a Chinese girl clad in grass skirts and brassieres do an exhibition Hula. How those girls waggled their stern pieces defies description. They dance faster until flat out they finished with a crash from the orchestra who were playing guitars and singing in native tongue. Getting pretty full we went aboard. Resting up on Tuesday afternoon we went off last boat and strolling around in the cool evening eventually started drinking about ten. We made up our minds to get drunk Nick and I, and getting a car we called at the Lido where they had no beer. Perforce we started on champagne at 40 francs per bottle. From there to the La Fayette we continued on champagne. I danced a lot but my recollections are vague. On the way back to Papeete we called at the beach where a mixed party were swimming in the nude. Let no one misconstrue those words, just a gay frolic where one swam as nature made us. Getting back to Papeete we went to sleep on the grass under a brilliant tropical moon till next morning when rising, we visited the "Au Col Blue" and quenched our parched throats. Leaving today a large crowd controlled by soldiers with fixed bayonets saw us go. I was sorry to leave but for my general health and pocket it is best.

Thursday March 21st.

At Sea. Today we had some rifle drill in preparation for the march through Sydney when we get back. Fruit is plentiful onboard, mostly coconuts and pineapples. Tomorrow is Saturday thus we skip 24 hours and arrive Suva on Monday early. We are doing about 17 knots in contrast to our 13 knots from Panama to Tahiti. I am duty on arrival in Suva and we will probably sail 24 hours later so I shall not see it.

Saturday March 22nd.

At Sea. Friday was no day, today is Saturday. We are still maintaining our 17 knots. The humidity since leaving Tahiti has been very great. We were swimming over the ship's side 3 times a day in the shark free harbour of Papeete. I wish that I were there now in the beautiful coral waters. Because I came aboard a little

drunk with my cloths under my arm, and no cap in Papeete I am doing 5 days leave stopped, which finishes on Monday at noon. Sunday March 23rd.

At Sea. At 8.30.a.m. tomorrow we go alongside at Suva. Next Monday there is a march through Sydney by the *Perth*. Tomorrow and Tuesday we are going ashore at Suva to drill for it. I have had to, along with all the rest clean up a set of equipment in my own time. The return of this ship from the active service area, coupled with the march is to be boosted as propaganda I am told.

Monday, Tuesday March 24th & 25th.

At Suva, Fiji. Approaching Suva we saw a long line of breakers flanking the hilly verdant island of Vita Levu, biggest of the Fiji group, containing Suva. Passing through a narrow break in the reef we picked up a pilot and came alongside. Our wires were taken by the crew of an armed merchant cruiser which flew the white ensign. A tall Sikh policeman with turban and beard controlled the crowd of fuzzy haired Fijians, who, clad in spotless white sarongs watched our arrival. The place looked very clean and the tallest building, Burns Philip, stood out as we came in. After tying up, the landing organisation for the march provided arms and fell in on the sward for a short march and drill watched by the fuzzy wuzzies. Being a make and mend my go ashore "oppo" Nick and I went off for a look around. Wandering in to a pub we found Fosters to be 2 shillings and 3 pence per bottle and draught beer 8 pence per pot. Still Aussie beer tasted all right again. We found the town to be pretty well spread out, the majority of the shops catering for tourists, prices accordingly. We found that there are a large number of Indians in Fiji and lots of the women were very pretty and rather shy. We hired bikes at 6 pence per hour and set out to see the place, taxi prices being exorbitant. It was Easter Monday and a sports meeting was being held. Hardly had we left town when without warning down came a tropical shower. Between showers we covered about 16 miles in a circular ride through swampy land, mud flats and green fields. Very much in evidence was a class distinction by the white people. So very tired I came aboard at 7.p.m. to sleep.

Wednesday March 27th.

At Sea. I was duty yesterday so had a good sleep last night. We left Suva this morning and after clearing the harbour dropped a sea boat with its crew and steamed away. Then we fired two torpedoes at it and steamed back. The boat recovered the tin fish and after hoisting them all in board we pointed our nose at Sydney and commenced the last hop. We are due to arrive there early on Sunday morning.

Thursday March 28th.

At Sea. The weather is decidedly cooler, indeed the white tropical singlets that we have been wearing all these months seem inadequate protection against the cool wind. The wireless tonight broadcast from 2 F.C. was heard plainly on short wave. I heard a Dad and Dave session once again and am surprised to hear that Dave and Mabel are married and last night they were just leaving on their honeymoon.

Friday March 29th.

At Sea. The lads are bringing all the souvenirs and presents that they have had stowed away for months, and dusting them over. The broadcast from Australia last night that HMAS *Perth* is returning to Australia and is expected to arrive at Sydney early Sunday morning, was heard onboard last night. It is much cooler today and although we are all browned up now it will soon come off. Tonight was the last night of housie- housie and for the last three nights I have been trying to carry off a prize. The last housie was worth 7 pound 10 shillings tonight but no luck for me. I find that the Victorian ratings in the ship start their 14 days leave next Wednesday. West Australians are unlucky for their leave is deferred until a later date (if any). "Landing at Gallipoli" is the broadcast lecture tonight.

Saturday March 30th.

At Sea. All around the mess deck tonight, blue suits that have been stowed away for ages have made their appearance and are being brushed and pressed, (after the cockroaches have been shaken out). We heard several times today that a special ferry for the relatives and friends of the personnel of HMAS *Perth* will leave the Quay and follow us up the harbour then call at Garden Island. We berth at Garden Island at 10a.m. It is not known to us yet whether the customs officials will search all parcels and cases

before allowing them ashore. The only dutiable goods that I have are a couple of cartons of Chesterfield cigarettes and a civvie suit from Jamaica. While everyone is pleased to be getting back, some are deliriously excited. Myself, I just feel that it is good to be back amongst one's own colour, speech and thoughts.

WORLD CRUISE 1939

H.M.A.S. PERTH.

LAUNCHED AT PORTSMOUTH JULY 1934
AS 'AMPHION' RENAMED 'PERTH'
JUNE 1939 DISPLACEMENT 7000 TONS.
SPEED 32.5 KNOTS.

From Sydney town
to Hobart,
Melbourne, Durban and U.K.
Four days leave and tons of fun
Then on to U.S.A.

S.S. AUTOLYCUS

New York, Jamaica, Panama,
San Pedro and San Fran'
Honolulu, Suva, then "Aussie"
Just in time for the
old sun tan.

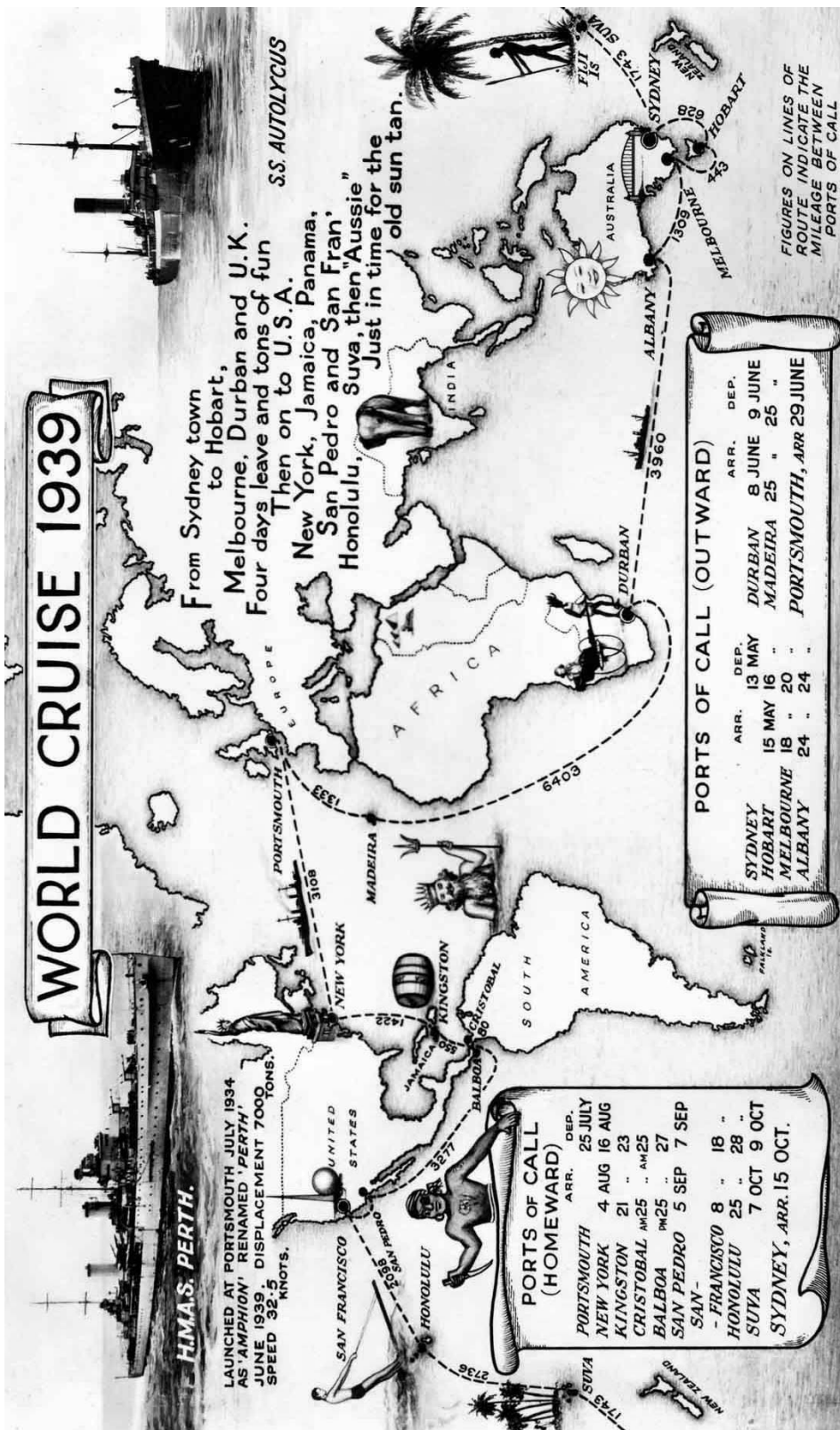
PORTS OF CALL (HOMeward)

	DEP.	ARR.
PORTSMOUTH	25 JULY	
NEW YORK	4 AUG	16 AUG
KINGSTON	21 "	23 "
CRISTOBAL	25 "	27 "
BALBOA	25 "	27 "
SAN PEDRO	5 SEP	7 SEP
SAN-		
- FRANCISCO	8 "	18 "
HONOLULU	25 "	28 "
SUVA	7 OCT	9 OCT
SYDNEY, ARR.	15 OCT.	

PORTS OF CALL (OUTWARD)

	ARR.	DEP.
SYDNEY		
HOBART	13 MAY	8 JUNE
MELBOURNE	15 MAY	25 "
ALBANY	18 "	20 "
PORTSMOUTH, ARR	24 "	29 JUNE

FIGURES ON LINES OF
ROUTE INDICATE THE
MILEAGE BETWEEN
PORTS OF CALL



Autolycus swimming tank



Crossing the Line, June 19th 1939



The Royal Court

Crossing the Line, June 19th 1939



Fanfare "Ala Maestro"



Royal Bears

Portsmouth / July 1939



Trans shipping to Perth



H.R.H. Duchess of Kent receiving silver salver at Naming Ceremony
10th. July 1939

London

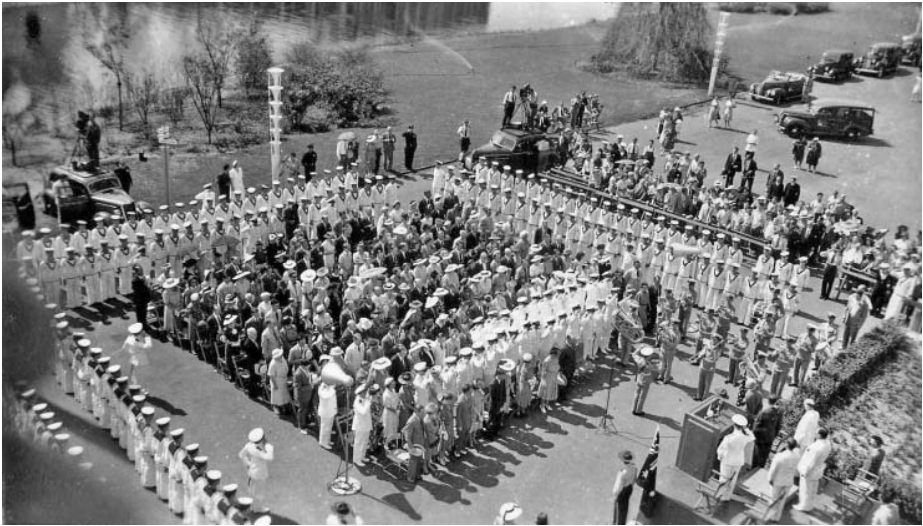


Lifeguard Troop
14th. July 1939



Petticoat Lane

New York, August 1939



Australia Day Ceremony



Captain of the Perth's speech

New York, August 1939



Madison Square Garden



Entrance to Brooklyn Bridge

Jamaica



King St. Kingston (HMAS Perth in background)

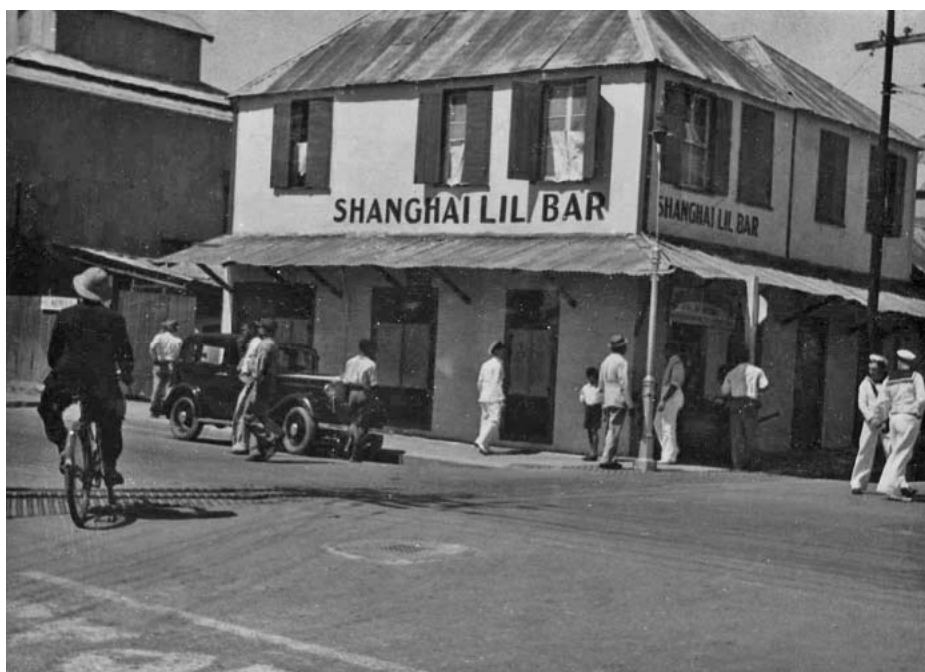


Loading bananas

Jamaica



Constant Spring Pool



Shanghai Lil Bar

Tobago Island, August 31st. 1940

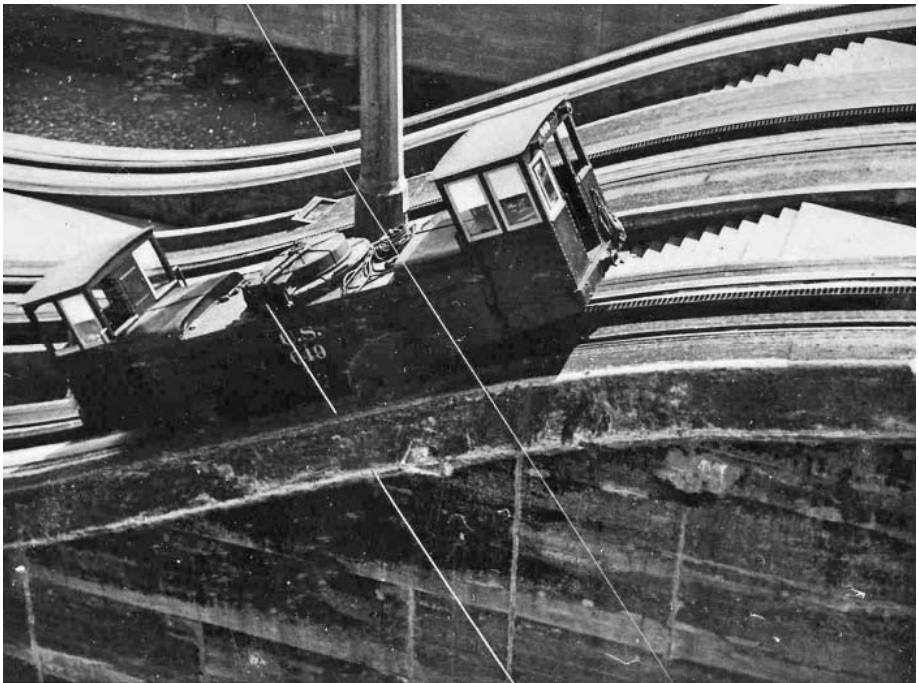
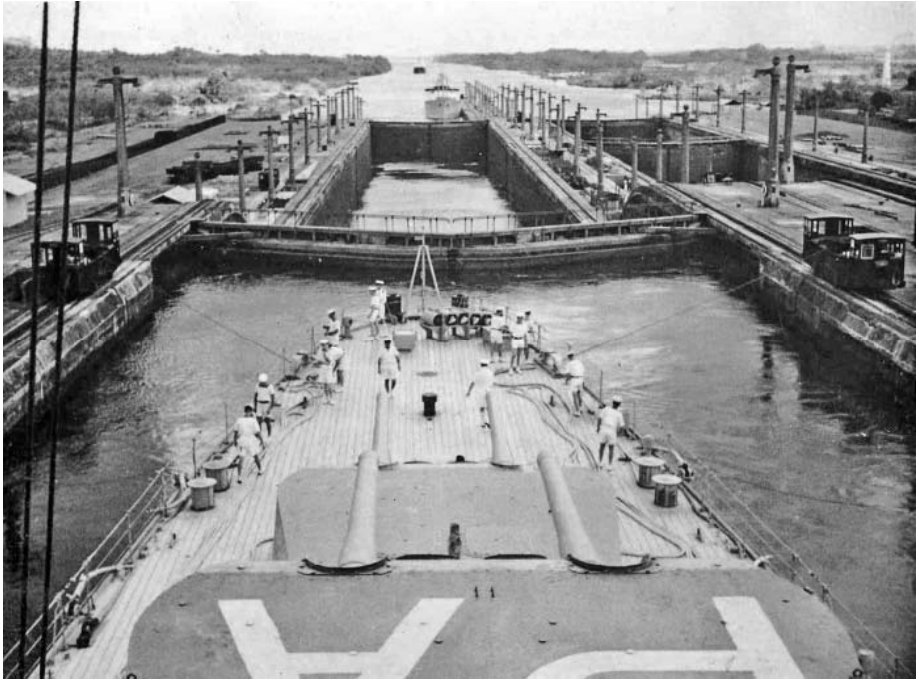


Palm trees with HMAS Perth in the background



Cutter for swimming party

HMAS Perth going through the Panama Canal,
2nd. March 1940



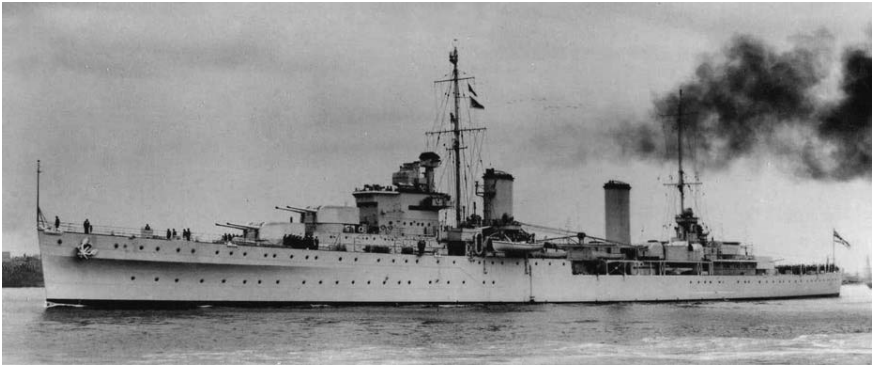
Panama Canal Mule

George (bottom right) at Sea, February 12 th. 1940

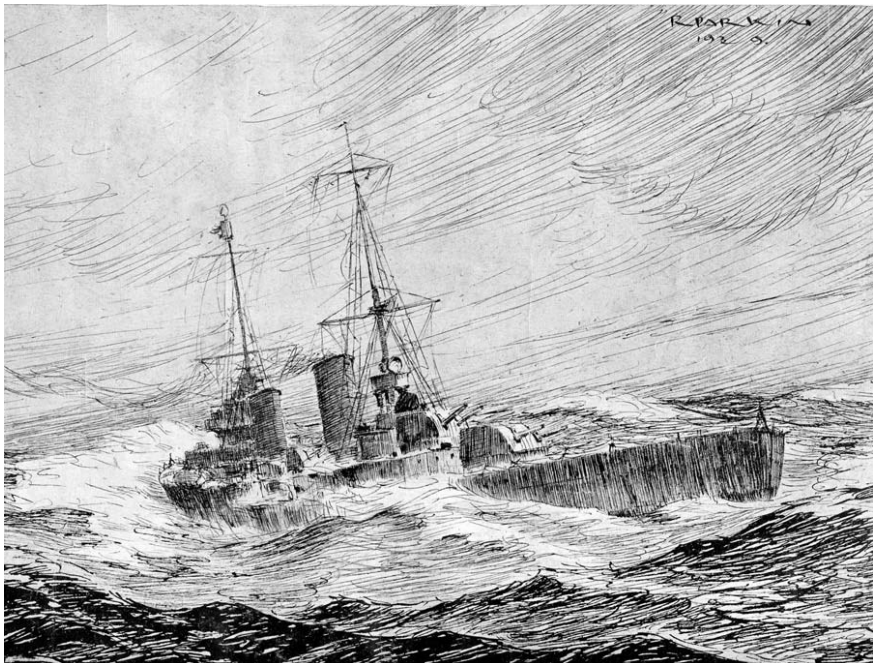


George with Carl Burnough
March 7th. 1940

HMAS Perth





Perth painted for camouflage



Sketch of Perth by Ray Parkin

Service Record

		
Home	Navy Canteen Staff	WW2 Overview
About this Nominal Roll	Glossary of Ranks	Contacts and Links

NAME	SERVICE NUMBER	HONOUR	PLACE
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Service record

In addition to viewing this service record, you can also

- [produce a certificate of this service record](#)
- [get help with the certificate](#)
- [view an explanation of the service record details](#)
- [request a full service record from the National Archives of Australia](#)

Service Record	
Name	HATFIELD, GEORGE EXUM
Service	Royal Australian Navy
Service Number	19559
Date of Birth	4 Nov 1913
Place of Birth	NORTHCOTE, VIC
Date of Enlistment	4 Jan 1932
Locality on Enlistment	Unknown
Home Port/Port Division	MELBOURNE, VIC
Next of Kin	HATFIELD, AMELIA
Date of Death	1 Mar 1942
Rank	PETTY OFFICER
Posting on Death	HMAS Perth
WW2 Honours and Gallantry	None for display
Prisoner of War	No
Roll of Honour	SYDNEY NSW

H. M. A. S. PERTH



CHRISTMAS DAY 1939

MENU

BREAKFAST

GRAPE FRUIT
FRIED EGGS AND BACON
BREAD ROLLS -- MARMALADE
COFFEE

DINNER

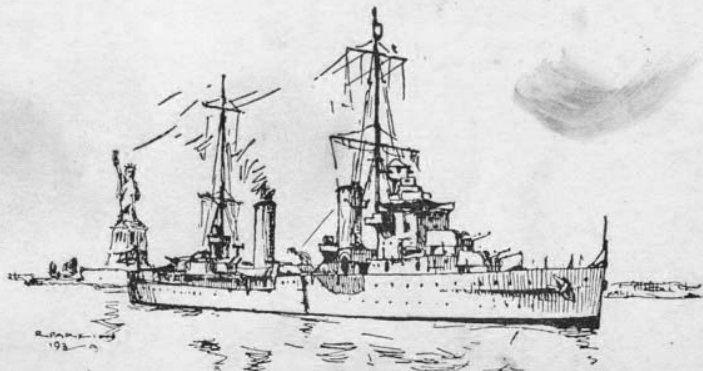
CREAM OF TOMATO SOUP
ROAST TURKEY, SEASONING
YORK HAM
FRENCH BEANS -- GREEN PEAS
ROAST AND BOILED POTATOES
* * * * *
CHRISTMAS PUDDING AND BRANDY SAUCE
FRESH FRUIT -- NUTS

TEA

CHRISTMAS CAKE

SUPPER

COLD ROAST TURKEY
COLD ROAST PORK -- APPLE SAUCE
SALADS AND MAYONNAISE DRESSING
* * * * *
JELLIED FRUIT



HMAS PERTH PASSING STATUE OF LIBERTY NEW YORK

HMAS Penguin, 13th Diving Class, 9th. December 1938



George, back row / right hand corner



Alma and George

Declaration of War, 3rd September 1939

LONDON BRITISH OFFICIAL PRESS. - 3rd. SEPT. 1939.

In broadcast address to Nation, Prime Minister announced Britain was at war with Germany. Announcement was made quarter hour after expiration of time limit contained in communication informing German Govt. that unless not later than 1100 today satisfactory assurance had reached His Majesty's Govt. in London, German Govt. would suspend all aggressive action against Poland and were prepared to promptly withdraw their forces from Polish territory, state of war would exist between the two countries as from that hour. Terms of this communication were revealed to Commons when ~~statement~~ Prime Min. addressed crowded House

at noon. He referred at outset to doubt and some bewilderment in parts of House last night as to whether there had been hesitation or vacillation on part of Govt. Stated he had now to make statement would show there was no grounds for doubt. He proceeded:-
"We were in close consultation with French Govt. yesterday, and in fact we felt that intensified action which Germans were making in Poland allowed of no delay in making our position clear. Accordingly we decided to send our Ambassador in Berlin instructions which he was to hand at nine o'clock this morning to German Foreign Secretary which read as follows - 'In communication which I had honour to make to you on 1st. September, I informed you on instructions of Secretary for Foreign Affairs that unless German Govt. were prepared to give His Majesty's Govt. in United Kingdom satisfactory assurance that German Govt. had suspended all aggressive action against Poland and were prepared promptly to withdraw their forces from Polish territory, Majesty's Govt. in United Kingdom would, without hesitation, fulfil their obligations ~~to Poland~~'. Although this communication was made more than twenty-four hours ago, no reply has been received, but German attacks on Poland have been continued and intensified. I have honour accordingly to inform you that unless not later than eleven a.m. British summer time today, 3rd., satisfactory assurance has been given by German Govt. and has reached His Majesty's Govt. in London, state of war will exist between two countries as from that hour'. No such undertaking was received by time stipulated, and consequently this country is now at war with Germany. I am in position to inform House that arrangements have been made between British and French Govts. French Ambassador in Berlin at the moment is making similar demarche, accompanied also by definite time limit. House has already been made aware of our plans. As I said other day are now ready. This is sad day for all of us, and to none is it sadder than for me. Everything I worked for, everything that I hoped for, everything that is believed through my public life is ruined. There is but one thing left for me, and that is a hope that with what strength and power I have to forward cause for which we have all sacrificed so much. I cannot tell what part I may be allowed to play myself. I trust I may live to see the day when Hitlerism has been destroyed so as to restore liberty of Europe" - Loud cheers.

live-longing attack.

INVASION

Late News

Tokio Reports Perth Survivors

LONDON, Friday (A.A.P.).
—Two hundred and fifty members of the crew of H.M.A.S. Perth succeeded in swimming ashore, Domei, official Japanese news agency, declared today.

The Perth's commander (Captain H. M. L. Waller) went down with his ship, the agency adds.

The Perth disappeared in the Java Sea on her way back to Australia after the Battle of Java.

Her loss was announced by the Australian Prime Minister (Mr. Curtin) on March 13.

He said: "It is conceivable that in the narrow waters in which the ship operated members of the crew managed to get ashore or were picked up by other vessels.

"It may be some time before news of possible survivors is received."

LUBECK IN RUINS

LONDON, Friday (A.A.P.).—Lubeck, important German Baltic port for supplying the Nazi front in northern Russia, suffered great R.A.

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Book Five (December 15th. 1940 – August 12th. 1941)

Events onboard HMAS PERTH During the War 1939 - 1941

By Acting Petty Officer, George E. Hatfield

*Book 5 starts in Australian waters convoying allied shipping,
then on to the Mediterranean theatre of war.*

Dec. 15, 1940

Some time has elapsed since I last recorded any of my doings aboard HMAS *Perth* during the Greater World War. I will put together in a few brief sentences our job since the return to Australia from our Atlantic Station. For a time we called ourselves the “ferry service”. Sydney to Fremantle convoying such ships as *Queen Mary*, *Aquitania*, *Mauritania*, *Andes* and others of smaller tonnage. The fast trips we did not mind for it meant Sydney return inside a fortnight, but slow ships such as, *Slamat*, *Nieuw Holland*, *Nieuw Zealand*, *Joan de'Wyte*, and others were most annoying, dawdling along at 12-14 knots, with the speed of three times that up our sleeve. When we arrived back home we knew that it would be but a brief respite before we are off again. Of course everyone was grabbing as much leave as they could. By no means were we swinging around the buoy all the time, for numerous recalls sent us out at the rush, at the most unexpected hours. One notable occasion was the sinking of the *Yurakina* in the Tasman Sea by a raider. A burly policeman frightened the wits out of my landlord one morning at the hour of 2 o'clock by demanding to see me. I had to get up and report aboard immediately, not a little bit bad tempered and 5 shillings out of pocket for taxi and private launch hire. Eventually we convoyed *Queen Mary*, *Aquitania*, and *Mauritania* as far as Cocos Island, some 1,500 miles from Fremantle. There we turned over to HMAS *Canberra* and lay anchored 2 days at Cocos. Due to mumps we were in quarantine so had no shore leave. It was some considerable distance to the spot where lay the relict of the *Emden* which ran aground in a fight with HMAS *Sydney* during

the last war. The local people who came aboard said that not much of her remained now due to the suspected pillage of steel by the Japs. Back to Fremantle and another convoy, this time the *Strathallan*, *Stratheden* and *Strathmore* and a Polish ship the *Bilory*. Whilst in Fremantle the ship raced out in response to the news of the loss of a ship in Bass Strait, probably by a mine. Our job was to locate the minelayer, but he kept out of our path. A return to Fremantle and again a 1,000 mile dash with *Canberra* out into the Indian Ocean towards Africa in reply to a S.O.S. The *Canberra* picked up a boatload of survivors sailing for Mauritius. I had the fortune or misfortune to miss the ship, through being at a party the night before and a hangover next morning, called for a sleep in. We were not alone in this respect as there were 76 ratings from *Perth* and 141 from *Canberra* adrift from sailing. I had 6 days ashore in Perth and knowing that we were going overseas when our ship came back, we went all out to have a last good time for heavens knows how long. Remember, we had got no final leave, as had all other troops of all three services since the war started. Sufficient to say, that I succeeded in having my good time and spending quite a lot of money in the process.

The Admiral (R.A. Gracie), transferred back to *Canberra* at West Australia and we shoved off for Colombo with the convoy. One day out from Colombo the "C" class cruiser *Capetown* relieved *Canberra* and with our mail aboard, she headed southwards. When we entered Colombo harbour the convoy had moored, not to wharves of which there were hardly any, but to the buoy trots. Considering the size of the harbour, a large amount of shipping can tie up there. At night a boom is drawn across the narrow entrance to the harbour and the door effectively shut against subs for the night. My little skylark had earned me 14 days leave stopped, so it looked as though I was not to see the town. Next night however I landed, as a patrol on duty. The usual smelly odour assailed my nostrils, made stronger by the market at the landing steps. There were rickshaw boys everywhere and rattling old trams clanking along. Few places were open and very few Europeans were sighted. The soldiers leave was up at 6 p.m. but at midnight they were still happy as Larry on the sidewalks. Jeweller's shops were open displaying ebony elephants, ornaments in tortoise shell and stones. I did not see much of the

place but may be back later. Leaving Colombo with the *Capetown* and convoy, we made for Aden. The *Carlyle* an anti aircraft cruiser relieved *Capetown* and we left them to speed into Aden. A bit of trouble developed there by the ship fouling oil pipes and our divers had to descend. My ears still being bad I was once again medically unfit to dive. My impression of Aden is a big pile of rocks stacked high, without the sign of any growth whatever. As barren and desolate looking place as I have seen. There were a couple of sloops camouflaged and very little of any other warships in the harbour. We saw the *Hobart* come in and tie up astern of us before we left. She looked very clean and did not look as if she had been bombed. I believe she is leaving for home before we get back to Aden. Rejoining the convoy, we found two late class destroyers *Kimberly* and *Kandahar* mounting twin 4 inch H.A. guns with us. Seeing that we were apparently only a stone's throw from British Somaliland now Italian occupied and Italian Somaliland, we needed all this anti- aircraft protection. Without seeing any planes we safely convoyed the ships to Port Sudan, along the Red Sea. One of the destroyers took them into harbour and we picked up another convoy on the horizon bound back to Aden. There are 8 ships, among them the old friends *Nieuw Holland* and *Joan de'Wyte*. In a day or so we should be back at Aden. The season now is the winter time I am told and it is warm of a day and cool by night. Why this sea is called Red I do not know, although there is always a haze making poor visibility.

Tues. 17 – 12 – 40.

We arrived back at Aden and leave was given, but not for me. I manned the diving boat at 4 p.m. and remained there till 11 o'clock. Anchored in the roads at Aden were upwards of 40 ships lying at anchor waiting for us. With everyone back at midnight we made an early start at 6 and piecing together a number of small convoys outside the harbour, we now have 41 ships escorted by 2 cruisers *Carlyle* and *Celadon* with *Perth*, 2 destroyers and 3 sloops. We are steaming past Hell's Corner, which is a narrow neck between Somaliland and Yemen, 14 miles across. We expect an attack any time with this large convoy. When we left Aden it was announced to the ship's company that the ship is proceeding to the Mediterranean. That will do me, for I

am not impressed with the desolate appearance of the Red Sea and the terrain thereabouts. It is quite within the bounds of possibility that I may chance to meet Ray, (*his brother*), maybe at Alexandria. With 7 days to Xmas Day I am regretful that it will probably be spent at sea.

Thurs. 19 – 12 – 40.

We have left the slower vessels of the convoy and now 13 ships escorted by 2 cruisers 1 destroyer and 2 sloops are out ahead of the remainder. Speed is about 10 knots, but about every $\frac{1}{4}$ hour the course is changed so that we are zigzagging through the Red Sea and not making 10 knots ahead. This manoeuvre is to avoid detection by possible submarines. Of planes we have seen none. Practically everyone is keeping 4 hours on watch and 4 off, so the cinema performances are held during the afternoon. When not on watch of a night we turn in about 9 o'clock. I believe it is proposed to camouflage the ship in the near future.

Monday 23 – 12 – 40.

We reached the town of Suez today early and I had but a passing glimpse. The Canal is but twice the width of this ship, as one enters it from the Eastern end. There are no locks as I have previously described, when passing through the Panama. A few offices and residences fronted the canal, built solidly of bricks with palms waving in the cool breeze. Further back lay the spires and domes of the city of Suez. To starboard of us lay a never ending scene of sand, broken occasionally. The other side was relieved occasionally by clumps of green firs and canal stations. Passing us in both directions were the Arab dhows being towed by a line slung around the chest of a man walking along the bank. They carried an immense spread of canvas laced to a long bamboo spar, sometimes 100 foot long. Small detachments of soldiers, some Kiwis and Diggers, others Tommies, stopped to watch us pass. Along the well kept road running parallel to the waterway went camouflaged R.A.F. and Army transports. They were hard to see at a distance against the sandy desert. An old engine of the Egyptian railways pulled 64 trucks along a railroad about the same gauge as Queensland. Just as dusk was falling we reached Port Said and as no leave was given, and we left early in the morning while I was still turned in, I saw nothing of the city. There was a blackout, so we did not even see the city lights.

About 3.30 p.m. we reached Alexandria to find a harbour full of warships. We steamed in through lines of English and French ships to our berth. I was duty and about an hour later the blackout came, so I saw nothing that night. In the morning I saw in one corner of the harbour, French cruisers and destroyers lay at anchor flying the Tricolours. Went ashore and caught a Gharry (open hansom cab) to the Fleet Club. We changed 1 pound sterling plus 1 shilling for an Egyptian pound. A few bottles of local beer from Cairo, then a taxi, 15 piastres (2½ pennies) out to a cabaret, where we stayed till midnight. At the Fleet Club the official concert party of the A.I.F. put on a show called "Aussies on Parade". We went backstage and lo they caught us to take part in a tableau of Army, Navy and Air Force for a finale. We were a little scared but everything was O.K. After the show the Diggers wanted all the latest news of home. I met a fellow named Allenby, who ran a shop opposite the Padua Theatre in Brunswick. I met a couple of *Voyager* sailors who are waiting for her to return from Malta. They told me that Ray had left about a month ago for Australia. Cec will be glad to see him, I know. We have had no mail yet since leaving Fremantle. I have decided not to go ashore in "Alex" again for a month at least.

Dec. 29 – 12 – 40

We left this morning in company of six destroyers, bound for the coast of Libya. The objective is for the destroyers to dash into Libyan ports, smash up what they can and get away again. Our job is to stand off and cover them if possible. I think that I am not far out, when I think that the "C in C" has sent *Perth* on this job, just to see what we can do.

Dec. 30 – 12 – 40

We slept at our action quarters all last night and I arose this morning with a decided kink in the kidneys. We visited Tobruk in Libya, standing off about 7 miles. The destroyers went right in close and we could see fire and tracer shells, while the R.A.F. subjected the place to a bombing. We still have not fired an angry shot from our guns in the war. At the moment I believe we and the "boats" are headed back for Alexandria, possibly to arrive there tonight. If so, I am going off for a change from bully beef.

31 – 12 – 40

It was blowing a gale when we got in to Alexandria last night, so I did not bother to go ashore, but got in a much needed night's rest. Today, in company with HMS *Ajax* we are bound for Crete to embark soldiers and take them to Greece. We are relieving HMS *Gloucester and York*. The *Ajax* is definitely a trouble finder I am told. Every time she puts her nose out she runs into it. I should have some interesting writing in the next 3 or 4 days. If I can find time to write, or still be here to write it. We are now making 22 knots for Crete. This time last year we were lying at Kingston, Jamaica having a jolly good time. I saw the *Voyager* lying not far from us this morning, but did not have time to run over and verify Ray's movements. She, the *Voyager* has a diagonal black stripe camouflage, looking very effective.

2 – 1 – 41

We had rather an ominous New Year's Day yesterday. Arriving at Suda Bay, Crete, we oiled from a tanker then dropped anchor in the stream. Then over the tall mountains surrounding the bay came an Italian reconnaissance plane, flying high. Our H.A. armament opened up at once, but they all burst short. A general alarm was sounded but we still have the same old shell in my turret that we started off with. The plane buzzed off and with *Ajax* we put to sea, being too much of a sitting shot anchored. The settlement ashore is scattered, square brick buildings and the mountain sides are tilled in squares. Little groups of buildings are walled with ancient walls, and all around the bay are rock fortresses, some of them in ruins. After sleeping all night in the turret last night at sea, we were just about to anchor today when the *Ajax* signalled, plane in the vicinity. She is fitted with detecting apparatus that picks up planes miles before they can be seen. The highest of the peaks around are snow capped and one can easily imagine a Norwegian fiord, per tourist bureau. The place is not unlike Mt. Egmont in New Zealand. Today is just like a beautiful spring day in Melbourne, warm without being hot, and the air is quite brisk. Coming to Crete has probably lengthened the time of delivery of our first Australian mail. At 4.30 p.m. we sailed for where I do not yet know.

3 – 1 – 41.

This morning we arrived at Athens in Greece and as luck would have it we, I mean I, am duty. These days the ship's company is split in two, duty one night, off the next. This harbour is pretty well protected and has nothing outstanding that I see, except perhaps the largest coaling apparatus that I have seen. It is 100 feet high and 200 feet long, running on rails. It is even bigger than the phosphate loaders at Nauru. Tomorrow I hope to see something to write about.

5 – 1 – 41.

Yesterday, I stepped ashore to have a look at Athens. The first thing that struck me was a very offensive smell radiated from all directions. The city is a few miles inland whence we went by taxi. I had changed 100 piastres (Egyptian) for 540 drachmas (Greek) onboard. Notes run 1000, 500, 100, 50 and 20 drachmas. The city itself is quite modern with up to date trams and trains. Little English was spoken and we had some difficulty in voicing our requirements. On the hill overlooking the city stands the ancient ruins of the Acropolis 4,000 B.C., not far from the modern Greek Olympic Stadium. Although there is a blackout the city simply teemed with life in cabarets and restaurants. The people were very polite and hospitable to us, the last Australian ship to visit Athens being HMAS *Australia*, 5 years ago. Some very fine looking people, men and women, are to be seen around the streets. Many and various uniforms were seen everywhere, just like a Hollywood set for a Viennese picture. At one end of the town there were whole streets occupied in a Paddy's Markets, pins to anchors for sale. I had a feed of turkey, peas, chips and a bottle of beer and soon reduced it to nothing. We are very rationed for food these days, main fare being bully beef and spuds. One requires a month to see this place properly and I had only 10 hours leave. One thing is common ashore and that is a universal hatred of Mussolini and the will to beat him.

6 – 1 – 41.

We left Athens today at 4.30p.m., bound I think back to Crete. There is an air mail being despatched on Wednesday and we are hoping to receive one there. The sea is flat tonight and the moonlight is brilliant, just the night for bombers.

7 – 1 – 41.

As I anticipated we oiled at Suda Bay, Crete this forenoon. We were just about ready to weigh and proceed to sea when 2 Italian planes flew around the hills at 8,000 yards. *Perth* and *Ajax* flung a few anti- aircraft shells at them and they flew off. We weighed anchor and are now proceeding at 20 knots, for where? This morning when we were at action stations, a stir was caused by sighting 4 dim shadows in the dawn. Guns loaded, they trained on the objects, which eventually proved to be 2 triple 6 inch ships of the Southampton class, accompanied by 2 destroyers. Once again the rusty old shells in the gunhouse missed a chance of going for a ride. We left our plane in Crete on Jan. 2nd and it is still there. We fired a torpedo by accident tonight, thus causing the government a loss of about 3000 pounds. While in Alexandria a .5 mounting was accidentally fired loosing 40 rounds. When we fired at aircraft at Suda Bay on Jan. 2nd the after 6 inch turret nearly blew a trawler off the map. All this without loss of life.

8 – 1 – 41.

At about 8 a.m. today we entered Suda Bay and had barely anchored when the alarm hooter went to indicate “repel aircraft”. It proved to be friendly and we secured. Back again we went five minutes later to our quarters again because 4 planes were sighted. *Ajax* and *Perth* opened fire, but packed up when it was discovered that the planes belonged to HMS *Illustrious*, a large aircraft carrier. We left harbour with *Orion* and *York* and discovered the *Illustrious*, accompanied by the battle ships *Warspite* and *Valiant* and a flotilla of 7 destroyers. We carried on, I believe for Malta and the others went into Crete. We are with *Ajax* just now and the *Orion* with *York* has buzzed off somewhere.

9 – 1 – 41.

We are part of the 7th Cruiser Squadron and are now with the Eastern Mediterranean Fleet. There are 4 convoys moving around us and we are covering them all, the fleet that is. Destroyers dot the horizon like 18 footers on Sydney Harbour. We are now in the “Italian Lake” that stretch of water around the toe of Italy. An extra sharp lookout is being kept for planes but we are not worried about Musso’s surface craft.

10 – 1 – 41.

HMAS *Sydney* and *Stuart* were with us for a short time today, sent a farewell signal, then away for Australia. The *Sydney* has a universal bad name among all the English sailors that we have met. The reason being, that they are all blarney about the *Colleoni*, and a really unsociable ship's company at that. According to gossip it was not *Sydney* but destroyers to whom most credit is due. Mines at loose ends were seen floating past the ship today.

11 – 1 – 41.

We were to join the battleship *Barham* and aircraft carrier *Eagle* tonight, but in response to a message from HMS *Gloucester* and *Southampton*, two of England's latest triple 6 inch ships, that they had been attacked by aircraft and that the *Southampton* has a fierce fire burning, we are on our way at 28 knots to the rescue. About 8.30 p.m. we could see a fire on the horizon. We had made preparation to take her in tow, but found that the *Gloucester* had taken off survivors and one of the destroyers put a torpedo into her. A gigantic sheet of flame, then two distinct shocks was felt by *Perth* about six miles away. The halves of her were blown well apart and blazing oil covered the sea. It was a moonlight night and a calm sea. She had been hit by incendiary bombs earlier in the day. The attackers are believed to be German pilots in Italian dive bombers. We were anxious for the safety of her crew, not knowing until after she had gone up that they had been taken off. *Southampton* was 9,000 tons. We rejoined the battle fleet to hear that the *Illustrious* was attacked by planes near Malta and had been hit by a 1,000 bomb and an aerial torpedo. The casualties are 154 men. She is not with us today. I had forgotten to mention that whilst we were in Alexandria two of the triple 6 inch gun ships, *Glasgow* and *Liverpool* were in dock. The *Liverpool* was blown clean off from the bow about 80 feet back and the *Glasgow* had a gaping 40 foot hole at the keel near the bow. The "city" class, as they are known, seem to be very unlucky in these parts. I am sure that the civilian populace will hear nothing of these misfortunes for a while yet, if ever. In company with *Orion* we are now at Suda Bay, oiling. I have just heard that the planes which attacked *Illustrious* were "Junkers 88", that is Germans. There are a couple of destroyers here also.

We have embarked 80 young R.A.F. personnel and there are some more to come tonight. It is bright moonlight tonight in this landlocked harbour of Suda Bay, and now besides us there are a couple of battleships, an aircraft carrier and numerous destroyers lying not far from us. We will be shoving off any time now and I will let you know later where we are bound.

13 – 1 – 41.

Left Crete last night at 8 p.m. and proceeded to Athens at high speed. Arrived there and embarked a large number of R.A.M.C. fellows. The average age I suppose would be about 20 years old. About 6 a.m. today we left Greece for Malta. The ship today is entirely different to what we have known these last 18 months. Piles of baggage are dumped everywhere. There are now over 1,000 men on the ship, so let us hope that we do not meet any of Hitler's dive bombers in the Mediterranean. One can easily see the difference in Navy, Army and Air Force. The "Blue Orchids" with their collars and ties, small Charlie Chaplin moustaches and general aloofness as everywhere, think that they are the pick of the bunch. The swaddies (soldiers) are wearing the new blouse and bloomer uniform, and are much chattier than the R.A.F. Yorkshire and other accents strike strangely upon the ear and this morning for the first time in a long while there was "burgo" porridge for breakfast. The few R.N. ratings that we have onboard are wearing "black hats", the navy cloth caps. There is ample sleeping room for the passengers because our regulars are at our action quarters all night. It is 8 days now since I last saw my hammock.

14 – 1 – 41.

Arrived at Malta 8 p.m. today and disembarked Army and Air Force personnel. About 300 yards from us lies the *Illustrious* with a crowd of dockyard workmen all over her. She shows burns on her side and apparently the hole in her flight deck has been patched. I believe that the casualty list exceeds 100 men. I see a submarine astern of the carrier and then one of the 5.9 gun ships, the *Bonaventure*. There are crippled destroyers all around the harbour, some due to mines and others to aerial attacks. I believe that attacks have been frequent on Malta, but the last one was 16 days ago, a dockyard constable told me.

15 – 1 – 41.

I was walking around the dockyard this afternoon and saw the submarine *Triumph* in dry dock. She has figured in quite a lot of triumphs since the war commenced. Further along was the destroyer *Gallant* with the bow clean off from 50 feet forward. The mine or torpedo took the messdecks where hands were at breakfast clean off and 60 men with it. Then I visited the *Illustrious*, after I had observed the hoisting out of a couple of bodies from the upper deck of the *Perth*. Going into the hanger, which is as large as most city theatres, I saw 8 or 9 planes, fighters and old Gladiator reconnaissance machines. None were intact, a few have shrapnel riddled fuselage, and the remainder were just charred frames and engines. A force of 60 J.U. 88, German dive bombers attacked *Illustrious* while she was with the fleet a few miles from here. A large bomb went down a plane lift well and killed a large number of officers and men. Altogether she was hit by nine bombs. There was a hole amid buckled steel 50 feet in diameter. The hanger was burning for 2 ½ days and everywhere under foot was .303 ammunition, which went off from the machine guns in the planes. As I looked down the hole there were small bits and pieces of ex-humanity floating around in oil and water. There were still some bodies not yet recovered due to the flooded state of the after end of the ship. It brought home to me with force, how uneven the contest between aerial and surface craft really is. The engines and hull of the ship are all right, but the rudder is jammed. I think that she will go to England for there is not a dock here large enough to take her. I went ashore by dhysai (dīso) last night and caught a hackney carriage (gharri) to the popular street known as “The Gut”. It was a strict black out and no one was on the street but sailors and policemen. “The Gut” is a narrow street, perhaps 20 feet wide, shadowed by 4 and 5 story buildings each side. There are dozens of little bars with orchestras, where English beer is sold in small bottles for 8 pence per bottle. English money is the currency. The service was prompt and with a few Maltese girls to dance with, one can fill in a couple of pleasant hours. Come 10 o’clock and “time gentlemen please”. The “redcaps” provost marshal closed all the bars promptly. Going out into the streets the small restaurant proprietors invited us to come and have the “big eats”.

In we went to have chicken, chips and cauliflower at one shilling and sixpence per man. At 11 o'clock the town (Valletta) was as dark and silent as the grave. I paid one shilling for a bed and slept in a four-poster for the first time since leaving Australia. The British communiqué tonight announced that 12 planes were brought down during the attack on the fleet. The casualty list of the *Illustrious* is over 100 killed and 80 odd injured. We had 2 air raid alarms today, but no planes materialized. The dockyard sirens wailed and our hooter hooted and Maltese ran to the refuges. I enclosed a copy of today's paper in relation to *Illustrious*, *Southampton* and *Gallant*. Since I wrote the previous notes for today, we have had an air raid alarm. At 7 3.0 p.m. the sirens went and I went up to the twin Lewis machine guns. Ten search lights were searching the sky and particularly the low lying clouds in patches. We could hear the drone of engines, but did not sight any planes. After 1 ½ hours the sirens sounded "all clear". Once again tonight I have just spent 1 hour up top but they did not drop any eggs. Around the dockyard are refuges tunnelled into the rock and rows of seats take up most of the space. At the inner end are fitted small altars with candles always alight. The Maltese are a strict race of R.C.s and I notice ashore that they all wear crosses or carry the virgin.

16 – 1 – 41.

Less than an hour ago I received my baptism of fire. A number of German machines came over and then started my first actual air raid. Not having a job at an anti-aircraft gun, I kept between decks and laid down. It seemed like the earth had split open. The air was a living screen of bursting shells. Then dull booms shook the ship. A tremendous concussion and the whole ship lifted up out of the water. Someone screamed "here she goes" and we tried to get out. Then we realized that was no good, for we would be exposed in the open. The merchantman astern of us was hit and burst into flames. We rigged hoses to her, the *Essex*, and started to fight the fire. It was passed around that she is loaded with high explosives. If that is true, there is enough to blow half Valetta off the map. 80 yards from here there is one wall of a house left standing and by a miracle, a picture of Jesus Christ was still hanging on that wall. Across the way, the *Illustrious* has a gaping hole in her stern. Outside our portholes there is an unexploded

bomb in an area roped off. They are dragging bodies from the *Essex* now. I have heard that there are a lot of women and children dead. I have a confession to make to anyone who may read these notes, that during that raid, I lay flat and could not stop my body from shaking. I buried my head in my hands and prayed, yes, that is me praying, that I should come safely through it all. Time seemed an eternity and I saw Al as plain as daylight in front of my face. This sounds like the confessions of a coward, but believe me, as I listen to the various tales of what the different fellows were doing and felt like at the time, I can say that the feeling was universal. We are unhit, but the upper deck is littered with bricks and debris. I am too upset to write more at the moment.

17 – 1 – 41.

We are now 400 or 500 miles from Malta and going further away at 28 knots. We have all more or less got over the raid by today and are now discussing the peculiarities of it. From a diagram of the bombs in relation to the *Perth*, it seems certain that we were singled out for the attack. I enclose a rough sketch showing the bombing. We did not escape entirely free of injury, for the concussion lifted our after turret off its bearings and it is now useless to fire except on a set bearing. The next turret has all her shell room, magazine and shell lobby flooded with oil. My turret, the forward one is still O.K. Personal injuries amount to light surface wounds caused by flying shrapnel. Quite a number of the lads have pieces of shrapnel as souvenirs.

18 – 1 – 41.

We arrived at Alexandria at 4 p.m. today. We expected to go into dock but have tied up to a buoy. The skipper told us that he is trying to find a dock for us but apparently they are all full. I myself think that Athens is a possibility. A small air mail arrived aboard tonight, and I got 4 letters from Al and one from mum. I have fond hopes of spending all night in my hammock tonight. I am very pleased that Al has apparently forgiven me for my escapade in West Australia. Ray's old ship the *Voyager* is here but up till Dec 31st Ray had not arrived home. I believe that Alexandria has had a few air raids since we left here, 18 days ago.

21 – 1 – 41.

We had a recall last night, but leave was later given again. We have had no docking as yet, but the oil has been pumped out of the stern tanks. Reading today's Egyptian Mail I find that Malta has been the centre of intensified bombing these last five days. The British claim to have shot down 35 dive bombers. I hope that the *Illustrious* was able to get out, for she was a sitting shot for the Nazis, tied up to a wharf. I am going ashore to stretch my legs tonight for a couple of hours. The *Barham* and *Eagle* are in harbour with us here and yesterday the *Eagle's* planes dive-bombed us for exercise. They moved slower than the dinkum Germans.

22 – 1 - 41.

This afternoon we left Alexandria in company with battleships *Barham* and *Valiant* and six other destroyers. We are shadowing a convoy, and also have a supply of bombardment shells handy, it is rumoured, to bombard Tobruk in Libya. The Dominion forces are forcing an assault on that Italian garrisoned town in Libya. The convoy may be *Illustrious*, indeed I hope so, that is if there is anything left of her. The damaged oil tanks have been pumped dry and that fact considerably reduces our cruising range. Everybody is dive-bomber conscious these days and a sharp look out is kept for them, (I trust). The *Valiant* is fitted with plane detector apparatus, so that we should get warning early if they are in the vicinity. I believe that forewarned is forearmed.

23 – 1 – 41.

This afternoon we had a visit by two Italian reconnaissance planes. They kept well out of range, although the 4 inch guns threw shells at them. They were of the seaplane torpedo carrying type with a 1,200 mile cruising range. It is a different feeling being at sea and able to manoeuvre and fight back anywhere when bombers are around. Tied up at the wharf and only able to fire certain guns for fear of injury to one's own side makes one feel so very helpless.

24 – 1 – 41.

At one o'clock today we drew in with our convoy the *Illustrious* and 7 destroyers. She had not been with us a couple of hours, when the *Valiant* reported enemy aircraft 48 miles away. They were not sighted and the all-clear was given. Aircraft carriers are

the definite target of enemy aircraft these days; witness the number of times that the *Ark Royal* has been sunk. It is said that we reach Alexandria tomorrow sometime. With 2 battleships, 1 cruiser, 13 destroyers and 1 carrier attacking aircraft, would have an intense barrage to dive through. They had a heavier barrage to get through at Malta and they came through it, but the targets were all stationary which is a lot different.

25 – 1 – 41.

This forenoon the battleships had a shoot at us with their 15 inch guns. That is not as serious as it sounds, for while their telescopes were pointed at us, the guns were thrown off several degrees astern. They did a real good shoot considering that we are not the *Victoria*, or her sister ship. We left the fleet and headed for “Suicide Gulch” otherwise Suda Bay, Crete to pick up our plane and airmen. Through the haze came 4 cruisers and we stood by for some fun, but they proved to be the *Orion*, *Ajax*, *York* and *Bonaventure* with 2 destroyers. They were headed for Alexandria so we carried on towards Crete at 25 knots. Expected time of arrival is 7.30 a.m. tomorrow.

26 – 1 – 41.

Arrived off Suda Bay early this morning, but turned around and have been cruising in the vicinity all day. This evening at sundown we entered Suda Bay, passing 4 Greek destroyers with a convoy of Greek ships just leaving the harbour. Now at 8.30 p.m. we have finished oiling and are leaving early in the morning. It is blacker than the inside of a gin’s belly outside and is definitely no good for bombers.

27 – 1 – 41.

Left Suda Bay at 6.30 a.m. and arrived at Piraeus (which is the seaport to the city of Athens) this evening. I am duty tonight but tomorrow is the day. Remarkable how many birthdays to celebrate.

29 – 1 – 41.

Yesterday I had a pleasant time in Athens and succeeded in buying rather a nice doll for Al’s coverlet. This morning we left Athens and at 6.30 arrived back at Suda Bay, Crete. The *Ajax* and destroyer *Dainty* are lying at anchor inside the inner boom defence. I presume that we will shove off with daybreak. I still have to spend the night in the turret, for our guns cover the

harbour entrance to keep out nocturnal prowlers. I do not think that the Dagoes have the guts to try tricks of that sort, but we can afford to take no chances. Pinned to this page is a postcard of George II of Greece. Also there is a 10 Drachmae note, the sole survivor of my last night in Athens. It is worth approximately 4 pence.

30 -1 – 41.

The *Ajax* fuelled from a tanker this morning and at 10 a.m. we both left in the direction of Greece. As we were leaving the *Jaguar*, a late class destroyer, went in to harbour to join the *Dainty*. This afternoon 7 planes were sighted and we stood by for trouble, but eventually they were identified as British. The wind is bitterly cold and the snow capped lofty peaks of Crete gleamed a fresh whiteness of recent snow. It has not snowed on the lowlands of Suda Bay when we have been there yet.

31 – 1 – 41.

This morning *Ajax* left us and continuing our way we came upon a British tanker, the *Desmoulea*, well down by the stern with her well-deck awash and bows poking up in the air. The destroyer *Dainty* was standing by her and after circling her we steamed away. We had made preparations to tow her, but received the order not to. The Aegean sky is lousy with aircraft these days, some hostile, some friendly. We treat them all as hostile until such time as they make the correct recognition signals, which for secrecy sake are frequently changed. Rejoining *Ajax* at Suda Bay at sundown, we entered and are now oiling from a tanker in the stream. This morning we sighted a corvette (small sloop) British, with a transport. I have since heard that they were attacked with aerial torpedos with success.

1 – 2 – 41.

We left *Ajax* this morning and have been patrolling all day. Entering Suda Bay this evening we passed 2 merchantmen going out, escorted by 2 corvettes and a destroyer. Lying not far from us is the damaged tanker *Desmoulea* with her stern well down in the water. She had been towed hither by a tug. We are oiling at the moment, but at 4 bells, if they were still striking the bell, we are proceeding to sea. As we entered harbour our seaplane put over some “crazy capers” for our benefit and finally flew past almost

alongside with the observer standing up and ringing a cow bell. I strongly suspect the plane's crew of boozing.

2 – 2 – 41.

Today we joined up with *Warspite*, *Barham*, *Eagle*, *Valiant*, *Ajax*, *Orion* and a flotilla of destroyers, including the Aussie boats. There is something going on somewhere and pretty soon too I think. It is the same fleet that was convoying before we went to Malta, minus the ill-fated *Illustrious*.

This month's information is as follows:

Distance run,	8,370.5 miles
Time steaming,	17 days 16 hours.
Average speed,	19.8 knots.
Days at sea,	24 days.

3 – 2 – 41.

Joined up with the battle fleet again this forenoon, but in company with *Vampire* and *Vendetta*, Aussie destroyers and *Ajax* we left the main force and steamed to Suda Bay where the "boats" are oiling. At 5.30 p.m. we sighted a large convoy escorted by corvettes, cruisers and destroyers. We joined up and are shepherding them now.

4 – 2 – 41.

I did not see the convoy of last night once night had fallen, and today at noon we tied up at Piraeus, port of Athens, along with *Ajax*. It is a make and mend day and the afternoon is beautiful, but I am duty.

5 – 2 – 41.

Left Athens at 1.p.m. today and are due direct at Alexandria at 6.p.m. tomorrow. As we came out of Piraeus we passed a small convoy of 3 ships escorted by a Greek destroyer. Only for the ensign one would not know that she was not British.

6 – 2 – 41.

The sea has been very choppy on the way across the Med. And *Perth* as usual, is wet throughout the messdeck. Arriving off Alexandria we ran into a heavy dust storm that reduced the visibility to 200 yards. We nearly gave *Ajax* a bump on the stern before we saw her. It is so bad that we are not going into harbour tonight, but are cruising until the morning. The sky is red and tiny particles fill the hair and eyes and the beards.

7 – 2 – 41.

Mr. Menzies

At 3 a.m. today we entered Alexandria harbour in moonlight after the dust storm. Australia's Prime Minister, Mr. Menzies, came aboard and walked around. What impressed me most about him was three massive chins hanging outside his waistcoat. Australia must have money to burn with all the taxes and trips to England for the Prime Minister. Reminds me of Joe Lyons, the tourist.

8 – 2 – 41.

Apparently something is going to be done about our damaged turrets aft, for we spent the afternoon getting out shell from the flooded shell rooms and removing cordite from the after magazine. I have paid for a seat in a sight seeing bus tomorrow afternoon. There were 3 stand by's for air raids today by detector gear, but no planes appeared. We had piles of cordite on the quarterdeck, so bombers stay away.

9 – 2 – 41.

Docked and Tour.

Today early, we went into the floating dock for scraping and survey of damage. Landing at 1.15 p.m., a party piled into 9 taxis, to see the sights. They were rattling old Fiats, but they got us along. I imagine that it is a bit difficult to obtain spare parts for Fiats these days. We had a look at a tall marble pillar, and a couple of Sphinx and a marble replica of the sacred scarab. It was situated right next to a Mohammedan's cemetery. Next stop was the excavated Roman Catacombs. They were very interesting and consisted of a series of levels with apertures about 4 feet square by 7 feet. In these tombs were piles of bones, prominent among which were thigh bones. In one tomb were 5 skulls and an extra big pile of bones. Sort of a community chest I suppose. For the upper classes there are stone sarcophagus with sun gods, birds and crocodiles carved on them. They have dug down to about 80 feet and are temporally halted by water seeping through the soft limestone. It is only 39 years since they dug into these ruins and the archaeologists date them as 300 B.C. Then we went along the banks of the Nile, which at that point is only a muddy stream 60 feet across. There were palms and the bulrushes that the song about Pharaoh tells of. Coming through the Suez Canal I saw the Nile in a vastly different aspect. Between sand dunes, the river stretched as far as the eye could see. It was swollen and I could see hundreds of acres of crops inundated. Our next stop was at

the Giza Zoo, which was not a very good zoo, having very few large animals and only a poor selection of the smaller ones. A drive through the Greek quarter, then back to the Fleet Club. A few years ago I missed a picture called "Mutiny on the Bounty". Several times in various places I missed it again, and last night I took the opportunity. I must say that I thoroughly enjoyed the performance. The talking is in English, with the speech in French at the bottom of the screen. Slept in a bed again last night.

11 -2 - 41.

At 4.20 this morning the air raid hooter brought me tumbling out of my hammock. We seem to have the unhappy knack of being caught in difficult positions when air raiders are around. Being in this big floating dock and no water around our keel, we offer a huge and immovable target to bombers. As it happened no raiders appeared. I have not heard anything of official reports regarding the extent of the damage to the ship.

12 - 2 - 41.

Today I saw the balloon barrage around Alexandria harbour, completely ringing it in. Our cruiser squadron went to sea early, including the *Glasgow*, for the first time since the bow was smashed.

13 - 2 - 41.

Repairs

We are still abiding in the floating dock. A large number of workers are busy with our damaged tanks. The Western Mediterranean fleet have been busy bombarding Italy itself at Genoa. Predictions of the theatre of war being situated in the Mediterranean will be proved before long, I think. Things are moving at an incredibly fast pace here now.

17 - 2 - 41.

We are still in dock, but I think that we will be out any day now. Today, I observed two ships come into harbour with Italian prisoners stacked thick on their upper deck. I believe that there are large internment camps in the desert here.

19 - 2 - 41.

This morning *Ajax*, *Orion* and *Gloucester* came into harbour, filled with troops and equipment and departed again. The battleship *Barham* and *Valiant* and destroyers then went out.

20 – 2 – 41.

After 10 days in dock we left her this morning and towed by two tugs went back to our old billet. At 6 p.m. we shifted birth to the detached Mole which is at the harbour entrance and miles from where we land. There are a large number of merchant ships in here and a couple of hospital ships. It seems to me that we are the watch dog of *Alex* at the moment.

21 – 2 – 41. A.A.Guard.

The battleship *Warspite* went into the dock this morning. At 1.45 p.m. the *York* came in. It is black outside now and there is a searchlight exercise, searching for planes overhead. Alexandria is ringed with searchlights; I counted 40 of them a few nights ago. We have acquired 2 Breda .8 guns firing 90 rounds per minute, in clips of 10 cartridges. They were to be tried out today, but something was wrong for they could only be fired in single rounds. The Bredas are part of the loot of the Aussies in the Libyan campaign and are mounted on our aircraft platform between the funnels. It is irony that the Dagoes may be killed with their own weapons. Our airmen are still in Crete.

22 – 2 – 41.

While still at the Mole we embarked some H.E. 4 inch ammunition to replace rounds fired. Early today the “C” class cruiser *Coventry* came into harbour escorting a merchantman. We noticed a big hole in her stern, at and below the waterline. On enquiring, we found that she had been struck by a torpedo fired from a submarine as far back as December. It is plugged from the inside and she carries on as usual. *Coventry* is an old cruiser rearmed with A.A. guns and called an “A.A.” ship. She mounts 8 single 4 inch guns, pompoms, and .5 guns, Lewis and Vickers all around her.

23 – 2 – 41. Terror Sinks.

I went ashore today and played Housie (Tombola) at the Fleet Club. If only I had been lucky enough to score a win. For 1 piastre (2 ½ pence), the prizes were 3 pounds 10 shillings and 9 pounds. A 2 piastre house was worth 21 pounds. At 2.30 a.m. we secured for sea and left Alexandria with 2 destroyers. This was a rush trip, for at midnight we knew nothing about it. When we got out, we were told that we had been detailed to stand by the

Terror, who had suffered damage from a near-miss, during a dive- bombing attack off Ben Ghazi.

24 – 2 – 41.

At 6.30 this morning we turned round and headed back to Alexandria where we are now. The *Terror* was built to bombard Belgium during the last war. She's a flat bottomed ship drawing about 6 feet of water and a large beam. One 15 inch turret amidships and a few smaller guns. She was known as a monitor, which is really a floating battery. We have since heard that the *Terror* was order to sink herself. Talking to some of the Aussie destroyer crews onboard today, I learn that they had their first contact with dive- bombers off Tobruk and Ben Ghazi during the last 14 days. They did not like it at all. Bombers escorted by Heinkels and the Messerschmitt fighters have been extensively bombing Australian troops in captured Libyan ports during the last week. The battle fleet arrived back last night. Today a hospital ship from Libya came in with a lot of wounded Aussies aboard. Just prior to that, a grey transport came in laden with Iti prisoners.

26 – 2 – 41.

Diving.

This morning I spent 3 hours diving on the hull of the *Bramble Leaf*, an oiler. We had half completed the job, when we were recalled to the ship. On arrival back we found her ready to go to sea. Till 4 p.m. it was uncertain, then leave was given and we resumed harbour routine. Looking around the harbour tonight I cannot see a ship that has not patches or something or other wrong with her. Still they soldier on, patched up and in the end invincible. They may destroy our ships, but they cannot destroy the spirit of the men who man them. I saw a corvette with her stern bashed in, alongside our bow. Sometime ago I said that the "*Stuart*" was going home with the *Sydney*. That was an error for *Stuart* lies just ahead of us.

27 – 2 – 41.

Relieving Garrison.

We left Alexandria this morning with the cruiser *Bonaventure* which ship I mentioned when she was at Malta with us on Jan. 14th. She has 3 turrets forward in steps and an additional turret aft. There are also 2 destroyers with us. K. Class. As we came out of the harbour I saw a tanker with a gaping hole in the starboard bow. She also had the forecastle stove in. Her foremost

compartments were open to the sea, and full of water. I have privately named Alexandria as the "Port of damaged ships". We are escorting a couple of destroyers *Decoy* and *Hasty* who have soldiers aboard, to a small Italian island off the Turkish coast. The "Breda" guns were fired today. I observed that they have a brilliant tracer which enables the gunlayer to correct his aim very easily.

28 – 2 – 41.

Night Operation.

About 3 this morning there was a fancy fireworks display of star shell flares, tracer shells and searchlights. Of all this I saw nothing, being shut up in the turret like a chicken in a coop. The destroyers went into the island (Kastelorizo) to land their troops and stirred up a hornets' nest. There were several Italian destroyers there and the *Jaguar* fired several torpedoes. We fired a few starshells and that was all. The mission accomplished we departed in haste. This forenoon the *Bonaventure* and destroyers left us. At one o'clock we rendezvoused with *Ajax* and are now tearing through the blackout. There is a short choppy sea running and things are most unpleasant. Quite a few of the crowd are seasick.

1 – 3 – 41.

Today there has been a decided loup on and the old ship is wet inside from stem to stern. Never since I have been aboard her have I seen so many of the crew seasick. We are now doing 4 -5 knots, just keeping her nose into it, and almost have to. It is most uncomfortable in the oily confined space of a turret. I spend about 14 hours out of each 24, when at sea, in the turret. Watching *Ajax* perform, I am of the opinion that *Perth* is a far better seaboat in heavy weather.

2 – 3 – 41.

We have steamed out of the bad weather. With *Ajax* we are now oiling from the same tanker at Suda Bay. I have heard that Bulgaria is now in German hands. I trust that Turkey will stand to her agreement, for Greece is on the spot now. It strikes me that the Mediterranean is going to be the centre of operations before many more moons have passed. It is going to be mighty uncomfortable for the Navy here. I trust that the ships at home are having a good time beating off aircraft around Australia. The original members of *Perth's* crew have spent far more time away

from Aussie in the last 2 years than any other of the R.A.N. personnel. About 5.15 p.m. we left the Norwegian tanker *Ergo* and went to sea. This afternoon the detector apparatus picked up planes and we stood by, for we were a good target from the air, 3 ships tied up together in the middle of the harbour. All was well.

3 – 3 – 41.

Torpedo Bomber.

At about 8.45 a.m. today an alarm was sounded and we went to stations for repelling aircraft. A huge Italian torpedo bomber flying just on top of the waves tried to sneak up on us while everyone was looking the other way for high bombers. He was spotted and a few explosive shells from *Perth* and *Ajax* soon had him tail towards and running. At 4.30 p.m. we reached Piraeus, port of Athens. With my usual will-power, yes, no, I went ashore to the International Cabaret and quaffed draughts of Mavrodaphne (plonk). It was a good night as usual. The A.A. ship *Calcutta*, HMAS *Vampire* (in dock) and a friend from the West Indies station, the destroyer *Hotspur* are also here. It is beautiful weather here in Greece, but a little too cold at night for comfort.

4 – 3 – 41.

Today at 2.30. p.m. just after *Calcutta* had pulled out, we left the wharf, and cruising around the bay, were joined by *Ajax*. We are shadowing a convoy to Alexandria. Convoy is expected to arrive there on Thursday. The sea is like a billiard table and a pest of a moon illuminates all. Time was, when I asked for nothing more than a bright moon and a splash of romance. These days and conditions, I'd like to "blackout" the moon.

5 – 3 – 41.

Today was uneventful, making good passage. During the day both ships fired smoke bursts, then fired H.E. shells at them. Our Bredas are now working smoothly.

6 – 3 – 41.

Troopships.

This morning off Alexandria harbour, we saw battleships and destroyers just come out. We went to a buoy then alongside a wharf. Tomorrow 600 military personnel embark and we leave. The *Ajax* and *Orion* are also filling up with soldiers. I suppose we will all go together. This afternoon *York* and *Bonaventure* left harbour filled with troops. My guess is that Britain does not intend to let the grass grow in Greece, now that Bulgaria has

joined Hitler's vicious circle. Troops are being rushed there from all points, Palestine, Egypt, Libya and elsewhere. Anything that will steam is being filled and sent to Greece to help that country, with Turkey, to oppose a threatened offensive.

7 – 3 – 41. Convoy.

This morning we embarked 46 officers and 610 men. They were a mixed lot, Royal Engineers, (English) Australians, Polish Jews, German Jews, Russian Jews, Palestine Jews, in fact a whole Jewish Company. We left at 1p.m. and had a good passage across. I had 13 Jews in my mess and it was a hell of a mix-up, trying to explain to them when to eat and where to go. They all spoke a common Hebrew tongue. Lots of them have families and relations under the tyranny of the Nazis right now. We were in company with *Ajax* and *Orion*.

8 – 3 – 41. Reinforcing Greece.

Arrived at Piraeus, Greece, at 11.30 a.m. Disembarked troops and then left the wharf to anchor in the stream at 1.45 p.m. At the moment 3p.m., a crowd are swimming over the side, but the temperature is too low for me yet. Out of the water, it is a beautiful sunny day. As we were leaving the groups of islands around the entrance to Piraeus harbour, a 6 ship convoy laden with soldiers and escorted by 2 Greek destroyers went in. Farther out 4 troopships guarded by an A.A. ship and 3 destroyers were waiting to go in. We are with *Ajax* and *Orion* again and there is a thick screen of destroyers handy. Also in the vicinity is the battle fleet I think, and we are all guarding convoys.

9 – 3 – 41.

We have been patrolling the Aegean Sea all day without incident so far, except for a groundless submarine alarm. The three cruisers, or the standing part of the 7th cruiser squadron, are not with destroyers today.

10 – 3 – 41.

We arrived at Suda Bay 7 a.m. today and anchored. Australian destroyer *Waterhen* was oiling. At 1 p.m. battleships *Barham* and *Valiant* with 5 destroyers came in. There is a destroyer patrolling the entrance and the *Voyager*, up and down just outside the boom. We have had 6 air raid alarms so far today but only 2 planes were seen. These soon cleared off when our fuloner fighters took the air. So far no bombs have dropped in the vicinity of the fleet at

anchor. As we were leaving harbour at 4 p.m. 2 planes appeared. They drew a blast of fire from all ships and were soon hot-tailing it for the horizon. In company with *Orion* and *Ajax* we are due in Alexandria tomorrow. In the cells are two soldiers, on their way from Crete to detention ashore in Egypt. I am fed up tonight.

14 – 3 – 41.

Dust-storm.

We are still in harbour and nothing unusual has happened. I got over being fed up by having a couple of rums ashore. Today the sands of the desert have descended upon the city filling all cavities and turning the world into a dull yellow hue. All ventilation has to be closed and all fans drawing air from the upper deck are stopped. The visibility is about 30 yards. Around us, one hears different toned bells ringing rapidly for 5 seconds each minute as for a fog. Strange things, dust-storms at sea.

16 – 3 – 41.

We have had 5 days in harbour. Shifted alongside a wharf this afternoon. Tomorrow we embark soldiers and sail. *Ajax* went out today. Whilst we were at sea last time, the damaged *Illustrious* went through the Suez Canal and a sister ship the *Formidable* replaced her. She left with destroyers this morning. It seems coincidental that the moment the “Lease and Lend Bill of America” was passed by the U.S. Senate that the war torn *Illustrious*, who had been lying unrepaired in Alexandria for over a month, should precede East from the Mediterranean. She will probably be renewed in an American shipyard.

17 – 3 – 41.

Pierhead Jump.

Loaded with troops today and to my relief, they were New Zealanders. They are a fine crowd of fellows. I had taken a couple of them under my care for the trip and we were not friends more than ½ hour before one of them, a corporal, gave me a couple of Italian souvenirs from Tobruk. Then lobbed the bombshell. The Master-at Arms told me that I had exactly 3 minutes to pack my bag and leave the ship. I threw together a few hasty necessities, among them Al’s photo, and jumped on to the wharf in overalls, just as *Perth* pulled out. I did not have time to shake hands with many of my pals, but waved them good luck as they went out. Then I got a R.N. service car to HMS Nile a depot at Ras-el-tin. Arriving there, I was told that I would catch the

3.45 train to Port Said, which I did. After a tiring journey with a change of trains at Ben-ha, I eventually arrived at Port Said at midnight. A marine met me and put me up at the Sailors' Rest.

18 – 3 – 41. Joined "Stag"

At 9 a.m. this morning I reported to the Depot, HMS Stag. I was told that I would be in the mine clearing party for the Canal. Getting my gear settled, I dug up the diving party and learned what the job was. As I had dived only once in six months and had been getting treated for my ears, I was a bit doubtful of my ability to do any great amount of diving. I had a practice dip from the wharf in 20 feet of water, but did not feel so hot when I came up. Reported to the Doc who said he thought that my ears would be O.K. for the shallow depths of 46 feet, which is the deepest the Canal goes.

19 – 3 – 41.

Had a crook night last night with a rotten headache and sore ears. I wrote out a request this morning to relinquish diving rate. That is something I had been going to do since the ears first became bad. I think that everybody, including the Doc, regards me as being a dingo re diving on mines, but I have my own feelings and know what is best for me.

20 – 3 – 41.

We are fitting up a diving boat but I did not dive today. This section of the Canal is clean so we just work around the boat until some more mines appear.

21 – 3 – 41.

The Canal is measured in kilometres and for clearing purposes is divided into 3 sections, Port Said, Ismalia and Suez. This evening I went ashore and had a look at the town. It is typical of Gyppo towns, but not quite so squalid as Alexandria. Nor were there so many beggars around. Saw Don Ameche in "Swanee River" once again and enjoyed it just as much. In company with a crowd of Diggers I saw the Can Can exhibition, Port Said style. The actors were 4 women whose actions I shall not describe. One does not leave Egypt without seeing something of that kind. Whilst I was ashore the Air Raid alarm went. There was no mistaking it. An electric horn is audible for at least 20 miles in the desert. All traffic stopped and all lights reduced to a minimum. No smoking during the alarm. Ten minutes then "all

clear". Five minutes later the alarm again, duration ½ hour. No guns were fired and no planes appeared. I was awakened by the alarm again at 3.45 a.m. and turned out till all clear. It is suspected that when ships pass through the waterway, denoted the Canal clear. Fifth Column activities notify the Nazis who promptly block it again. Thus, as many ships as possible are rushed through during the few short hours that the daylight allows. The Germans do not leave it clear for more than a day or so. It is a very vital connecting link.

23 – 3 – 41. Ex. Diver.

Today I saw the Captain at Stag and turned in my diving rate. The doc bore me out in regard to my ears and incidentally I think he is Australian. Things are just as quiet as ever. Nothing to do all day except play darts, billiards and drink my tot. Now that I am attached to the Royal Navy I draws me tot o'rum at eleven each day. It is the best neat Jamaica Rum and a perfect inducement for an afternoon's sleep every day. Therefore I sleep all afternoon.

30 – 3 – 41. Peaceful.

One week since I made last entry. Nothing out of routine has happened here this week. I have found a good crowd of fellows in the diving party. So far, we have missed very few canteen sessions. B.B.C. news states, that an action with the Italian's fleet in the Eastern Mediterranean resulted in heavy damage to the first named. A large battleship and 2 cruisers are reported hit. I suppose that when I rejoin *Perth* again I will have some stories to listen to. You see, I leave the ship and they have an action. I arrive Port Said where they are flat out clearing mines from the Canal and then all is quiet here. Something is going to bust soon. I have just heard that it was 3 cruisers and 2 destroyers that were sunk by the Med. Fleet.

5 – 4 – 41. Free Beer.

These last few days I have been just eating and sleeping as usual at Port Said. Saw the skipper on Thursday for a draft to rejoin *Perth*. Played Housie a few times, but the usual luck, rotten. No letters have been forwarded from the ship yet. Been here 19 days and no mines dropped during that time. I had a diversion today when I went down the coast with a demolition party. A mine had been washed up. They set a charge under it and from a distance of 600 yards it was exploded. It was a spectacular sight and I shall

try to obtain a print of the photo taken. I have now a few lines to print regarding mines which have been dropped in Canal De Suez. Two kinds have been used, magnetic and acoustic. There is nothing to distinguish them by sight. They are about 12 feet long by about 3 foot 6 inches in diameter. The magnetic is operated by the magnetism of the ship passing over it. It is counteracted by the electrical Degaussing gear. The "acoustic", is set off by vibrations of the ship's propellers. A clockwork fuse, which may take one ship or ½ dozen to set off. Nazi planes fly about 40 feet above the Canal and launch the mine, to which a parachute is attached by a soluble plug. When it gets in the water, the plug melts and the detached parachute floats away and does not mark the spot. Then the sweepers drag for it. Heavy planes fly overhead. Fast motor boats are run over it, and one such was recently blown sky high, they didn't even find the chips. A trawler, called the "Hammer Boat", because it has a pneumatic hammer rigged over the bow to cause vibration, is then run over the spot. Lastly divers are sent down and when they find the mine, place a charge alongside it and then come up. It is then exploded from a safe distance as we did today. Altogether it is rather a dangerous business. Although the canal has been clear 14 days, very few ships have passed through.

Easter Thursday.

Still at Port Said, but not for long now. A draft note back to *Perth* to take place on Saturday, has come to Navy House. Now that it is here I do not know whether to be sorry or glad. Have had no mail forwarded to me since leaving the ship. I have heard that our comrades on the cruisers *York* and *Bonaventure* had their ships blown up under them, a fact which rather takes the edge off the Italian scrap. One day since I have been here, we pinched 7 bags of 2 dozen each bottles of beer and threw it into the (hogwash) sea. When we were broke, or thirsty, we would just go fishing. 14 dozen bottles at 6 P.T. per bottle = 10 pounds, 1 shilling and 6 pence, roughly, so that saved us quite a considerable amount of cash. When I look back at some of the scrapes and moonlight antics we got up to, I think that I will have a feeling of regret at leaving. It has been a good month's holiday here away from the war. I am prepared to go back to work now, for there are stern things going on around the Mediterranean. There are great flat

bottomed barges, motor propelled, capable of holding hundreds of men and tanks around the canal. They are "invasion" barges but might easily become "evacuation" barges. One can only hope for the best.

Good Friday.

Returning.

Left Port Said rather reluctantly, by the mid day train and arrived at Alexandria at 5p.m. Went to depot HMS Canopus and baggage followed next day. Then to the submarine depot ship *Medway* to await *Perth*. The rum issue here is 2 water and 1 of rum, no where near as well as Stag. *Perth* came in and we rejoined her at 1.30. p.m. I had the Battle of Mattapan fought all over again for my benefit, but I enjoyed it nevertheless. The lads were disappointed because I had no tales of perilous encounters with mines to recount to them. They narrowly missed disaster when the harbour of Piraeus was dive-bombed and mined on the day that Germany marched on Greece. An ammunition ship blew up and wrecked the harbour. I can not give an account of these operations for I was not there. It seems like I missed a chance of writing a lot of sensational stories. It is good to be back among the boys and I suppose we can look forward to some more affrays when next we go out.

19 – 4 – 41.

Convoy.

Left Alexandria yesterday with armed merchantman *Breconshire* and destroyer. We are going to Malta with her, then to join up with the battle fleet tomorrow morning. Several empty merchantmen are coming out of Malta. A nose plane drew our fire this morning at great heights and went into the clouds. I notice a difference in the way the lads fly to the guns when air raid is piped. No longer is there any skylark about planes. The novelty has worn off.

20 – 4 – 41.

Joined the battle fleet today at 8.a.m. During the day the carrier *Formidable's* planes shot down 2 Italian reconnaissance machines and 4 J.U. 52's German troop carriers. Later in the afternoon, a couple of destroyers dropped a pattern of depth charges around a sub. I cannot say whether it was sunk or not.

Bombarding Tripoli.

Tomorrow morning at 0300 the fleet is going to bombard Tripoli, the big landing place in Libya for German supplies and troops.

The R.A.F. are going to blast blazes out of the town with explosives and incendiaries. Then 9 destroyers are going right in, while the *Warspite*, *Barham* and *Valiant* stand off and bombard with 15 inch guns. *Gloucester* is detailed to look after the shore batteries while *Perth*, *Ajax* and *Orion* with 4 destroyers are to stand by the *Formidable* while her planes are bombing ashore. I shall not see any of this action, but must rely on the statements of eyewitnesses up top.

21 - 4 - 41.

We were too far out to see anything of the bombardment of Tripoli. This morning the fleet was heading East, all intact. We had no air raids today in retaliation for the 600 tons of H.E. shell fired by the battleships.

22 - 4 - 41.

In company with *Gloucester* we left the fleet, on our way to Crete.

23 - 4 - 41.

Diver Lost.

Arrived at Suda Bay at 0500 today. *Gloucester* oiled, and then went to sea. There were intermittent alerts during the day and a Greek destroyer was towed in with her stern missing. The *York* was still well down in the water. During a heavy raid yesterday here, a diving boat was overturned and 2 divers, fully dressed were drowned in their suits. One of them, Shipwright Haddow from Hastings, was on loan from *Perth*. I knew him well and we worked together when diving. I have definitely put all diving behind me for all time now. After oiling we put to sea past a large tanker with her bow stuck into the air and her stern underwater a result of yesterday's raids. We are on our own now and I do not know what we are doing. Probably Aegean Patrol. Our losses to date are Ord. Seaman Andrews missing ashore during bombardment of Piraeus. E.A Murdock jumped over the side at sea during bombing, because his nerve failed.

24 - 4 - 41.

After having several alerts during the day which all proved to be friendly, we are now heading north to a point somewhere near Athens. A notice on the board reads thus:

Information

We have now been ordered to one of the embarkation points, where we expect to arrive at midnight. It is not clear whether we

embark troops as well as support their embarkation and transport. If we do embark troops they will be tired and probably hungry men who have been through a lot and I know I can rely on them being given every aid and help in our power while onboard. The ship will be at 1st degree of readiness for L.A. and H.A. from 2300. V.A.L.F. with Ajax when ready is proceeding to Aegean to take charge of operations.

Signed Captain.

I believe that Aussie destroyers are participating in operations. Quite a large number of ships will be taking part. The mantle of darkness should provide a good cover from aircraft, if there are any loafing about. *Phoebe*, a new ship to the Mediterranean, same class as the *Bonaventure* and replacing her, joined us for ½ today, then steamed away. We passed her on Tuesday when she was escorting merchantmen away from Malta.

Anzac Day – 1941. Evacuation.

I did not see any of last night's operations, but we went into a small cove and covered ships embarking soldiers and nurses. By daybreak we were well away with a large merchant ship, *Stuart* and a couple of other destroyers and corvettes. Another convoy escorted by *Phoebe* and destroyers joined up and we made for Suda Bay. There were British planes up top all the while, but suddenly out of the sun came Junkers, dropped their bombs and away. The bombs went close to the crowded merchantmen but no casualties. One enemy plane lost height and his starboard engine gave out a cloud of smoke. He had been hit by our .5 gunners, however no one saw him crash. Arrived Suda Bay O.K. *Stuart* came alongside. 11p.m. *Stuart* shoved off and 11.30 we followed, joining *Orion* and *Phoebe* at the mouth of the harbour. On Wednesday, when we were here, I noticed a Greek destroyer flying an Admiral's flag. Onboard were women and children. It was later found out that George of the Hellenes and his suite had just arrived to transfer the Greek government to Crete. Here was I witnessing history and not knowing it. I do not know if we are on the same mission again tonight.

26 – 4 – 41.

There is such an amazing system of convoys around the Aegean going in all directions, that it is impossible to figure out what is doing. With *Orion* and *Stuart* we have been roving from convoy

to convoy. During the day different convoys were raided and we fired a fair amount of shells. Two A.A. ships, the *Calcutta* and *Carlyle* were with the big convoy of 5 ships. I believe one of these ships was the "*Slamat*", our old acquaintance in Australian waters. We were not directly attacked for planes invariably make targets of the convoyed ships.

27 – 4 – 41. Aircraft Activity.

Late last night we received news that one of the evacuation transports had been bombed and her engines finished. She is being towed back to Suda Bay by a minesweeper. We were detailed to go and collect her quota of soldiers. Poking our nose through a maze of islands at 2 a.m., we located the landing place. The troops were Aussies and we took 860 of them aboard. They had been fighting a rearguard action for weeks and were just about all in. They told us tales of slaughtering of Germans troops by the thousand. They saw no R.A.F. planes, and 60 and 70 Stuka divebombers bombed and machine gunned them at leisure. Individual tales of atrocities I shall not put down. We got out safely, but then it started just after dawn. Bombers and more bombers all day. The guns have been poking them out like sausages all day. The soldiers were only laughing at the divebombers when they came over for a look at all our A.A. armament, whilst they had only rifles against them in Greece. We lost a lot of men, the army I mean, in Greece and there are still a batch trying to fight their way out. The *Slamat* and a couple of other ships were sunk by bombs today and destroyers took off their soldiers and crew. We oiled tonight and will go to sea later.

28 – 4 – 41. Terror Tales.

Put to sea last night a 2300 and with *Phoebe* and 6 destroyers have been cruising all day. Tonight we are going in on another evacuation to Greece. Destroyers are going in to pick up the troops and then to come out and load us. We expect 2,000 troops tonight. We have bombardment shells handy if there is any opposition offered to the evacuation. Listening to the last batch of soldiers onboard, I heard that they have been forced to be in gullies while divebombers bombed and machine gunned them at leisure, because there were no R.A.F. fighters to drive them off. At other times when the German infantry came through, the Aussies and Kiwis set their Vickers and Bren guns at them and

mowed them down by the thousands. An estimated loss is 80,000 men (Germans). Many of the Germans were found to be mere boys. In their pockets were syringes and their arms were full of injection holes. So much for the much vaunted guts of the Germans. A gunner of a shot down dive bomber, on being stripped, proved to be that of a girl. The Aussies say that with air forces cooperating, they would go right back and walk through to Rumania. The crew of a tanker which had been bombed ceaselessly in Suda Bay shot down a bomber with their 18 pounder. A Maltese in the crew dived over the side of the *Cherry Leaf* and swam to the plane. Hauling the pilot out, he ripped him from crotch to throat, and putting in his hand pulled out his guts and threw it away. No doubt the Maltese have had a tough time with divebombers, but so much for modern civilization.

29 – 4 – 41.

Too Late.

Last night's effort to evacuate troops did not come off as far as we are concerned. We went into a place called Kalamata, west of Cape Matapan. The destroyer *Heros* went into the shore then sent an urgent message "get out quickly", Germans occupying town. We were only a couple of miles offshore when great flares from shore lit up everything. Their spotting aircraft was up over us I believe. About turn and away at 27 knots. There must have been several thousand rear guard actions troops left there, a tragedy for them. A Junkers 88 attacked during the forenoon and straddled the destroyer *Nubian* right ahead of us with 4 bombs. The concussion swung her 50 degrees off her course and shrapnel penetrated. However she is still with us. Off Suda Bay we joined *Orion*, *Ajax* and destroyers and now with 2 A.A. ships, *Phoebe* and destroyers we are escorting 7 large ships towards Alexandria. I believe that they have troops onboard.

30 – 4 – 41.

Dodecanese Dodging.

Last night was a very sleepless night for all of us. We had to pass through some very narrow straits in the Dodecanese (Italian). We were on our toes for "E" boats, which I have mentioned before. All through the night dark shapes kept looming up, only to prove our own ships. Destroyers kept firing and our 6 inch let go at point blank fuse setting. Whether we scored or not is an open question. We did not wait to see. One air raid today in the forenoon, but *Formidable's* fighters attended to that. We fired an umbrella

barrage over the carrier. At sea these days in a raid, the aircraft carriers are surrounded by its escort and a barrage is fired over the top of it. It has been proved via *Illustrious* that carriers are invariably the target for bombers. *Perth* has joined the convoy, assisting *Carlyle*. A.A. ships, and the battlers are away astern somewhere. We arrive at Alexandria tomorrow. "E" boats are very fast motor boats about 40 -50 knots carrying torpedoes. They dash in on dark nights, launch their fish and tear away. They are no good in a choppy sea and have not such a great cruising range. However, they are dangerous fellows to have about on a dark night.

1 – 5 – 41. Night Air Raid over Alexandria.

Arrived Alexandria today, everything quiet till about 9 a.m. Then all the land batteries opened up and we watched a beautiful fireworks display of bursting shells, tracer and searchlight beams. They got a plane right in the converged beams at 6000 feet. I saw him release a mine by parachute. Then the beams lost him. We did not open fire.

2 – 5 – 41. Six Months from Civvies.

Borrowing a pair of sports trousers I went ashore and met an Egyptian friend of mine, a young policeman named Hanafi Effendi. Donning a shirt and sports coat of his, I proceeded to have a look at Gyppo town. Into mosques, where one has to take one's boots off before entering. Into cafes, drinking coffee with a glass of water and playing loon-Can a crowd. I could not come at the Gyppo water pipes. It felt alright to be in civvies again for the first time in six months.

3 – 5 – 41. Mines Explode in Harbour.

During the forenoon two mines went up with a hell of an explosion near the channel to the harbour entrance. All preparations are made for a raid tonight. Battleships *Barham* and *Valiant* with *Formidable* and destroyers came in at dusk.

4 – 5 – 41. Night Raid.

Last night they were over again, but were not sighted. As usual the fireworks were on but it was all a blind barrage. We even let a couple go from A and B turrets.

5 – 5 – 41. Mine Explodes.

Another mine went up this morning. Yesterday the "N" class destroyers arrived. There are a lot of fellows who left the *Perth*

months ago onboard them. They have been up around Iceland. There are two more cruisers here now. The *Dido*, same as *Phoebe* and *Bonaventure* and a 3 funnel minelaying cruiser. She made the trip from England to Alexandria in 5 days. Her speed is reputed to be 41 knots. Her name is HMS *Abdeih*. She's no sluggard.

6 – 5 – 41. Fleet goes to Sea.

Today the fleet went to sea; battleships, cruisers and destroyers. An armed merchantman accompanied us. No raids today.

7 – 5 – 41. Preparation to Bombard.

We got our 6 inch shell on top line to carry out a bombardment on Benghazi. The *Orion*, *Ajax* and *Perth* are to fire at 1a.m. tomorrow, with spotting planes up top dropping flares. An (information) signal on the board tells us that we are to get a convoy into Malta, get one out and take one from Gibraltar to Alexandria. During this time the bombardment is to be carried out. The captain expects some handsome reinforcement when these operations are over. This statement has us puzzled.

8 – 5 – 41. Plane Crash, crew Rescued.

About an hour ago a Gladiator about to land on the *Formidable*, miscued and landed in the sea. We manned a lifeboat, but the destroyer G.64 beat us to it. The crew of two were picked up by a whaler from their collapsible rubber float. The last I saw of the plane was the tail vertical above the water, still floating. We left it to sink for there was an air raid yellow, which means enemy planes in the vicinity. This morning the visibility was very low and it was raining. Out of the low hung clouds flew a Junker. The 4 inch Breda, Pom-Pom and .5 guns were very slow off the mark and the forward turrets beat them to it by letting go a 6 inch broadside at his backside. He managed to get out of it though. All afternoon there have been formations of enemy planes hanging round the outskirts of the fleet and convoy. The carrier's fighters shot down 4 out of 5 planes this morning and the telegraphists picked up the report of the 5th plane to his base, re the fleet. Three battleships, 1 carrier, 8 cruisers and 15 destroyers, with 4 merchant ships covers rather a large area. We have also with us the oiler *Breconshire* who has been oiling destroyers all day, on the move. I saw *Ajax* buzz off yesterday and we learn today, with destroyers, she had a stunt on her own last night, and sunk a convoy with 2 merchants.

9 – 5 – 41.

At Beneto's Backdoor.

The convoy went into Malta last night. The 7th Cruiser Squadron steamed around during the night in the Sicilian channel, between Italy and Malta, less than 50 miles from the Italian coast. It was broad moonlight until 3 a.m. and the only incident was a series of distinct shocks felt at 2a.m. as if depth charges had been dropped. This morning at 0900 we rejoined the fleet. An R.D.F. warning of aircraft 7 miles away put us on our toes. Through the fog came the rattle of machine gun fire. Then *Formidable* reported air raid green, that one of her planes had shot down the follower. Another one of the *Formidable's* planes crashed this afternoon, and this time *Perth* was first on the scene. We got a lifeboat away smartly and picked up the two airmen. This afternoon at 4.30 the convoy with units from the Western Mediterranean Fleet, came in sight. There is the battleship *Queen Elizabeth* and some new cruisers and destroyers. All told there are 39 ships escorting this convoy of 4 merchantmen. The *Q.E.* was stripped to the hull, preparatory to being rebuilt when we commissioned the *Perth* in Portsmouth. Unlike the plane of yesterday's crash the plane today sank almost immediately. I see that another plane crashed on the carrier's deck and is hoisted on the crane over the side.

11 – 5 – 41.

Back in Alexandria.

Left the fleet yesterday with *Orion* and *Ajax* and proceeded to Alexandria arriving there at 1600 today. Went ashore today and saw Charlie Chaplin in "The Dictators". Whilst it is quite a good picture I do not think that it merits the publicity. I sat in at a game of Tombola at the Fleet Club, full house, 20 pounds for 2 P.T., but had my usual luck. It was my turn for all night leave so stayed the night at the Australian Club.

12 – 5 – 41.

The fleet and a dozen merchant ships arrived back today and I had a look at the new arrivals. The battleship *Queen Elizabeth*, triple 6 inch cruiser *Fiji* and the 5.9 gun ship *Naiad* same class as *Dido*, *Phoebe* and *Bonaventure*. There are now over 30 destroyers in the harbour and about 5 A.M.C's. A couple of shore guns opened up at the brilliant sun today but packed up after a few rounds. On Saturday at sea, a couple of bodies floated past, dressed in white overalls. I think that they were airmen. Of what nationality?

13 – 5 – 41.

The 7th Cruiser Squadron left harbour at 0100 with 3 Tribal destroyers to do a bombardment. *Benghazi* was plastered by the R.A.F. and destroyers a few nights ago.

Air Attack at Sea.

12 Junkers 88's attacked us today and after narrowly missing the *Ajax* dropped a few dozen bombs into the sea. They beat a hurried retreat leaving one plane crashed in flames and sunk 300 yards from us by *Perth's* gunfire. The lads were cheered immensely by the sight. Our Pom- Pom performed well in its first run in action. The date is significant.

At 0130 tomorrow morning, the three cruisers are going to bombard Derna Aerodrome where 100 planes are reported to be on the ground. With 60 tons of 6 inch bombardment shells falling around the place, something must get hit. The destroyers are going to attack shipping in Derna Harbour. As usual the RAF are going to plaster the place first and then drop flares and spot on our shots.

14 – 5 – 41.

Missed Bombardment Again.

We were right on time last night to commence firing, but a hitch occurred with the spotting planes and we left the place in a hurry. The personnel on the bridge could see the flares being fired at by Bredas trying to shoot them out. Destroyers launched torpedoes at tankers in Derna Harbour successfully. The explosions and leaping fires were seen by us. We also saw large fires on the aerodrome, a plateau 800 feet high. The RAF gave them a good strafing, I believe.

15 – 5 – 41.

In and Out.

Arrived Alexandria 0230, oiled and proceeded to sea again at 0600 to join *Barham*, *Q.E.* cruisers and boats. Air Raid "Red" ½ after we got in, but no planes materialized. Doing 28 knots this morning, headed North towards Crete. A solitary T.U. 88 appeared suddenly, to disappear quicker than that when the boys went to town on him. This diary is becoming an Air Raid Record. This evening a lone torpedo bomber made a futile encirclement of the fleet, and soon scrambled when some lead went his way.

16 – 5 – 41.

Prevention Measures.

A notice on the board tonight tells of an expected German attempt to invade Crete. *Perth* and *Naiad* with 3 destroyers are sweeping the Aegean, west from Suda Bay tonight. *Gloucester* and *Fiji* with destroyers have another sweep and *Barham* and *Queen Elizabeth* are covering both sweeps. The invasion may be by troop carrying planes, or small surface craft. This evening 4 planes appeared and we had a “Red” warning but they beat it and no one fired.

17 – 5 – 41.

Shilling Saturday.

Word that the attempted invasion was off for last night was broadcast in the ship early in the night. I had another night uninterrupted. Luck changed for the better when I won 10 pounds in the raffle today. Looks like a present for Al. One “Yellow” today, a lone plane 19 miles distant. The patrols of last night made up the complete unit about 0800 this morning.

18 – 5 – 41.

Air Mail Special.

Arrived back in Alexandria at 4 p.m. today. Re-ammunitioned and oiled ship and sail again at 6 a.m. tomorrow. Received my parcel from Al and was very pleased with the woollen contents. Also two letters from Al. I think that the situation in Iraq has affected the air mail from Australia in some way or another. *Warspite*, *Valiant*, *Formidable* and destroyers went to sea this morning.

20 – 5 – 41.

Patrols Round Crete.

The last 2 days and nights we have been on the look out for ships carrying troops from Greece to invade Crete. So far we have sighted a few formations of bombers and torpedo carriers but no attack has developed yet. Today, 1500 parachute troops landed in Crete, but the army has them under control. Later today 1700 more paratroops landed. Paratroops of necessity must have supplies and heavier backing. That is our job to intercept transport and carrier planes. Tomorrow should bring along a lively time. Practically all the fleet has come around Crete. We are with *Naiad* and destroyers. This evening a torpedo bomber got close, but the two tin-fish that she launched at us were avoided by manoeuvring.

21 – 5 – 41.

Six Hour Bombing.

Commencing today with a torpedo bomber attack, we have had waves and waves of all types of German aircraft over us. It is impossible to estimate the number of bombs dropped. The destroyer *Juno* caught up a salvo of 9 bombs. A puff of smoke, then no more destroyer. She sank instantaneously. There were very few survivors. Our 4 inch guns fired upwards of 700 shells today, beside the thousands of Pom-Pom, machine gun and Breda ammunition.

22 – 5 – 41.

Worst of All.

Today has been the worst and luckiest that I have ever experienced. Starting early, we were bombed unmercifully. We were cruising near Crete to prevent seaborne reinforcements to Nazi paratroops. We sunk several small craft laden with troops. Though not directly hit, we received near misses, shrapnel and machine gun incendiary bullets. A near miss smashed our port P.V., 20 feet from the side. The deluge from a missed bomb near the 4 inch guns drowned the crew for a few minutes. The wooden main topmast is splinted with M.G. bullets. The wireless aerials have all been shot down. The side forward is plugged with pieces of wood to stop up the shrapnel holes. Petrol tanks are leaking and several compartments have water in them. The bridge and turrets were all gunned. There was an inch of steel between my shoulder blade and a Nazi bullet. Our 6 inch control system has broken down. To paint a picture of today is impossible for me, it is too vivid and graphic. We joined the *Warspite*, *Valiant* and destroyers at noon. The *Greyhound* had a go at some troops landing, then sank a large fishing smack, flying Nazi colours. A few seconds later 7 J.U. 81's bombed her and she sank in a few minutes. During the day "*Perth's* Home Guard", armed with rifles was stationed, and as planes dived close they aimed all together with tracer ammunition. By afternoon, we were nearly out of high angle ammunition. The 4 inch mountings fired 1400 rounds in the two days. During the day I saw dozens of low flying troop carriers on their way to Crete. They had no fighter escort and flew just out of our range quite calmly. We could not catch them. The A.A. ship *Carlyle* stopped one right amidships, but survived it. Both she and the *Calcutta* have done good work with us. We heard that *Ajax* and *Orion* sank two transports and 2

destroyers with smaller craft last night. The *Warspite* had a 6 inch and 4 inch mounting wiped out with a Messersmidcht's bomb today. The cruisers *Gloucester* and *Fiji* have been sunk somewhere behind us.

23 – 5 – 41. Headed South.

We are with the battle fleet still and headed for Alexandria. Never have I counted the hours till darkness as yesterday, for only the mantle of night could bring respite. Destroyers dropped depth charges last evening, sub hunting. We have had numerous alerts today, but no attacks. At one time there were 7 formations round us. I do not know the situation in Crete, but we have lost 2 good cruisers and 3 destroyers with men in them so far. One of the alerts today was six fighters and 1 Blenheim, English. Our nick name for the RAF is Rare as F.... We did not see a friendly plane.

24 – 5 – 41.

Arrived Alexandria and went alongside the store wharf. Had new barrels fitted to our 4 inch guns. Started to embark a couple of thousand rounds of 4 inch. Survivors of the *Kashmere* and *Kelly*, two good destroyers came in last night. Went to Alexandria Sporting Club Course. My first race meeting. Backed Achilles first race and he won. No more luck and lost 5 pounds. All hands have been busy these days re-ammunitioning and restoring. It has been a disastrous week for the Navy. Sunk, 2 cruisers, 4 destroyers and now the battle cruiser *Hood* is reported sunk in an action with the German battleship, Bismarck. The *Gloucester* and *Fiji* sunk with destroyers *Juno*, *Greyhound*, *Kashmere* and *Kelly*. *Naiad* has a large hole in her bow; *Carlyle* has had 2 guns wiped out with casualties. We have superficial damage. *Orion* was hit by *Dido* guns when she (*Dido*), engaged an Italian destroyer, fatalities there. *Warspite* had 2 guns smashed with casualties. *Valiant* was hit. *Phoebe* is in dock. Destroyer *Kipling* is smashed up inside. Rather a serious total for one week. *Kelly* was commanded by Lord Louis Mount Batten, who survived. I believe that the RAF has put in an appearance in the Crete campaign now.

27 – 5 – 41. More Losses.

Last night I went ashore and had a few *Venus* cocktails, very nice, comprising, Gin, Vermouth and Cherry Brandy with an egg flip. Later I enjoyed a performance of the film *Balalaika* and thought

it a very good show. We moved out into the stream and *Formidable* took our berth with a large bomb crater right through her bow. These carriers are certainly vulnerable to bombing. Just astern of her lies the destroyer *Nubian*, with her stern smashed off. The *Nubian* was with us near Crete on 29/4/41 when a J.U.88. straddled her and caused slight damage. I observe 2 large long range American bombers off the bow, at anchor. The message has just arrived from Admiralty that *Bismarck* is sunk.

28 – 5 – 41.

Crete Convoy.

Left Alexandria at 2100 tonight with *Phoebe*, *Coventry*, *Calcutta* and destroyers. We are convoying a large A.M.C. to Crete I presume. We have taken onboard two big flat bottomed steel boats complete with their crews.

29 – 5 – 41.

The Evacuation.

We had a “Yellow” raid warning a couple of times early this morning, but the aircraft proved to be British. Apparently we have an air escort part of the way at least. At sunset we were just off the southern coast of Crete. At midnight in a light fog, we dropped anchor off the village of Spakia and embarked over 1100 troops, some barefooted, others in remnants and rags and none fully equipped. There were a large number of wounded among them and lots with dysentery. They were on their last legs, just about finished. Aussies, Maoris, English and Greeks.

30 – 5 – 41.

Unlucky for Perth

We were only a few miles from Crete at daybreak, getting away without incident, save for a large white flare dropped near us. During the day until noon we were ceaselessly bombed and saw nothing of our friendly escorts. At 1.15 p.m. we caught the bomb that we have been dodging this last 5 months. It was dropped from a great height and carrying away the polemast with D.F. gear, a foot from the mastheadman’s head, it fell just clear of the signal deck and finished in the forward boiler room. It blew out into the starboard waist and killed 9 soldiers, splattering pieces all over the place. At the same time it blew in the after bulkhead and killed two cooks. The escaping steam boiled one stoker to death in the boiler room. From then on we were attacked a few times but our fighters were around. I felt the shock of the bomb but it could not have been a very large one. In the evening they buried the dead, what pieces they could scrape together. At one o’clock

we berthed and disembarked soldiers. Once again a battle has been lost through lack of air power. The soldiers told us that they had the Germans under control, but merciless strafing and bombing unhampered from the air, took heavy toll of them. Alexandria will have to stand by now.

31 – 5 – 41. More Wreckage.

This morning I went down to the starboard waist and met the stench of rotting flesh in my nose. There were shoulders, hands, and feet with a mass of guts splashed around the waist. I had a look at the *Dido* this morning and she has “B” turret smashed to pieces with a bomb. The *Ajax* has been hit and is lying in the harbour. The *Orion* has been badly smashed by bombs and I fear that the casualties there are heavy. The old 7th Cruiser Squadron has copped theirs in the last few days. *Naiad* is in dock with two torpedo holes in her. Ord. Seaman Andrews, presumed lost in Piraeus during its destruction, turned up the other day in civvies. He came over in a Greek fishing boat.

1 – 6 – 41. Another Loss.

Since last time of writing the A.A. ship *Calcutta* has been hit by 3 bombs and sank in 3 minutes. The battleship *Barham* was hit and has left the station with *Dido*. I went to the races today and after winning about 7 pounds, I did it in again and finished up square, the meeting paying my exes. Stayed ashore all night. The Australian destroyer *Napier* was towed in the other day, badly damaged by near misses. There are a team of engineers cutting through steel everywhere to fix us up. The deeper they go the more damage they find.

3 – 6 – 41. Housie Luck.

Went ashore today and shared 3 ways, 7 pound 10 shillings for a single line playing Tombola. The sloop *Parramatta* arrived from the Red Sea today. I know quite a few of the crew. To date there have been only reconnaissance planes around, but they are prepared here for bombings.

5 – 6 – 41. Bombed Again.

Last night the bombers were over again for a couple of hours. The searchlights and H.A. guns were flat out at times. As far as I can hear, there was no damage to the harbour, but quite a few houses were knocked over ashore. It is not so hot being alongside a wharf with nothing to do but listen to the firing all round,

knowing that up there somewhere those lurking planes are dropping eggs. Our dove which came aboard us on Good Friday is still with us. He knows when things are going to get cracking and flies away till it is over. The dove, coinciding with Good Friday, is a good symbol. I trust that it is right. HMS *Leander* arrived today.

6 – 6 – 41

Reunion.

Today I met Harold Josey, an old acquaintance of mine in Australia. He is a leading seaman of *Leander*. We qualified as divers together. They have been 13 months away from New Zealand operating in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. Went to sleep in the Rio Theatre the other night seeing *Arizona*, so last night being more sober, I went and the program was seen right through. A few drinks and a peaceful night with no raids.

7 – 6 – 41.

Blitz over Alexandria.

At 11.15 p.m. the alert sounded and the R.D.F. reports showed more than a dozen formations around the harbour and the city. The barrage was going up pretty well all the time, but mines were dropped everywhere. One fell and exploded a few yards from our last berth alongside the wharf. Whole blocks of houses in the older portion of the city were flattened and hundreds lost their lives. The poorer Egyptians live 10–12 in one room so no wonder they died. The houses are mud plaster and the blast must have wrecked a lot of them. Nothing fell near us among the French ships, although we were firing. Two large fires I saw, one of them looking like an oil fire. With one hour's break the raid lasted until dawn at 5 a.m. I do not know if our fighters had any luck.

8 – 6 – 41.

Stanley Bay.

Went over to the *Leander* and met my pal, then went ashore to the popular swimming place at Stanley Bay. Boat traffic was restricted to certain routes, certain areas being flagged as mined. Saw dozens of families, with their goods and chattels on their backs, making away to the country. I enjoyed a swim at Stanley Bay, which is nearly modern and a fashion and leg show for the natives. It is a small bay with no surf, an expensive bar and bathing huts along the promenade. During the afternoon I heard firing and saw the smoke bursts in the sky 6 miles away. I later learnt that an Italian reconnaissance plane was destroyed by fighters and the crew bailed out. We were too far away to see the

planes. A few beers at the Fleet Club then returned aboard. It was a raid free night.

9 – 6 – 41.

Sailing and Swimming.

Took the skiff away sailing after 4 p.m. and had an enjoyable couple of hours sailing and swimming. Just got back to the ship when a “Yellow” raid warning went up. I saw no firing and the all clear went after a time. *Leander* went to sea this evening. Another raid free night. The moon is just full now and the sooner it dies out the better we will like it.

12 – 6 – 41.

Last night I was very sore on the legs with sunburn. Taking advantage of a half day off, 3 of us went sailing and swimming all afternoon. This morning at 1.50 we had a “Yellow” alert but no planes came over. The harbour was screened by a thick black pall of smoke sent up from all ships to form a haze. The moon is on the wane now and in a few days it will disappear for this month. I am unable to work out whether we will leave the Mediterranean or not in the near future. I think that we will be out by the end of June. Hope that I am right. Wishful thinking.

16 – 6 – 41.

Restful Days.

During the time between my last entry and now, I have put in quite a lot of my leisure hours sailing, cutter, whaler and skiff. With wind and sun it is making a nigger of me. It is a good rest these last few days, with no night raids or day ones either. The Gyppos are putting new armour plating over the hole in the boiler room. The guts of the works has not all been replaced. I do not think it will be too long now before we go to sea. I sailed to the *Ajax* tonight and they said it was much quieter outside from aircraft these days. Sixteen real bomb-shocked ratings were sent ashore today for 48 hours to a rest camp in the desert.

17 – 6 – 41.

Air Raid.

At 4 a.m. this morning we had a raid during which large flares were dropped over the harbour. A perfect fusillade of short range weapons shot them out. *Queen Elizabeth* and *Valiant* were walls of flame. Bombs were dropped near the drome at Abu Kare. We remained closed up till dawn at 5.15 a.m. Today I was forced to take a dive on the propellers and shaft. No confirmation of the relinquishing the diving rate. Being still paid for it they took the

view that I was still entitled to dive, so down I went. The props and shafts are ok and so are my ears.

20 – 6 – 41.

One Boiler Less.

The dockyard workmen have taken a devil of a lot of stuff out of the boiler room but put very little back. Broken pipes have been renewed and the hole has just about been patched up. The idea is I think, to isolate the busted boiler leaving us with three boilers. What speed we can make with them, I do not know. We have not refuelled since being in harbour. (3 weeks today) The tanks aft are not oil tight I believe.

21 – 6 – 41.

Fire Ashore.

This morning at 2.45 the siren sounded and we were raided by single planes which came and went in a fair number. Flares which were dropped were shot out. *Formidable*, *Queen Elizabeth* and *Valiant* tore into them with Pom-Poms. Nothing was dropped near us, but a large fire was going ashore astern of *Warspite*. The raid finished about 5.30 a.m. The *Carlyle* A.A. ship, which had 2 mountings wiped out on 22/5/41 has returned to the harbour with a mine laying cruiser, same type as HMS *Abdeil*.

23 – 6 – 41.

Submarine Victories.

Today I saw 2 subs come in with the skull and crossbones flying in the breeze. Our subs operating from Alexandria rarely come into harbour without that emblem of victory flying. It is a terrible warfare. A convoy steaming through the night, then a torpedo strikes amidships and down she goes with a few hundred souls. Both sides use subs therefore, I give a silent cheer when I see the skull and crossbones. At 3.30 a.m. today they were over again dropping flares all around the harbour and sprinkling a few bombs among them. The usual barrage was sent up. An unexploded bomb or mine is marked by a buoy between *Perth's* stern and the *Ajax*. *Warspite* was scorched by a near miss. This evening at 6 o'clock *Orion* steamed out on her way to a dock out of the war theatre somewhere. Our ship's company cheered them first, then they cheered back. Our band played "For they are jolly good fellows" theirs "Auld acquaintance". Remember they were with us on the West Indies Station early in the war. That leaves *Ajax* and *Perth* of the old 7th Cruiser Squadron. *Ajax* has taken the *Orion's* Admiral's Flag.

24 – 6 – 41.

To Sea Again.

Today, 25 days after entering Alexandria last, we are going to sea again, with A.A. ship *Carlyle* bound for Haifa, Palestine. Clearing the channel we had a practice shoot with 6 inch and 4 inch armament. The ship reached 29 knots making smoke. I was mistaken about the boilers. We still have 4 boilers, but one fan less. It seems strange to be at sea once again after that period in harbour. I know that the steel deck of the turret certainly was very hard.

25 – 6 – 41.

Reach Haifa, Palestine.

This morning we reached Haifa to find the *Naiad* alongside the wharf. The Australian destroyer *Nizam* is here with others. It looks a most modern looking town, with sandstone buildings in latest architecture. The destroyers *Ilex* and *Isis* are here; *Ilex* with a broken back and *Isis* a damaged bow caused by near misses off Syria. The *Janus* has gone to Port Said after being hit by Vichy destroyers. The sloop *Auckland* was bombed and sunk off the coast of Libya. Went sailing this afternoon in the skiff and then for a swim, the temperature was about 86 degrees. The water is salty and very buoyant.

28 – 6 – 41.

Bombarding.

Left Haifa this afternoon in company with *Carlisle* and destroyers to bombard a town up the coast. We had six fighters over the top of us most of the way. It was a treat to be at sea with our own aircraft instead of the Nazis. The destroyers went in close and let go. A shore battery fired a few rounds at them then packed up. We were firing over the top of them at 20,000 yards, point of aim being a tall wireless mast. We fired 95 rounds at the shore. On the way back we had an alert which proved to be our own fighters. As we came into harbour the *Ilex* was being taken in tow by the destroyers, *Hero*, *Carlisle* and *Nizam* standing by.

29 – 6 – 41.

Tipping the Day.

It is 2 years today since I first set foot on HMS *Amphion*, now HMAS *Perth* at Portsmouth. This morning I started a sweep to tip the day when we go back through the Suez Canal. It is worth 53 shillings to 1 shilling at the moment. 98% of the tips are in July this year which shows how optimistic the lads are. Personally I hope that they are right. My date is July 26th 1941.

1 – 7 – 41.

On Patrol Again.

We are going to sea again today with destroyers and expect to be back in harbour at dawn. The work here is all night work. A cruiser goes to sea each night with destroyers in turn. Each afternoon is a half day off and lots of the lads have been to Nazareth, Christ's birth place, about 40 miles distant. I went ashore yesterday and had a good look around. The older and lower city is Haifa and the newer city up the slope is Hadar on Mt Carmel. I believe that the Haifa oil pipe line is responsible for the progress of this place. The city is ultra modern, with buildings and conveniences and appliances. I bought a few little souvenirs for home. Currency is in Mils, - 1 pound Egyptian = 1,000 mils or 100 piastres or 25 shillings Australian or 1 pound English.

Today we had 2 "Red" alerts but I saw no planes and no bombs were dropped. Popular buzz has today veered from leaving for home in July until Xmas time now. Buzzes are always fickle however. Sent Al and Mum a letter each yesterday, the first at the increased rate of 9 pence per ½ oz air mail. The solid stone buildings here would not be toppled flat by bomb blast as the shacks in Alexandria do. RAAF planes seem to score good victories over Vichy French planes in Syria, according to the news.

2 – 7 – 41.

Bombardment and Bombs.

With *Naiad* and destroyers we went to sea this afternoon along the Syrian coast and bombarded a city (Palmyra). One hundred and eighty five rounds of 6 inch. We had W/T spotting from observers ashore. There were large fires and reports of an ammunition dump struck. This is our 2nd bombardment, both daylight raids. On the way back we were missed by a stick of 4 bombs from a high level bomber. Our fighters, never far away were soon on his tail. We stayed at sea all night going on a sweep well up the Syrian coast.

3 – 7 – 41.

Looks like Alexandria.

Back to harbour at Haifa early morning and a couple of "Red" alerts, but no bombs dropped. This afternoon *Ajax* and *Phoebe* with destroyers arrived. We are sailing tonight, for Alexandria I expect. I am not too pleased at that prospect, for with the growing moon, the place there is raided almost nightly. I think that there is

something in the wind. A large sea mail arrived today, with a Pix from Al and books from S. Aus. Also air letter no 34 from Al.

4 – 7 – 41.

We Miss a Raid.

Last night whilst we were out patrolling Haifa, was raided. The anti aircraft (ack-ack) guns winged a plane which crashed into the sea. One survivor, the gunner who baled out, is now in hospital. As far as I know there are no German or Italian planes operating in Syria now. The planes there are French and American, supplied prior to the downfall of France, with Vichy pilots. The plane which bombed us at sea 2 days ago was a Blenheim I believe, who took us for 2 merchantmen, escorted by 3 Vichy destroyers. It was luck that he missed us. I think that he will not be congratulated.

5 – 7 – 41.

Another Bombardment.

In company with *Ajax* and *Carlisle* with destroyers, we proceeded up the coast and knocked over another Vichy city. We fire usually at 20,000 yards which is out of range of the shore batteries. Destroyers go close in and sometimes are straddled. There were reports of single hostile planes around but our fighters got on their tails and they worried us not. We are anchored outside the boom gate now at 8 p.m. and are replenishing ammunition. I believe that we go to sea with *Carlisle* and destroyers tonight.

6 – 7 – 41.

Batteries Silenced.

I learned that the batteries at Damour were knocked out by *Ajax* and *Perth* yesterday. That enabled the infantry to cross the river and advance farther than they expected. With *Ajax* and *Carlisle* we went up again today but were not required. While we were out a “Red” sounded and bombers, believed to be Italian Capronis were seen. They did not attack us and I think our fighters tailed them off. We returned to harbour to the oil wharf where *Ajax* and *Perth* berthed to refuel. *Naiad* and *Phoebe* went to sea for the night with destroyers on patrol.

7 – 7 – 41.

Blitzed Again.

At 1.30 this morning a raid started which lasted 2 hours. About 20–30 Heinkels and Domiers operating from Rhodes or Crete were the attackers. They flew low, sometimes only 100 feet in the bright moonlight. A large bomb landed fifty yards on our port beam and lifted the ship. As usual everything was going to town

on them with a lot of tracers. They started two large fires ashore. One was in the direction of the drome. *Carlisle* was not hit, but was evacuated as soon as the "Green" came through. She was surrounded by mines which the planes dropped. With the *Ajax* we provided breakfast for them when they came aboard. A tug got a line to her and after she had slipped her anchors and cables into the sea she was towed out to a wharf. All three ships have shifted berths today in readiness for another attack tonight. At 11.10 a.m. a mine went up where *Carlisle* had been with tremendous concussion. The harbour was closed, but is now open I believe. Hope they do not repeat the raid.

10 – 7 – 41.

Quiet Night Patrol.

With *Ajax* and destroyers we went to sea last night on patrol. Despite the full moon for the entire night, in an almost cloudless sky, we encountered no opposition. Vichy government in Syria have asked for an armistice, which will lead I think to peace terms. That will make things easier for the troops here. Alexandria was raided again last night and A.A. fire was seen by us from 15 miles out at 3 a.m., so I think that they had a raid here in Haifa. Each day is a half day off here in harbour and that is all right for swims and sunbaking and odd jobs for myself.

11 & 12 July.

Patrols.

We have had a couple of nights out on patrol without incident. Personally, I would rather spend the nights at sea than in Haifa Harbour.

13 – 7 – 41.

Touring in Palestine.

Went ashore to tour to Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee via Nazareth. The tour lasted some 250 miles and cost 500 Mils (10 shillings). We went along a very good road over extra hilly country till we came to the fertile valley of the city of Nazareth. When we left the boundary of Haifa we were stopped and checked by military sentries. I saw the well where Mary, Mother of Jesus, drew water. There were Arab women still drawing it in large earthenware pitches which they carried on their heads. I saw the Church of Annunciation where Jesus lived, but did not enter. The church is built over a cave. Through miles of barren hillside and fertile valleys we went to Tiberias on Galilee shores. Looking down on the lake it was a marvellous scene. Half way down the hill to the shore we passed a sign reading "Sea Level". The level

of the lake is 290 metres below sea level. It was terribly hot in Tiberias with a stinging hot East wind. Only place of interest was an old fortress ruins. Going around the shore we stopped and several of the lads stripped off and went in for a swim in the nude. The water is fresh. Eventually we reached the Syrian border and the car, a German Mercedes Benz broke down. We were delayed 1½ hours and eventually got going. Some of the boys bought Log Cabin tobacco at an A.I.F. canteen. On the way back to Haifa we passed dozens of Aussies camped in the olive groves alongside the road. They were also on point duty. We had a run around the town of Acre which is on the northern side of the harbour. The Syrian Armistice was signed there on Saturday. There are some very interesting old forts that date back to Richard, the Crusader and later to Napoleon's onslaught. They are still standing from the 11th century. The forts are surrounded by moats 60 feet wide and 40 feet deep, now dry. Eventually we arrived back in Haifa tired and hungry and had a good feed ashore then returned aboard at 9.30 to sleep through a raid free night. I think 10 shillings well spent.

14 – 7 – 41. Goodbye Haifa.

Though not officially announced it is known that we go through the Suez Canal this week on our way home. *Perth*, *Naiad* and *Phoebe* with destroyers, left Haifa at 6 p.m. to arrive Alexandria 9 a.m. tomorrow. *Ajax* stayed there. We were told not to cheer for we might meet her again. There were many sly waves though.

15 – 7 – 41. Alexandria.

Reached Alexandria this morning and squeezed past a wrecked merchant ship in the harbour entrance. I am not going ashore in Alexandria, though I might go over to *Leander* to see Joe Josey.

16 – 7 – 41. Drafts.

There have been 100 drafts out of the ship since we landed here and we are all very apprehensive about getting one. The crews of Aussie destroyers have come aboard to take passage home. Contrary to buzzes, Alexandria has not been blitzed to blazes since we left. They have had one small scale raid. It will not be long now before *Perth* leaves the Mediterranean I think. The *Leander* went to sea yesterday, so I missed Joe. *Warspite* has now left this station, as has the Greek battleship. *Waterhen*, *Defender* and *Auckland* have been sunk near Tobruk since we left.

17 – 7 – 41. HMAS Hobart.

At 11a.m. today the *Hobart* arrived in Alexandria. The signalmen broke out the Australian Jack at our yardarm, and the congregated *Perth* sailors let out a concentrated cheer. I think that every RAN sailor in the Middle East is trying to get on this ship. For every one that succeeds, one of our lads goes. It is a rotten deal, for those that go are as much entitled to go home on this ship as people whom they relieve. It will take a full month to get home, but a month seems nothing to me over here where months are illimitable.

18 – 7 – 41. Farewell Alexandria.

At 5p.m. today we slipped our buoy wires and departed Alexandria for the last time. There was much interchange of signals of farewell and good wishes, especially from HMAS *Hobart* and *Parramatta*, only Aussie ships there. On the way to Port Said we saw searchlights at sea which I think were battleships *Q.E.*, *Valiant* and *Phoebe*.

19 – 7 – 41. Port Said.

Reached Port Said early this morning and embarked plane (a Walrus) and for the first time a catapult. I looked around and saw the very familiar place I knew during my month there. It was rumoured that we would stay overnight. In that event I hoped to be able to meet some of the diving party and have a few convivial wets in the canteen. My hopes were dashed to the ground for we got under weigh, and passing along the canal anchored for the night at the basin at Ismailia. Anchored there were two of King Farouk's yachts plainly marked with the crescent moon and star of Egypt. Apparently Alexandria became too hot with Nazi bombers for their safety.

20 – 7 – 41. Wrecks and Suez.

This morning we got the hook up and passed through to Suez. On the way were several vessels sunken in the channel and the pilot felt his way gingerly past them. One or two were of considerable size. Reaching Suez we saw the Greek battleship and Greek destroyers which were in Alexandria before we went to Haifa, anchored there. Ablaze in the harbour at Port Tewfick (the port for the city of Suez) was the U.S. ship *Georgia* which had been bombed the same night as the *Hobart* anchored there 3 or 4 nights ago. I think that the fire was gutting her and I saw her heavy list

to port. We did not stay at the canal but dropped the pilot, picked up some eastward mail and carried on down through the Red Sea. A notice from the Captain states that we expect to arrive Fremantle in early August, thence to Sydney for a thorough refit. Suez Canal is rightly called the gateway to the East and we knew that we were on our way home when we passed it. The lads naturally are very happy at that prospect. I believe that we oil only at Aden then stay overnight at Colombo, reaching Fremantle on Aug. 6th. It should be a fairly fast trip. My sweep popularly called the Suez Sweepstakes was shared by three young lads at 70 ackers (piastres) each. It seemed very strange last night to see ships at sea proceeding to Suez with navigation lights on, and portholes open. That cannot be for us until the war is over.

23 – 7 – 41. Australia and Perth.

The last three days we have sweltered on the way down the Red Sea to Aden. Ships were passed and lighthouses seen at intervals. The desert land on either side of the Red Sea make the place a melting pot. I have been pressing suits to try and get a few bob together before we get home. We arrived in Aden about 5.30 p.m. today to find HMAS *Australia* moored there. She had left Aussie about a month earlier. Our deck hockey team which trounced every ship in the Eastern Mediterranean Fleet including *Hobart* and Australian manned N Class destroyers *Nizam* and *Napier*, inflicted a 7-4 defeat on the *Australia's* team. We left Aden at 2100 on our way to Colombo. The Aussie's crew cheered us when we came in and we returned the cheer. Remember since we last saw her she had been engaged at Dakar and then around war infested England. Unlike *Canberra* and *Adelaide* she has been into it and could not be named as a back seat spectator. I think we make Colombo on Saturday or Monday next.

27 – 7 – 41. Crossing to Colombo.

We arrive at Colombo early p.m. tomorrow, Monday. The trip from Aden has been uneventful so far and no land has been sighted till just a while ago, when a low lying island with a lighthouse prominent on it came into view. It looks like the Laccadive Islands according to the chart. A few hours out of Aden our telegraphists picked up German wireless being transmitted, by the use of our new D/F gear. The bomb carried the last pole-mast fitted away as I have recorded. These radio

messages were being sent out from down Mauritius way. I believe the HMS *Colombo* went to investigate. Apparently the Indian Ocean is not yet free of raiders. Though I sincerely hope not, the tense Japanese situation at the moment may have quite a lot to do with the amount of time and leave that we are supposed to do in Australia. I do not think that crisis will blow over.

28 – 7 – 41.

Calling Colombo.

This afternoon we tied up to a couple of buoys in Colombo harbour. The town, to outward appearance does not look any different from 9 months ago, except that now there is only a partial blackout in force. The cruisers HMS *Hawkins* and HMS *Ceres* both 6 inch ships, are in the harbour. We have taken a few ratings onboard for passage to Australia. I have one chance of going ashore, that is today, but have decided to remain onboard. Doubtless I shall go ashore in Fremantle next week. We can hardly realize that we are less than 3 weeks from Sydney.

30 – 7 – 41.

Aussie Next Stop.

We left Colombo this morning at 7 and are now headed for Fremantle. The sea is not quite as flat as that which we were accustomed to in the Mediterranean. There is a short swell, which gives the ship a jerky movement, decidedly unpleasant. We have heard rumours of a civic reception in Perth, but I prefer to wait and see for myself. Al will certainly be surprised to receive the news that I will be with her in a couple of weeks. The hands are painting the ship overall, and she looks very different from the chatty rusted, battlewagon that she was in the war theatre.

1 – 8 – 41.

Rolling Home.

In less than a week now we will be in Australia, after an absence of over 10 months and nearly 12 months away from Sydney. Now that the bombs have ceased to fall on us, we discover ourselves back into the peacetime spit and polish Navy again. Jobs which we were unable to do during raids must all now be done to get the ship spic and span. With some leave at the end of it, we could stick a lot more than that though.

3 – 8 – 41.

Sunday at Sea.

We have now advanced further south than Cocos Island and are only a couple of days out of Fremantle. At a meeting held this afternoon there were members of the ship's company speaking over the mike. The subject was, "What Christ did for me in the

Mediterranean". The response to the call for speakers was very poor, only 4 of 700 odd stepped up. During the meeting, the padre admitted his failure to get any nearer to the ship's company than he was when he joined *Perth*. To this fact, I attribute the failure to the man himself. He ridicules Australians because he is English and has no understanding of men living under our conditions.

5 – 8 – 41.

We have slowed down our speed a few knots and reach Fremantle tomorrow, Wednesday. Today there is much brushing up of blue suits. Today, for the first time in months, blues have been the dress for the day. I am going ashore tomorrow night, but do not intend to repeat the performance of my last visit to West Australia.

6 – 8 – 41.

Deck Hockey.

On the way home from the Red Sea we have had a knockout deck hockey comp., all branches entering a team. I follow my division, the Forecastle, through the matches and at 11.30 this morning they played the final against the Foretopmen. In the most brilliant game that I have seen they won by a goal and netted me 5 shillings. At 2.30 p.m. we arrived at Fremantle to find *Canberra* and convoy in port. I took some souvenirs out home, with Nick Carter, for a young fellow who unfortunately got a draft to destroyers before we left Alexandria. We left there early and had quite an enjoyable evening at a friend's place. I forgot to take my overcoat ashore with me and boy did I shiver coming aboard at 7.30 next morning.

7 – 8 – 41.

Leave for Melbourne.

At 12.30 today our hockey team defeated *Canberra*, score 9-1. they were a very surprised team, but we assured them that it was no disgrace, for our team were beaten but once against all ships in the Mediterranean Fleet, beat the "Aussies" at Aden on the way home, next the *Canberra* and were determined to wipe up the glamour ship *Sydney* when we meet. An information chit on the board says that we are going to Melbourne where we stay for 2 days. W. Aus natives went on leave there. Tasmanian and South Australian are to go from Melbourne.

9 – 8 – 41.

Straight to Sydney.

This morning the Commander said to the hands that we had received orders to omit Melbourne and proceed straight to Sydney. Great is the disappointment of Melbourne natives and me too, for I wanted to see Mum on the way home. We are scheduled to arrive at Sydney at 10 a.m. Tuesday. Al will not expect me until Thursday at the earliest so I guess that she will be surprised. It is much colder than we have been used to and we are all wrapped up. A heavy swell is running but we are lucky to have it on the quarter.

11 – 8 – 41.

Rough Going.

This evening at 5 o'clock we rounded Gabo and for a couple of hours things were flying all over the place. The stern sea which we have had since the West is now on the beam and we are rolling like a big pig. Nobody is minding that very much for Sydney and leave is just around the corner of Gabo.

12 – 8 – 41.

There at Last.

This morning at six, the lights of the southern beaches were plainly visible. We rolled around outside the Heads until at 8.45 a.m. we entered the harbour. Our Walrus plane which flew from W. Australia to Sydney came out to convoy us in and did that pilot go through his hoops. He made that old duck do her stuff. It was great to see the familiar sights even though there was no welcome of sirens or boats. The R.A.C. Rear Admiral Gracie welcomed us back home, followed later by Lord Gourie, the Governor General. That paragraph closes this diary which is the 2nd overseas edition.

This is the last recoverable diary of George E. Hatfield onboard HMAS *Perth* 1.

George had substantial leave with his wife Alma while the *Perth* was being refitted in Sydney during September – November. 1941.

December 1941. *Perth* had post refit trials and patrol duty in the Tasman Sea. Also escorted troop convoys to New Caledonia and New Guinea.

January 1942. *Perth* involved in convoy defence.
Transferred to ANZAC Force under US Navy command.

February 1942. *Perth* escorted military convoy to
Singapore. Joined the Western Striking Force in East Indies.

March 1st 1942. *Perth* was sunk by a Japanese invasion
force heavily screened by Jap. warships in Sunda Strait, off Java.
George E. Hatfield went down with the *Perth*.

George Hatfield Jnr. was born on 8th June 1942.

Extracts from the Memoirs of George's brother, Ray Hatfield

THE EARLY DAYS

Details of my life as far back as back as I can remember.

My father's name was Albert William Hatfield, he was born at Wangaratta, Victoria, where his father was a barber. Dad was apprenticed to Singer sewing machines as a mechanic. He had one brother and two sisters near as I know. He married mum, who was previously Kate Field, also born in Victoria. They married in Victoria and eventually they had four children.

They had two children George and Bill. Bill was commonly known as Bonnie, and with those two children they moved to Adelaide in 1918, where dad had a second hand sewing machine shop, mainly industrial machines, in Grenfell Street on the outskirts of the city.

I was born at Queens Home, Rose Park, in Adelaide on 16 February 1918. My earliest recollection goes back to life in that shop in Grenfell Street. I can remember dimly, sitting in front of the open fireplace in that shop with the three boys and mum and dad. Dad who had quite a pleasant tenor voice, singing some old barber shop ballads, which were the thing those days - sentimental old songs and I don't know why that sticks in my memory but it does. Dad no doubt had had a few beers and was enjoying himself. He was a very good mechanic, a gregarious man who loved a practical joke and was involved all his life with the buffalo lodge. Funny thing I never heard him swear. In his day he was a fairly good foot runner and had aspired to compete in the Stawell Gift but never made it.

Probably through his sporting contacts, he took a position as curator of Kensington oval which was about four miles out of Adelaide and included a brick residence on the ground. It was a very large oval. The outer fence was I'd say roughly about four hundred yards from the playing field and the whole of the outer

fence had thick hedge all around. It was a terrific place for kids to be raised in. We had all that area. Motor cars weren't very frequent those days and I can remember when the oval was being upgraded, they were building sloping surrounds to the pitch for the spectators, it was all done with draught horses pulling drays. These drays were about eight feet square I suppose and a couple of feet deep and took a few tons of soil which was obtained a bit further up the mountain from the oval and while the job was in progress they had many of these drays racing from the oval up to the quarry to pick up the material. The young drivers had a ball they were racing each other and cutting everybody off and it was a picnic and it was very exciting for the kids to watch.

As I say motor cars weren't very much in vogue those days we had a couple of cows, chooks and a draught horse, a big Clydesdale, which we called Gilligan. Dad used to use him to roll the cricket pitch. He used to have part of his duties was to make the cricket pitch in the summer time which he did with Gilligan and a big heavy iron roller. Gilligan used to be shod with special leather boots so that his hoofs wouldn't mark the pitch in the final stages of its preparation and one of his famous acts was he knew damn well when the pitch was nearly ready he'd prop in the middle of it lift his tail and dad would smartly dive for it with both hands so that he would collect the manure instead of going onto the pitch. There were no flies on old Gilligan.

I was about four year old when we went to the oval and George and Bill went to the local school which was in the next suburb of Marryatville half a mile away I suppose. I used to go there I believe and sit on the fence waiting for school to end and for my two brothers to come out and the head master bailed mum up one day and said 'he'd be better in school than sitting on the fence waiting', so I started school when I was a bit over four. Life on the oval was kids' paradise. We had tunnels cut through the hedge around the oval, which we were the only ones that knew the entrance to them. We had it all cleared rocks inside where we used to do all sorts of things we shouldn't have been, such as lighting a fire and baking spuds, smoking tea leaves wrapped up in newspaper. The most of them or a lot of the neighbours in the

area had horse and buggy and dad used to allow them to run them on the oval to get a bit of grazing and we were adept at approaching the horse leaping on its back and going for a wild bare back ride till we got thrown off. We had a lucrative business going, with the number of animals in the oval that we used to collect the manure and give it to the neighbours adjacent to the oval in return for which we were allowed to take our pick of their fruit trees. Everybody had fruit trees in their back yard. I must tell you about the one we had by the cottage on the oval, It was the biggest apricot tree I have ever seen, the size of a Moreton Bay Fig and the apricots were as big as apples. There was also a vineyard on the Kensington Road side of the oval, the tram ran past the oval and back to the city, on the other side was a vast vineyard which was very often felt in the humour for a few grapes.

One of our neighbours had a job as night watchman or watchman for the quarry which was up the hill a bit from the oval and weekends he used to take the kids up there with him and there was a big well there bricked in about four foot deep where the water for the boilers used to circulate and this was always warm and we used to walk up to the bricks works with him, he was the a fantastic fellow in our estimation because he was a crack shot with a shanghai and on the way up he used to show us how to use the shanghai. We learnt to swim in this brick kiln hole, another swimming pool we had fairly adjacent was a creek and the water was crystal clear and there were a couple of logs dropped in it conveniently by the parents for the kids to swim onto, it was really a thing. When I think about the days that we had as kids I feel sorry for the present generation of city kids.

As I say there weren't many motor cars around but I can remember the family going to Glenelg beach by buggy, horse and buggy, which Dad had probably hired or borrowed from one of the neighbours. At that time the steam train ran along the street front at the beach at Glenelg. One time we did rent an old weatherboard house on the dunes overlooking the beach and we kids slept on the veranda. I can still smell the wild roses which

grew along the front of it. Anyway that was something unusual to go for a holiday but life was one long holiday those days.

My younger brother Charlie was born in Adelaide and shortly after Charlie was born they decided they would go back to Victoria. Dad went first I don't know why and Mum was to come later with the four children, Charlie in arms and the other three larrikins a bit of a problem. Anyway the train was quarantined because of diphtheria which was raging through southern Australia and Mum spent a while in quarantine at the showgrounds, dad used to come and look over the fence to her. After quarantine they went and lived for a short while with Dad's sister Adelaide who lived in East Brunswick and they had a cottage there with a large sleepout in the backyard quite a huge sleepout, Harold my cousin slept in that sleepout. Dad and Mum slept in the house, the three boys and Harold slept in the sleepout.

Eventually we moved into a terraced house a mile or so away in East Brunswick in Edward Street. There were three houses in a terrace, the old lady who owned it lived in the middle one with her married daughter and her hubby and a couple of kids. He was unemployed, things were crook those days. The other side house was occupied by another married daughter and we rented the third one. These cottages were three bedroom with a passage way down one side. There was three rooms plus a kitchen lounge room or dining room whatever you prefer to call it, so Mum and Dad slept in the front room, Bonnie and I in the second room and then you went into the kitchen and George at the backroom, you went out the back door rather small backyard where there was a lean-to bathroom with a tin bath, adjacent to that was the laundry with a fuel copper and a couple of tubs. The routine was, on Saturday the fire was stoked up, the copper boiled and you had a bath one after the other using the same old water. This only occurred once a week. Nobody bathed every day those days not in our system anyway.

Charlie of course was a baby; the other three of us went to East Brunswick school, state school. State schools were free; they went up to the eighth class. If you wanted to have training for a

technical course you left in the sixth class and went to a technical school, or, if you wanted to do a clerical career, you went to a high school. These were not free you had to pay a certain figure.

This time was still in the depression era, Dad was scratching a living running another second hand machine shop in Melbourne, sometimes he made a quid, and sometimes he didn't. Mum lived a very hand to mouth existence, if he had a good week he gave her some money if didn't well, there wasn't any to give.

When George went through school to the eighth grade Bon and I had a couple of jobs as messenger boys, we were lucky to get them. Bonnie and I both finished up in the same grade at school, we were both in the sixth grade and they allowed a certain number of us to go to technical or high school without paying fees if their circumstance warranted it. Bonnie being the eldest was selected to go to Brunswick Technical School, the headmaster approached mum and said I think you should send the other boy (me) too. Bonnie is bright but he is lazy, the other bloke is not as bright but he's a bloody battler. So he said I think I can wangle that to get you two instead of the one. They were only allowing one per family.

GEORGE'S LAST MEETING WITH HIS BROTHER, RAY.

My brother George and Reg my brother-in-law had left in 1939 for England to takeover a British cruiser now renamed '*Perth*'. They were returning to Australia via America and were in New York when war was declared. After spending a few months in the Atlantic they returned to Sydney and the crew was reorganised. Reg went to Flinders for a gunnery course. George was now a petty officer and had married his fiancée Alma Parkin in Sydney and remained in the *Perth*. The *Perth* then went to the Mediterranean. Arriving there shortly after I had left for Flinders Naval depot. They were in the evacuation of Crete and Greece and eventually left for the Indian Ocean. While we were boiler cleaning at Patavia, *Perth* berthed behind us. She was in company with an American cruiser *Houston* and a Dutch cruiser *Van Trompe*, also a couple of destroyers. I met George on the wharf; they had had running encounters with Jap ships. They needed oil and ammunition as they were running low. No ammunition was available at Patavia and they didn't fuel as the oil supply had been tampered with by adding salt water. They left again soon after. I know I thought I would desperately have liked to be aboard her and maybe have a fighting chance of getting out of the Java Sea. Our captain had obtained a huge army truck and it was parked on the wharf by the ship. We were told to ditch our gas masks and put some personal gear in the haversack. At that stage it was being considered to scuttle the ships and get across Java to Jillijab by truck, it was a port on the Indian Ocean side of Java. They were going to evacuate naval personnel as they needed them but the army was to remain. The truck was never used, we left port with *Yarra* in company of an oil tanker and a couple of tramp steamers. The *Yarra* was in command. If we got through the straits we were to go to Colombo. Oiling from the tanker as required. Shortly after making it through the straits the oil tanker exploded violently. The *Wollongong* and *Yarra* searched the area for the submarine which had torpedoed the tanker but we were unable to locate it. The tanker was unable to proceed and *Yarra* instructed our captain to endeavour to make the West Australian

coast as we had insufficient fuel to make Colombo. *Yarra* proceeded with the rest of the ships. We made it to the coast of West Australia, just off Shark Bay. Fuel was exhausted and we had to wait there several days till fuel could be sent from Fremantle. We enjoyed some of the excellent liquor we had acquired while loading our Bofors gun in Singapore. Whilst there our wireless operator told me that *Perth* and her companions had run into a huge Jap invasion force heavily screened by Jap warships and that they had put up a grim fight but all Allied ships had been sunk. This news devastated me though I had known that it would be fortunate for either of us to make it out of Java. We entered Fremantle harbour and after a few days I was drafted to Cockatoo dock to standby a tribal class destroyer *HMAS Warramunga*.

HATFIELD FAMILY TREE

Adelaide
Amelia
(Nee Holland)
HATFIELD
SILK
Born 1828



Marr.
1853
New York,
USA

Charles
Alexander
HATFIELD
Born 1830
Cin. Ohio, USA



Mary Ann Melicia
HATFIELD
Born 1855

Charles
Exume
HATFIELD
Born
23.9.1857
Melbourne,
Vic. Australia



Francis (Nee Locke)
HATFIELD
Born 1867



Charles Joseph
HATFIELD
Born 1887



Kate
(Nee Field)
HATFIELD
Born 1884



Albert
William
HATFIELD
Born 1890



Ruby Francis
HATFIELD
Born 1892



Adelaide
Amelia
HATFIELD
Born 1895



George Exum
HATFIELD
Born 4.11.1913



Bernard William
HATFIELD
Born 23.7.1916



Alfred Raymond
HATFIELD
Born 16.2.1918



Alexander Charles
HATFIELD
Born 2.4.1926

George William Hall
HATFIELD

Janice Fay
(Nee Hatfield)
GILBERT

Robin Raymond
& Betty Lorraine
HATFIELD

John Charles
& Raymond Bernard
HATFIELD



NEW YORK WORLD'S FAIR 1939

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For Officers and Crew of
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H.M.A.S. PERTH.

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SPEED 32.5 KNOTS.

