David’s Navy

Part 1 Sept 1944 to Jan 45 Flinders Naval Depot

Date 9-9-44

Arrive Flinders Naval Depot

At last I’m writing on an F.N.D. letterhead - & what a place – it’s a town in itself & I think it’s going to cost just as much to live here as it was back in the city at Spogs. I suppose I should have written before but I was pretty tired – dog tired, & the mails are cleared here at pretty awkward times. I think the best idea is to give a description of what I’ve done since I left Adel. station – that way I should remember a few more of things I’ve done than by just writing as I think of them.

Before I do that I must ask you to send over a padlock and key please - for my locker. They sell some here at the canteen but they are all the same & so anyone can open them. The lads all seem pretty tired looking today – mainly because of needle we had yesterday. 3 S. Ausies went out to it yesterday at diff. times; one is in the sick bay still. I’ve got a rather depressed feeling today & my arm is still sore & swollen: not as bad as last night though – more stiff today – they say 1st needle is the worst, except for vax. – we’ll see.

I’m writing, with fountain pen - but not used to it yet, in the N.E. (new entry) reading room & library – a beaut. new place & the only quiet place in the depot. The weather here is not the best – today & yest. afternoon has been raining nearly all the time & cold – boy, I noticed it today. I’ve seemed to get away from my original idea, so we’ll start.

After we left Adel. we got a bit excited & made quite a row – thanks for fruit & nuts which went down well between us during the journey. 1st stop was Murray Bridge & of course got out and had pies & coffee – were given some fruit by nurses – I think. Next stop was Serviceton (?) but after that I don’t know quite were we pulled up until Ballarat. The trip was really lousy – that’s the best word for it (although I didn’t say so in telegram) There was 9 in the one compartment & how could 9 possibly get to sleep – only a couple even dozed for an hour or more. Two got up in luggage racks, but those positions changed about every hour. Got to Ballarat about 8 or 8:30 & had coffee & sandwich – is that place cold. Got to Melbourne about 11:15 & was disappointed with it at first. Had to report back at station (Spencer St.) at 11:30. That hour was the cause of statement, as we couldn’t get far & down that way (Spencer St.) city is filthy – our eyes got full of dust & coal. At 11:30 we had lunch at station & had to report back at 3:30

This time we got well into the city & my opinion changed – I reckon I know my way around well enough after that. They tell us we probably will ‘go ashore’ after 3 weeks (or may be 5) so more about Melbourne then. I’m in Port watch (the other is Starboard) & each watch goes on leave alternate weekends, after of course a few weeks for us. We went from Spencer to Flinder St. Station at 3:30 & waited an hour or more before travelling in my first electric train to Flinders. Got here about 7 & marched from train to office where we got our ‘red card’ stating what mess, class etc you are in. All my cobbers are in the same mess & watch except Eric – he is in a different watch which means we’ll go leave diff. weekends. I’ve seen dozens of lads I know during last couple of days – nearly all are in Port watch too.

After receiving cards we went on & were issued with hammocks, already stamped with name, & two blankets (one only bound) & then marched with these heavy things right to the end block of dorms. which was ours. First we had supper (evening meal) & then started pitching hammocks & receiving lockers. I got to bed by 9 & slept like a log – a hammock is an extra thing to sleep in – except with a crook arm. When they are all slung & you are in them it looks as if there is another floor in the room. Woken by bugle at 6 & by 6:15 have to have hamm’s down & stowed away in corner – then wash & have breakfast from 6:30 to 7 when we fall in & day begins. In morning (Friday) we marched around depot & then had dentist inspection (one to be filled), then went on & had first needle, blood grouping & another med. Didn’t feel needle until after lunch when it began to ache. In afternoon went down & received all kit issue & what a kit – we tried on uniforms until we got one that fitted (didn’t improve arm). Marched with sea bag to marking room, where we left them

Then had divisions – worth seeing – everyone here fell in on parade ground & was inspected by Commodore – beaut. band. After this had tea – was raining like anything. Received note from Johnsy to meet him outside hut – talked to him till about nine o’clock – he is going on draft in about a week’s time.

I forgot to bring towel with me had had to borrow but will get issue tomorrow. Went straight to bed when I got back to dorm. (after a shower) but didn’t sleep very well. Up again at 6 & marked all clothing this morning which will collect tomorrow morning. After this we had lunch & haven’t anything more to do today – had a bit of a look around before writing this.

Might go to pictures tonight. Have to pay for everything here – nothing much to do tomorrow. Have to get out – closing. (more next time)

Date 16-9-44

Settling In

Received your very welcome letter last night (get mail at 8pm.) – yours being first to receive. Thanks for forwarding on papers & lock (have not received these yet, though)

I would have written before but have been down in the dumps again; I got over the 1st innoc. on Sunday & by Wed my arm was O.K. when we had another innoc. & the vax. Together. So I’ve been a bit crook yesterday had a crook headache & sore throat & a fever (I think – was flushed but shivering). Today I woke up feeling 100% again other than cold – effect of vax I believe – so am enjoying Navy life again – it certainly is having its ups & downs at present. One consolation is that we’ve had the worst of the needles (of course – final effect of vax, yet) & the others don’t hurt at all or if they do only for about ¼ of an hour. The two we had were for typhoid (you get a mild attack of it I believe) & we’ve got tetanus & cholera to come (two of each). Only have to have one tooth filled by dentist. That’s about enough of my aches and pains.

During the week have seen lots of lads I know – Johnny Tillbrook & Quirke – saw Darby J. again Wed. – he’s drafted to “Echunga”, a corvette.

Last Sunday got into rig for first time & paraded for church but not enough room for us so were marched away again. Had most of day to ourselves so sorted out my gear, rolled it up & tied it with tape (Id a yard). Still felt tired so went to bed early. We stack our hamm’s away each morning & can’t sling them till 7 pm at night & not later than 7:30. So going to bed means finding your own hamm., slinging it, unlashing it, making your bed & then heave it to desired height. Then in morning “wakey”, “wakey” is sounded at 6 & by 6:15 the above routine must be reversed.

On Sunday we fell in at 7:15 in “giggle-suits” – two piece overall suits - & did 30 mins P.T. We wore these, with gaiters (small canvas leggings) all of last week, but on next Monday we wear no. 3 rig (working uniform) with gaiters. All last week we had lectures, instructions in Naval routine, discipline etc. & of course plenty of marching in our working boots (which now feel quite comfortable) They don’t issue shoes now : working & good boots & sand-shoes. I go on leave in a fortnight’s time – had to have that letter Dad – have to stay in arranged place – annex of Navy House at Hawthorn. First home leave will probably be Xmas – 14 days : but leave is only a privilege – so we’ve been told.

Last week went to barbers & had haircut (1/3) & had my no. 2 suit (best one) altered by tailor (nix) & pressed (2/6). On Thursday it was pay-day & each pay-day our hammocks & mattress covers have to be changed & scrubbed – this is a big business & has to be done in dog-watches (your free time in afternoon) but we did it during instruction – we were shown the correct way. Pay is fortnightly & quite a big business – fall in in alphabetical order & when name called advance to resp. table, remove cap (correct way) & call your pay no., when envelope is put on cap; you then place hand on money, turn to right, replace cap, take out money & give env. back to Wran. After this the money is yours & you’ve earned it. I got £3 – how I don’t know but one doesn’t argue in this place. Others only got £2, some £2/10/– etc. I banked £2/10/– in C.S.B. which I’ve opened. That night was feeling a bit better so went to pictures. Couldn’t sleep in my hamm. very well that night – I hadn’t done the tying the correct way when changing ; result – every time I moved – just about rolled out. (Just kicked out of reading room – closing for supper). Back again, have just slung 5 hamms. for lads who have gone to pictures – my throat is still too sore.

By the way, I hope you will be posting this on to Marg. as I haven’t written her a big letter. Thanks for sending her letter on, & the N.A.P. one – I will send this back to you & get you to put it with my other N.A.P. stuff, please.

On Thursday afternoon we got to work on our dirty hammocks & scrubbed them – boy what a job, especially when the canvas is all new. Never-the-less, after an hour’s good scrubbing with plenty of soap, both hammock and mattress cover were reasonably white. After this on Friday afternoon I started washing & now I know what your Mondays must have been like, Mum. Still I did a fair job, considering I used cold water; couldn’t heat coppers– wood all too wet with rain: It rained here all the time on & off. This morning it looked very fine & as it had been raining all night we thought it would be a good day – but by 8:30 it was hailing. Since then it rained a couple of times. I collected these things – undies, hankies, towel, flannel - this afternoon after a good burst of sun – all dry – I’m sure of that too Mum. Tomorrow I’ll have to do some more. This afternoon I scrubbed a couple of pairs of gaiters; seem to be spending a bit of time in the laundry - don’t I.

On Monday our class starts on our 3 weeks parade-ground work. After this we can march & drill : one just has to listen to our P.O. & we soon believe him. The other day we were talking while sheltering from rain in a garage so – out we went, in rain, & doubled up & back between two blocks, five times – quite a run. They know what they are doing – most are 13 - 17 years servicemen (ours is 15). This course begins with P.T. & marching & finishes with squad drill with rifles & bayonets. I don’t mind this though. As long as I can keep fit I am going to enjoy this life – the mess & food is pretty rough – if you don’t fight for it, you won’t even get bread to eat; but now we are getting a bit more order in our mess. Once we get out of “J” block, things are much better – this will probably be when the draft on Oct 2nd comes in – tell Eddie I’ll be looking for him - & laughing.

Will answer your letter now Mum. Yes, Monty got pretty crook for a while, but is O.K. again. Thank Auntie for her share in fruit please Mum. Hope you had a good time at Floyd’s. Gordon – don’t forget to write if you get any spare time at all. Guess it was strange with only two of you at tea, rather quiet I should think, or maybe not. Yes Monty is in same watch, all my pals except Eric. All the lads who came over together are in same mess i.e. sleep & eat together, together with some Tassies, Qlanders, & N.S.W’s. Nels is with us too & a good laugh he is – no need to worry about me not settling down because of him though – if I do the O/D course there is not much swotting & he, is in a coders course, but if O.T.S. well they are in another block altogether.

Well, there is so many things I want to say that I can’t remember them all, or think of them just when I’m writing; still can’t help that. Must close now & see if I can drop a note to Marg. before this reading room is closed. So cheerio & hope all are O.K.

P.S. only need a penny stamp Mum

Date 21-9-44

In Hospital

Received your letter yesterday Mum, apparently you had not received my other letter by then. Thanks for forwarding on Marg’s letter – seems to have settled in down there – will send it back, you might want it. Got the mail & Argus on Monday night – interested in Sth. Aussies. I suppose ‘Argus – boy wonder’ wrote that epistle – I’ll run him down with this pen for that. I didn’t get padlock till today – thanks very much though Dad.

Guess you are wondering about envelope – yes it’s right – I’m in hospital. I came in Tuesday afternoon – guess I can’t take it; still it is very nice here when you’re feeling a bit down. I had been getting a bit worse each day after Thursday I just thought it was the vax. – developed a super-duper cold - by Sunday came out hot & cold with headache. Each night had been dosing myself with aspros, eno’s, lax. Pills & Buckleys (all procured at canteen). Monday felt a bit better – no headache – started on parade - marching & drilling. Tuesday morning more marching, pretty crook – sick bay & so to hospital. Tues. & Wed. just slept: cold, headache & sore throat. This morning got rid of headache but ear ache – doc. says infection from throat – in a bad way, what!

The ward here contains two-piece beds, one above the other - about 10 along each wall, looks very neat – could hold about 40, only 25 now. I’m on top; below is a Q/lander, on right is Vict. & W.A. & on left in S.A. & N.S.W. – good variety.

We have a wireless here – first I’ve heard since home; meals are brought to you – no fighting for sugar, milk etc like we do in mess. Even get occasional fruit here.

Most of the lads have crook throats, coughs, ears, etc. I had temp over 100 Tues. & Wed. – better today though.

On Wed. a Red + Worker came in & handed round 2 packets of cigs to each person here, also gave us this paper & envelopes I’m using. Another came round today with magazines & books for us to read. I’ve still got fags – haven’t been smoking for days now, since I had crook throat.

The trouble with this place is that it is very hard to get out quickly & so you miss your class & have to wait round for next one to come in. I certainly hope I can get out by weekend – very much doubt it though according to other lads. The first morning I was away from class, class leader was picked – it is a big help, so I’m told to be class leader – one consolation is that Monty was picked.

The meals aren’t so extra, Mum – no sugar in our mess since Thursd. ; fight for butter & milk & bread – still, we’ll live on it, & put on weight. The manners are exquisite, too; you could imagine. We are issued with two white towels. I don’t think we get our no. till we go on draft, but it doesn’t matter Mum. What we learnt in N.A.P. doesn’t make any diff. till we start out seamanship course – course we know some marching etc.

Well, I didn’t intend to write much, just to tell you I was in hospital for a spell – silly boy;

Date 23-9-44

Still in hospital

Received your letter this afternoon thanks – so this is just a note to answer it. And before I forget this time – please send over two face-washers – the two I had in town (white with blue check) are marked. It’s the only way to clean my ears out & the Doc. said I’ve got a lot of wax in them.

Yes, I’m still in hospital, but am feeling pretty good now thanks; other than my cold which doesn’t seem much different – they say you don’t lose it till you leave – I’m not going to believe that. (Just read Sept 16th Women’s Weekly – all about Navy & Flinders – you might find it interesting to get one).

The lads – Eric, Nels., Mont. & another lad (Duggin) – have come up & seen me every afternoon, so have had my visitors O.K. They have brought all letters, handys, etc that I wanted. My sore throat has gone, also earache – in fact I feel quite alright other than cold which I’m getting used to. This afternoon I got up for first time – to sit in sun. Have been 4 1/2 days already. Don’t know when I’ll get out, Monday, I’m hoping; still it’s been a wonderful rest here.

One lad next to me got earache same time as I did – he had an abscess – just as well mine has gone. Another lad (S.A.) is ward, used to moan & groan whole night : couldn’t bend his neck. In the end they had every doctor here, took him out – has got tetanus. He is so crook today that if he pulls through after tonight they think he’ll be right – poor lad. The hospital must have about a dozen of our mess in various places at present.

Eric-Kain went up line this weekend – I go up next – I hope.

Church hall is same hall as pict.; screen up one end which is taken down. Other end is altar, pulpit etc, screened by partitions except for Sunday. That’s right Mum, if tired you can’t sling hammocks; if not raining – down on ground outside, if raining trek up to canteen & try & get a seat there. Each block has its own laundry & accompanying shed, also lines outside – weather has been much better lately – since in hospital.

Haven’t you received civvy clothes yet? I handed them in during the first week I was here, can’t tell if they were posted though. Got overcoat like Rea’s Mum (with belt). Weekend leave extends from 4 pm. Friday to 9 pm. Sunday.

That’s funny about “pegs” Mum, how long would anyone keep things like pegs – you just fasten them on as best you can – I usually use a couple of hankies to help.

The sick-bay-attendants here are not bad one is a hard nut: Asked a lad where he came from, “Hobart”, “Who owns the store there now” he asks. This goes on all day.

Hope the Doctor’s right about you’ll be so much better in 6 mths, Mum. Glad you’re quite O.K. Gordon, better start on that veg., you don’t know what good food is till you come here – then you know what you’ve left behind.

Guess had better get to bed now, so cheerio for now

P.S. Might get out Monday, said Doc. today, hope so.

Date 30-9-44

At American Red Cross

As you see I’m up the line at last – well it’s only just over 3 weeks really.

I’m very sorry I didn’t write last week but when I got out of sick bay wasn’t so good & after marching etc was just about done so went to bed after tea every night – didn’t do anything else. Thursday felt better & at night got ready to come on leave on Friday; left 4 p.m. Frid.; leave Melbourne at 8 p.m. Sunday. Tell you about it in next letter, am writing Monday night. Guess you wondered where my letters were – received yours thanks – it’s great getting even a note.

Yes Mum, I think it would be a good idea to forward nose drops & dropper – this cold gets you down a bit. – I’m sure they would help. I think there may be enough solution in bottle – I bought some Vaporite today – that ought to help too.

Am having a good time so far, what with this cough, but just about coughed myself out. Staying at Navy House; since 11:30 this morning, have been here at American red cross – what a place. It out does any of our service hostels, naturally. It’s a big 5-story place, has got everything and anything you want. writing this in their waiting lounge! Of course the place is full of Yanks, only occasional Aussie. Am leaving in a minute moving somewhere else; - excuse writing but crossed nib (I think a crook one anyhow). Had beaut lunch here 2/= roast turkey etc, as much fruit as you want, well did I eat; also pint of milk & cup of coffee.

Will be forwarding parcel today – one of my Navy collars & please keep it at home till I’m on leave. As matter of fact I swapped it when first there & it’s a big crime – result, wouldn’t want to be caught with it. I’ll buy another one later – wearing O/T now Mum!

Date 2-10-44

18th Birthday, Watch

Here I am 18 today, sure getting on now. Must thank you both very much for the letters which I received today: I am replying them both together, guess you won’t mind, & I can get more in the one letter. Boy, that watch is certainly a beaut. and thank you all very much. I got that today too – what a surprise, I never expected it for ages & I get it on my birthday – what could be better. As you say Dad, it’s just the very type I wanted & a ‘Lavina’ is about the best brand, isn’t it? I showed it to everyone in the mess now & I only got it at 4.30 with the letters & papers (thanks again).

Do hope you are feeling much better Mum, after that visit to the hospital. I never realised that that little sore lump on your finger would finish up causing you so much bother, hope you have recovered fully & have no bad after-effects. At least I’m feeling myself again, really; have still got cough & cold but that’s part of me now. When I came out of sick bay on the Monday afternoon, I felt O/T. but on Tuesday I was down again. Until Thursday afternoon I felt really crook & couldn’t eat much – what a spell I’ve had. Still now I have settled down properly, I really enjoy this life. Up till now I’ve been saying I liked it but now I can like it – a lot. As you said Dad, I’ve waited long enough to try this life – so really I couldn’t have a better birthday than having it – in the Navy! (Course I wouldn’t say no to being home for it).

When I came out of sick bay I went back to my old class & soon picked up the drill I’d missed – it wasn’t much as it happened. Thus I haven’t missed much at all by my short rest. By the way Dad, congratulations!! on having completed your 20th year of service – I should think that must be some achievement – it certainly is a long time : it’s time they gave you a secretary – what? No, I haven’t received other parcel yet – will be looking forward to it though. Last Wed we had another needle – cholera – no after effects at all with that though. Today has been quite wet, but not enough to dampen my spirits on such a day as this. It rained all this morning, with us out in it, still I’m used to rain here now, although last week was quite hot at times & very little rain. When it was hot our rig of the day was jumpers & flannels; today, cold & wet our rig was cotton shirts – that’s why colds are hard to get rid of.

Do hope Marg. that you were satisfied with exams – I’m sure you would have done quite O.K. in them, especially with stay in town which must have helped a lot in your view of the work, & work generally. Yes Mum, am A1 now & haven’t missed out from others. Thanks for hanks & face-washers which you have sent (haven’t got them yet, though) When I went into hospital Mum, I had to pack all my gear into sea-bag & take that + hammock to baggage store & leave it there till I came out. Have just read through some of your last letters Mum, & roughly answered them above – more about my work, etc here :

Today we started on bayonet fighting – we did this in the rain until we got wet through & then they decided we had better go in. After this we have been learning about hand grenades, use of, etc. We should pass out of parade this week sometime – this is 3rd week. Last week we did mostly rifle drill & marching, with spells of P.T. On Wed & Thurs. We did our anti-gas course – quite interesting, if feeling in the mood. We have been issued with our gas-masks, etc’s. During course we went through gas chamber of tear gas, first in gas masks & then we had to go through without – boy, does it make your eyes run – they beat you out the door. Another thing we had to do was double round & round block with gas masks on – gosh does it make you heave when not used to it. Also had incendiary bomb lectures & then practice. When we pass out (& if, of course) of parade (re: marching & drilling with rifles & bayonets) we start on Vicker’s Gun – so looks as if our training will be starting in earnest once off the parade ground. Have heard they’ve shortened our parade course because of big numbers new entries arriving – guess Eddie will among these – we don’t mind.

I just missed out on big march through Melbourne on Trafalgar Day. Our class, 82, was first one not called (?). what I mean is all classes up to 81 are in it. Our class is a reserve, so I may be in it yet. If in armed party, will have to march 3 miles with fixed bayonets – they get heavy as you know Dad. Still unless some are away, we won’t be in it.

Almost forgot about leave, had better tell you about it:

We changed into no. 2 rig (best) on Friday about 2.30 (after games). Marched up to station at Brite Pt. at 4 & got a seat in train. By 6.30 we were in Melbourne, after yelling our way through suburbs – one old lady bout 80 was standing on her front veranda waving Aust. flag as our train, packed with sailors only, went past. We went straight to Navy House i.e. Nelson & I, all others had to go to Navy Annex – we can’t decide, Navy allots were we must go. i.e. under 18’ers (the youngsters!) Had tea & I was tired & my cough was getting me down so thought I’d stay there. Nelson went to Luna Park & later some lads came in from Annex so I thought I’d go with them & cheer up; went to Glaciarium – ice skating, but no skates left, so just watched. Felt much better coming home – had good sleep.

Sat. morning lay in (& was it lovely, a bed with sheets & a pillow) Got up about 9.15, had breakfast & Nels & I looked around shopping centres.

Sat. had lunch at American Red + (probably get letter) played billiards there & later went on to ‘Dug Out’ – another very nice place – plenty of girl hostesses there. Sat. night we decided to go to a house party (offering from Navy House). It was at Flemington & a bit of a shock – no young people there (only a few under 12) & the others over 45. The people had good intentions though& we thanked them very much afterwards – it was a nice quiet cheap evening for us, anyway. Sunday once more ‘slept in’ & went out to Shrine – a beautiful place – talked to guard there while it rained. Raced for tram, got wet through, had lunch again at Yank joint. Went for a walk, between rain & then to Power House, on St. Kilda Rd. Had photo taken there, for nothing, one photo 4 negatives to you Mum & one to girlfriend so sent it to Marg. D. – hope it’s O.K., you should it soon. So we had to come back at 8 pm. (had coffee & biscuits at Y.M.C.A.) It was beautiful though being free for a while – had a beaut. time.

Well, must close, here’s little 18 year old birthday boy signing off thanking you all very much once more.

Date 5-10-44

Watch Broken

It hasn’t taken me long to do something to the watch : as you see I cracked the glass last night while “mucking – around”.

So would you get another face (unbreakable if possible) put in please. As far as I can tell it keeps good time, but I have no way of checking. While you have it home, would you keep it, say a day or two & see if it is losing at all – if it is I suppose Mr. O Llneyer will fix it.

Sorry I have to send it home so soon ; it is an extra watch, don’t you think. As it happened, it’s just the type I was thinking of. Guess I can fix things up about it, when I come home next.

Just a note to let you know what happened, so could you get it fixed please Dad & send it back when O.K.

Thanks again, very much

Date 7-10-1944

B’Day Cake Arrived

This is mainly a note of thanks – once again. Thanks Marg. & Gordon for your letters, got them on the 3rd, & it was very nice to receive them. You’ve done quite some travelling around Gordon, lately – you’ll know those areas better than anyone soon. Suppose you are doing a bit of swotting now (?), it certainly won’t be long before the exams, i.e. if the next month slips by like the last one has – for me anyway (will return programme, you might want it – thanks). I guess the Asst. Leader looks extra smart in her uniform – I suppose you won’t dine with ‘the men’.

I hope you have a very good time Marg. – you will have been by the time you get this. It sounds quite a strenuous weekend – not for those used to exercise – I suppose.

Next I must thank you all very much for parcel – cake etc. You have got no idea the way it went. I brought it out at tea (4 pm.) & it went straight away – just kept one slice to eat later – the lads soon made it feel lighter. It carried well, of course icing was broken, but could read “Happy Birthday, Sailor”. Thanks for nuts and sugar : the former are extra, I nibble a couple after each meal. The sugar has come in handy already – that was a brain-wave. Quite often we get no sugar for meal at all – so, I can now just get a couple of lumps, & everything is sweet. I got the other parcel yesterday (face-washers) – thanks for those Mum; extra hanks will come in handy too. Hope you have got the watch back by now, Dad – it certainly is a pity to return it so soon; I was wrestling in the washrooms & slipped when I broke glass.

I did very well on my birthday, I received (on 2nd & 3rd): 3 telegrams, 8 letters & 2 parcels – boy was it any good getting that mail (have to get another parcel from Auntie Marg., too). That’s what we all look forward to most. Received your other letter last night Mum, - thanks for photo too – I reckon it’s good of all of you, I’d like to keep it. I’ve got my shoulder in it anyway, even if it’s not the five. I’m feeling pretty good now Mum thanks – my cold is even better, so things are looking up. Do hope your finger doesn’t hurt too much & trust that Dr’s. in town will be pleased with it, when they see it. Also hope that you, Dad are not feeling too tired with all that work & that your feet will improve. That was a shock about Rex – hasn’t told me yet (officially) what he was doing – hope he fits in & likes work there. No Mum, wasn’t at Red Cross on my own, there were 3 of us there. Nelson & I & then another lad came later.

The S. Aussies came in last Wed. night – saw Eddie, Pansy Hunter, another lad from Bank, one from footy club & two cobbers from N.A.P. – so there is plenty I know in the new batch. I feel an old salt now with all the new batch in. Doug Gordon came in too – with the Victorians – has been in Army, Air force & now, Navy.

I have done quite a bit of washing now, but with not much success, I’m afraid. My hanks never seem to be quite clean & my shirts, with blue round the neck, always run although I use cold water; never-the-less I’ll learn with constant practice, I guess. Yesterday afternoon I had to scrub my hammock cover (supposed to be done last pay-day, but was up the line that weekend) & this afternoon scrubbed my gaiters (canvas). I should have washed too, but was too lazy, will have to do it Monday afternoon.

Each morning we fall in at 5 to 7, do ¾ an hour of P.T. & then have divisions. Then we march down to wharves & do boat pulling : the latter we do every morning but P.T. only each alternate week – the other week we have working parties – cleaning up etc. After boat pulling we go to what course of class we are doing. Last week we had bayonet-fighting, hand grenades, pistols (.38’s) & then 2 ½ days of Vickers m.g. On Monday I think we resume parade & then go on with other m.g’s. We knock off at 4 pm. & have rest of day to ourselves (usually – sometimes working parties etc.) At first I wondered what I’d do in that time – now I don’t seem get any free time, there’s always something to do. I haven’t struck mess duties yet, or any block duties (these are weekly), I think that’s because of “W” (it’s some good Dad), & I’m not looking forward to them – only consolation is that you usually manage best of food.

It won’t be long before I’m up the line again, only another week – these fortnights will pass quickly, I think. Going to apply for billet next time, with Nels., others don’t want to come, so hope we get a nice home.

Well, got a lot of letters to answer, so will say Cheerio , hope all are feeling better home (other way round now)

Date 18-10-44

Pusser’s Bible

Once again I’m thanking you very much, first for watch Dad, which I received this afternoon & note, & for Argus & mail, & letter last night, Mum. This time I’ll see the watch does not come to any harm whatsoever. It certainly is a beaut. & suits me down to the ground – I’ve been looking forward to its return. Hope you got small parcel I posted, Dad.

This afternoon I’ve been washing, or dhobying as we call it in the Navy. I think the worst things are hankies – especially when you’ve got a cold. I also washed a shirt (the blue ran again), towel, blue collar, sox & “dickie-front”.

Well, the hurried nature of this note, is because I’m asking again – had better confess. What I want is my ‘pusser’s bible’ please – Admiralty Seamanship Manual, Vol I”, 1937; it will be with my N.A.P. gear & before you send it, would you put another paper cover over the brown-paper one that is now on it – hope you can find it now. If you have not taken over my khaki shorts, Marg. or Gordon, I wouldn’t mind them. If you have it, it doesn’t matter & there is no hurry. Thanks very much, folks

Date 24-10–1944

O/D (not II now)

Mess cook racket etc

I’m sorry I haven’t written this letter before but have really been working hard since last Friday – you see I’ve hit the ‘mess cook’ racket, & what a job it is too. One doesn’t get any spare time at all & what I do get at night after 8pm., I’m too tired to do anything but have a shower, & go to bed. Tonight received mail & Argus (thanks I like getting those Mum, Eric & I always read Argus together), & your very welcome letter – thanks Mum, I don’t mind how many I receive - & also one from Marg. D. So I feel a bit happier & have decided to write. This morning, up at 5:30, raced round & got breakfast, fed the mob (44 at present & 4 mess cooks) & washed & cleaned up & scrubbed tables & stools by 7:50. Dinner time is a bigger rush still & after running to classes & back again at 3:30 to get tea & then racing off to instructional class at 4:30, back again at 5:30 for supper, clean up by 7:30 for ‘rounds’ & then waited till 8:30 tonight for mail, which we have to collect; so it tires you a bit & boy do we have some arguments and fights; guess we all get a bit quick tempered. I began last Friday night and finish next Friday midday – will I be glad – still we all have to do it.

Another thing which disappointed me was last Friday when I went up to Melbourne for the march. Just before I left, 20 of us were detailed off for ‘working party’ up there & were not in march. When we arrived we found we had to serve lunch to everyone taking part & then clean up afterwards – it was a bit of blow. They wouldn’t even let us see the march – had to mind baggage – the only thing we saw was when they marched back to get their baggage. Anyway I believe it was a great success. (Sorry, can’t finish it now, only ¼ hr. before lights out, so will have to leave it till tomorrow). Well, another ….. day over! Tonight I spilt grease all down my trousers, which I had kept pretty well cleaned and pressed. Still, can’t expect to keep anything clean while on this game. Guess I’ll have to wash this suit, weekend after next. Back to the march: there were the 3 bands – Navy, Army & Air Force & that was the order in which I placed them. We have got a beaut. band & definitely better than the others (so I think).

On Friday, 6 of us came back with the ‘pigs’ (officers, as they are known by the majority) in their bus (couldn’t spell the other) – it was a change going back by road instead of rail. On the weekend I did quite a bit of work. Sat. afternoon I washed all my dirty gear - & there was a lot - & also scrubbed my hammock. Sunday morn. went to Church at 10 – after working in the scullery for an hour or more (Sat. morn. we spent the whole morning scrubbing the deck & everything possible), & in the afternoon got an iron, pressed all the washing & my best suit – which is a business with the 7 creases in each leg, etc.. Then I got out needle & thread & began mending & re-sewing buttons . So I spent a profitable weekend. With this messing I haven’t had time to do anything, so next week after being up the line, will have to repeat it all again.

This week began our second week of seamanship – tomorrow go out for the day on a small craft (only miss one meal though). Today had a tetanus innoc. – the last for other lads, but as I missed one, have to go back at the end of November to get my last. (Just got a letter from Rex – thank him please if you see him, will write soon) Have been for a couple of swims last week in our new pool – it’s a beauty. Friday lunch time I finish mess cooking (all being well) & in the afternoon go up the line again – gosh these fortnights come round – will soon be home.

Will answer your letter Mum: Trust you all enjoyed the show – congrats Marg. on your winnings (from Rex). Sounds if you have to take things quietly Mum, if Dr. won’t let you do that convening – trust you & Dad thoroughly enjoy your stay in town & your respective visits prove successful. John Q. is about again – much better. Yes thanks Mum, the biscuits arrived hardly broken at all – were extra. Also received those magazines thanks. I replied to “Auntie” Knapp – she has visitors this coming weekend so won’t go out.

Congrats Mum & Dad on your 24th wedding anniversary: will have to remember that date, if possible. Pay day again tomorrow – maybe I’ll catch up on some of that pay – hope so, right down to a penny tonight.

Well, folks, sorry this is not very big, but must close & have a shower – tomorrow night have to get ready for line. So cheerio, hope all are well & you Mum & Dad had a good stay in town.

Date 4-11-44

New OD

It is Sunday afternoon & I thought I’d write a note home. I’ve just had lunch (which wasn’t enough, so have been up the canteen eating biscuits & sweets topped with a bottle of lemonade). Now I feel better, so have slung my hammock & am reclining in it, trying to write letters; so please excuse writing.

This morning went to Church at 10 – the service is a combined Prot. service, but is almost identical with C. of E. After this, was talking to a lad from the Bank & he told me the corvette Darby J. was drafted to has been sunk, but he is OK. Rather lucky to get action so quickly.

Last Friday we changed into tropical rig: shorts, shirts, sox (all khaki) - & boots. This is more convenient – less to wear in hot weather, less to wash & less to change. So Friday afternoon I washed my working suit & it came out pretty well too – I pressed it Sat. when I did more dhobeying. I’m getting quite used to washing now, although I’d much rather press my clothes than wash them. By the way Mum, could you give that collar a boil or two (the one I posted home). When you’ve cleared everything out the copper just drop it in for a while – it’s much too dark, I ~~want~~ would like (that sounds better) it a fairly light blue if you could Mum – it runs a lot, though, so don’t leave anything in with it. I’ve learnt to watch anything that runs - by experience (have had ‘yellow’ whites & ‘blue’ whites).

I hadn’t been to the pictures for ages & I went Friday night & Sat. Nothing much on though – just thought I’d like to go. Tomorrow we go back to seamanship.

Thanks for your letter Mum, which I received the same night I wrote last, but after I had sealed it. You seemed to get around to a few the relations Mum. Thanks also for Mail & Argus. Hope Tink. & kittens are progressing; guess Paddy is pretty jealous. I reckon the ‘Ink Spots’ would be a good name. Gordon – how’s the swotting going?

I wrote to ‘Auntie’ Knapp (by the way I’ve been addressing her as ‘Mrs’) this week – I don’t quite know whether she wants me to stay out there, or just visit her. I have had another offer to stay for a weekend. Bob Hunter stayed at his relations I think, at Box Hill, & they told him to ask me out there (he must mentioned me). He goes up the line the other weekend to me; at present he’s in hospital, so I’d better go up & say ‘Hello’ this afternoon after this is finished. Nels has had his weekend changed now, so I think I’ll go out to one or the other next week.

Well, I think I’ll close now – this is a pretty crook sought of letter but don’t expect you’ll mind getting it.

Date 13-11-44

Win at Melbourne Cup

As I have got a bit of time off this afternoon I thought I’d begin this letter. We began our torpedo course today (a week) & at present the instructor has vanished, so -- . Thanks very much for your letter Dad, received it last night. when I got back from Melb. It was a bit of a surprise – very glad to receive it. Will have to re-read it to pick up a few words I missed out on! - I still can’t make out all your letters, Dad. Glad you both enjoyed stay at Grosvenor & that your feet are getting accustomed to new supports. It seems as if you also had quite a bit of rain; it has been raining here for the last fortnight, on & off during each day – today was quite wintery – raining cats & dogs (I’m sorry but will have to close for now, Dad – I’ve been talking to Eric K. & Des. R & in came your Argus & Mail (thanks) so we all went through the rag & had laughs. Then in came Rog. Radloff, do you remember me talking of him back in N.A.P., & he is leaving on draft tomorrow, so have been talking to him for rest of evening). Cheerio till tomorrow Dad.

Well, here I am again & trust that I will finish this with the third sitting. Talking about drafts, our course should finish about Jan. so hope we will get our Xmas leave & not finish our course first. Anyway as far as I know we will get it (Xmas & draft leave together) & it’s said we should leave on 22nd – I hope so, I’d like to be home for Xmas. Still we can just wait & see.

It was bad luck about the setting of eggs Dad. Apparently there are a few developments about to take place in Clare: a new P.O. certainly would not be amiss. Yes, the watch is still extra, thanks Dad.

Today I got a pair of shoes from shops for 17/9 - & a beaut. pair of shoes it is too. Signallers & officers are only ones who can get them, so I got Nels to get me a pair! By the way, note new address is Mess 137, ‘H’ block.

I’m sorry but I’m afraid I can’t write at least, think, tonight; everyone in the mess is yelling & fighting & it’s almost impossible to write a word – will try & proceed.

Last weekend Pansy Hunter just about arranged for me to go to this relation of his at Kew – so I went & they were very nice people: Mr. & Mrs. Green. Went out there Friday night, got up Sat. morning & had a game of tennis on their court – they have a very nice place in beautiful grounds (I called it grounds because people grow so many trees in their gardens). Then went into town & met some cobbers & had lunch (Pansy came too) & we then left for Flemington & the Melbourne Cup. I’m sure you would have enjoyed it very much Marg. – but the crowds! You’ll never guess what happed though: another lad & I went 50/50 in a 5/- ticket on – Sirius, the cup winner. So I was more than excited when I watched the race. I saw the complete course from start to finish. Anyway I got back 5/- for my 2/6. Thinking it was too good for my first bet, I put the 2/6 on another horse in the next race - & lost it. Maybe it was just as well or I might be a racing fan; one race a year would be plenty for me. I had some good laughs at the crowds there; middle-aged women pushing through the crowds like bull-dozers.

On the way home we were stacked into the train like sardines. We gave our seats to two girls & another lad & I finished up by taking them to the pictures Sat. night. They seemed quite nice & it happened one lived one street from where I was staying. The pictures were terrible though, so went to a dance at Town Hall from 11 to 11:45.

Sunday morning got up about 9:30 & went to Pres. church at 11 with Pansy. A very nice church but didn’t go much on preacher. After lunch Mrs. Green & two children (David 5 & Gay 3) went to Sunday school – Mrs is a S.S. teacher – so we just stayed home till 3:30 when Mr. & us, went round in car (Buick 8) & picked them up. Then went for a drive & visited some other people. Had tea about 6:30 & rushed off to catch train – got to station with a couple of mins. to spare.

I was going to see “Auntie Liz. Knapp” Sunday afternoon but it would have taken 1 ½ hours or more each way – so put it off again. I will go next leave though Mum. Will also try & see Mrs. Adam’s sister.

Just found the two letters I received from you last week Mum – thanks a lot, sorry I didn’t answer sooner, but put them in my wallet & have only just found them. Hope your face is O./T. by now Gordon – guess you’re looking forward to those exams. Well, stick to those books for these last few weeks & you can’t go wrong, son.

Guess this is a simply lousy letter, but it’s been very hard trying to write tonight, everyone’s gone mad for some reason. Well hope all at home are 100%,

Date 23-11-44

No chewies available, Shooting practice

As you see I must have paid a visit to the Chaplain; I’ll have to go again soon – but not for the paper, of course! This will just be a note before I go up the line because if I don’t write now, it won’t be till next Monday. Mrs. Green wrote to Bob H. & asked us to stay out there again but I want to try to go ‘visiting’ this weekend & I can’t do that out there i.e. I don’t like just going out to sleep. I’ll try & see ‘Aunt Knapp’ & Mrs. Main this weekend, Mum.

Thanks very much for the letters, Mum, I have had two since I last wrote. Also thanks for your letter Gordon, it’s very nice to hear from ‘little brother’ – I wonder! I’m sorry about the chewies though, son; since the army took over the canteen we haven’t been able to buy one packet of the above – they ration the smokes & chocks. etc now & they aren’t as good as when they opened. Still have been trying to get some privately & if I can, I’ll post them post-haste; it might be best not to hope too much, though. (I’ll provide for the no. of pens you consume) Anyway, if you don’t hear from me before you begin exams, you know all the best of good luck goes with you, & I’m sure you can do what you like with all the papers – guess you’ve heard this before but just take your time & forget it’s an exam. You apparently are a bit better at cricket than I was; nice work, you must A1 crickets at school. I’ll bet you’ll be able to wipe me at tennis too, when I get home; how do you like the lawn courts?

Sorry Mum, I haven’t got all those bones you sent; I’m using one & I’ve given some to another lad. Also sorry to hear about sick turn – hope you are feeling better. Glad to hear Navy Concert was such a success. No we aren’t told our various marks for class results, Mum - not until end of course: which doesn’t seem so very far off. On Monday evening I went to a Maths class for O.T.S. exam, found I’d forgotten almost all Maths from school, but it soon came back. These classes are purely voluntary & just a brush-up, really.

I think that must have been Roy Bond who was engaged, only it seemed so funny I knew nothing of it when I saw him before I left – must be mad. Ron Nelson’s course finishes before ours, but he wants to transfer to a seaman if he can – it would be hard, I think.

This week we have been doing working parties & range–work. Tuesday we fired the Vickers, Bren & Lewis mg’s – fired single shot & then automatic – they are beaut. Today we have been firing 303 rifles all day & I’m tired out. A very hot day & when kitted up in gear & steel hat the perspiration was running very soon. We go back again tomorrow so don’t know results – not too good I’m afraid. The working parties have been from peeling spuds & carrots (laugh), at the range today, to pick & shovel work Monday & Wednesday – I ought to be able to qualify for a job in the Corp. soon, Dad.

Am very tired tonight, everyone, so must close, am feeling extra though – so

P.S. Have you got the watch yet Dad; do hope nothing serious is wrong. DW

Date 28-11-44

Washing floors, gunnery, zoo

Received your letter yesterday & thanks Mum. Also received parcel of biscuits, nuts & sugar, Friday I think, & thanks very much – I’ve still some left, I’m rationing them, you see. Will answer your letter now:

The courts here are only asphalt. We only have the one wireless – no private ones allowed. I can see why Donnellan hasn’t fixed up iron – Eric is in the Navy now, you know!

Well we finished our week on range – I’ll just add I didn’t do too good, but had a good time. This fortnight we are doing gunnery & this is most interesting; we do both practical & theory (this gunnery is A.A. & heavy guns). When we finish this we only got 4 weeks of seamanship to finish course. No Mum, Melbourne seems just like Adelaide now – it’s easy to find your way round. Des E. is on other weekend leave, so don’t see much of him; I know he’s just getting practice in different departments while waiting for the draft. About this floor polishing Mum, I wouldn’t mind doing it home (so much), but here a chap’s dignity is lowered when he’s polishing floors, while WRANS walk over his hands & tell him “can’t forget under that typewriter table, son!! Hope you have got chewie by now, Gordon, posted it today – was going to send it airmail, but they told me it wouldn’t get there much quicker.

Today we had ‘divisions’ at 3 o’clock – beg your pardon - 1500 – Admiral of the Fleet, Lord Keyes inspected us & it was quite a turnout; you’ll probably see it all in the newsreels. Your son was standing in second row, if you do, not that you would be able to see him.

Well, went up line again. Friday night – every place was booked out, so after having meal at TOC H waited till 7:30 & got a cancelled booking. TOC H. is the best place in Melb. to stay – it’s very nice. Some girls there (TOC H) got five of us “Naval men’ to go to a dance in Sth Melbourne (was going to have an early night). It was some low drive down a back lane, & 3 of us left about 9:30 and so got back to TOC. H about 10:30. Sat. morning went shopping, but didn’t buy much at all. After lunch went to a newsreel show & afterwards went out to Aunt Lizzie’s. They seemed very pleased to see me & send their love to Mother & Father. Stayed there for tea & then met lads, about 8:30, in town, & went to a dance at St. Kilda Town Hall – pretty good too – saw a lad who used to be in N.A.P.

Sunday morning went to St. Pauls in Swanson St. at 10:45 – a choral service, matins – seemed rather strange. Lunchtime saw Dig. Groverman but when I finished, couldn’t find him. Just got out in Collins St. & ran into Dick Ewens – he is in ground staff now, stationed in Melbourne.

In afternoon, went to zoo – it was a beautiful afternoon. Had tea in city & so back again here. These weekends come & go pretty quickly.

Well, I’ve got some gunnery notes I want to read through, so will try & write again fairly soon. Hope all are feeling extra (I’ve put on my lost weight again i.e. nearly all of it: 1067)

Date 3-12-44

Before OTS Classes

Just a note to tell you I’ve had another beaut. weekend here at the Depot. First must thank you for letter, Mum, & two parcels of magazines, which came in very handy this afternoon for everyone. It has been quite hot both yesterday & today. Had better answer your letter now Mum. We have 3 Chaplains down here: C. of E., R.C., & Metho. First & last both seem quite nice. John Bails must have had an exciting experience alright. No, Mum, the only subject you have to do for O.T.S. is Maths. There are two classes a week Mond. & Thurs. but I’ve only been on Mondays, so far. Monty isn’t going for O.T.S. now – I’m the lone hand in our mess.

I might add I’ve heard they are going to rush our course through so that we can have Xmas & draft leave in one – that will mean some work as there is only 3 weeks to go – I certainly hope it is so though. Tomorrow we have an exam on gunnery, theory, so this will only be a very short letter. I’ve got plenty of notes to swot through tonight. I like gunnery though, it is very interesting. We went to pictures almost every morning last week. Thursday we went to Stoney Pt. to A.A. range & used the latter. After the exam we start on a week’s practical gun drill, etc.

On Friday I landed the job of dorm. sweeper – much the same as mess-cook. Sat morning I worked really hard, with a result our mess was awarded the wireless again. You should have seen the mess though, it was perfect, not a bit of dust anywhere. The floor was like a dance hall – you could see your face in it. So was the cutlery.

Yesterday afternoon I washed my best suit with some other gear & then lay out in the sun & watched it dry. At night I ironed it all – someone else’s suit & gear; the latter for 2/-. I had to do it as I hadn’t a penny (i.e. other than the bank) between then & payday – next Thursday.

Went to Church this morning – had a front seat today; & after dinner reclined in the sun for a while & then went for a swim – it was beaut. in. So I must off to my notes. By the way I got a letter from Spog. on Friday – the two young lads have had measles, both together, so she had some work. Both are better now she says.

Hope your papers were just right, Gordon – guess there aren’t many to go.

Must go, hope all are well.

Date 6-12-44

New draft from SA

I received your letter Monday, Mum, for which thanks very much: it was very full of news, or maybe it was just that I’m thinking I’ll be home so soon. Do hope you got the chewie in time for its special use Gordon – guess you feel super now everything is all over. You’re lucky having such long holidays this year. I’m afraid Arch will have to look for someone else to give a speech on Friday as my leave will be during his holidays; that is bad luck. Gosh Marg you must be getting some horse woman for Reg to ask you to go into Bendigo race. Well I hope everything turns out just how you would like it – don’t forget you get on a horse from the port side! (Mail just got in & guess what – got a letter from Arch, & what a letter too! – it was really good & I certainly appreciate it).

No Mum, don’t know yet when we get leave, so still, - just expect me about Xmas. Had no trouble in finding Aunt Lizzie’s place – Melb. just seems like Adelaide now. By the way, her husband called her Bet & she signs B. Knapp.

Yes, I rather like gunnery. On Monday we passed out in theory: four of us got V.G.I.’s and Monty and I came top of class; he got 90% & I happened to get 92%. This week we have been doing practical this week & tomorrow we are going to Boot-Hill to fire 4” QF. gun. We have had some hot days & with gun drill, it certainly was hot!

Last night a big draft came in from Sth. Aus. & my cobber from the Bank (was in N.A.P. too) came in – had a good talk to him & told him just what a good show he was coming into. He has been waiting ages & certainly is glad to be here.

By the way Dad, how is the watch? I hope there is nothing serious wrong with it. Went to Maths class last Mond. – I’ve certainly forgotten a lot – will go again tomorrow night. So will have to pack & press my gear tonight. So once again, I’m afraid this is very short!

Thought you might like this snap of ‘the sailor’ Mum, it was taken at zoo last weekend, by one of the lads. How do you like it?

Well cheerio for now, hope all are tops,

Date 12-12-44

Weekend in Melbourne

I’m afraid I’ll have to answer all your letters with one in return (as if I don’t always) – but thanks all of you – it was very nice to hear from you. I received the letters over a period from Thursday night to Monday afternoon but couldn’t answer them last night as I went to Maths class – it is getting easier now. First the watch which I received safely Thursday – thanks very much Dad, it now keeps perfect time, haven’t had to alter it since then. Also, thanks for papers & letter Gordon - guess you’re glad it is all over. How did you go in your speech night i.e. if it is over when you get this: those drawings must have taken some time to compile – maybe you would like them back – will send back exam papers by separate envelope. I haven’t tried all the Maths questions yet, but will – when I get home. Hope your feet will allow you to begin bowls soon, Dad. No, Mum, we weren’t allowed that long weekend because it was so near Xmas – don’t think I would have gone anyway. Not definite about date of our next leave yet, only a lot of rumours, so won’t tell you them unless they prove false. I’m pretty sure I’ll be home for Xmas day though. Will answer your next letter now, Mum. Yes, we all finished our gunnery last Friday & all passed out – but didn’t get marks. Last weekend I stayed at Green’s again – had a nice quiet weekend. Friday night after having a meal in town with the lads, went out to Kew & so got to bed early.

Sat. morning, got into town about 10 & did some shopping; ran into a couple of lads in Elizabeth St. Went back for lunch – had some beaut. fresh green peas, first I’ve tasted - & then went out to Thornbury. I rang the Main’s on Friday night

& so arranged to go out Sat. afternoon & stay for tea. Mrs. Main is certainly very nice – sends her kind regards, Mum & Margaret is split image of Nina. The younger daughter, Nan, was in the middle of her Leaving. I had tea & stayed till about 11:30 – Mr. Main came home during the evening. Sunday morning got up about 10:30 & went to Church. In the afternoon went for a drive, finished up at one of their relations. The latter took us (Pansy & I) to a next-door neighbour – a retired Captain from Royal Marines; he was very interesting to talk to. The weather was awful Sat. & Sunday, so I had to spend an indoor weekend.

This week we started seamanship again, we only have 3 weeks to finish; we must be one of the oldest classes in New Entry School now – an old salt! Last week I got a letter from Mrs. Burton – very nice too. Also, one from another girl from the Bank.

Lastly thanks for your letter Marg - & the plans for Xmas. It was a heck of a surprise & it seems a good idea, because I was thinking of having a couple of days in Adelaide. There certainly is a crowd. I’m afraid I won’t be able to get any films, Marg, I tried here without success & won’t be back in Melbourne again.

Well, afraid this is all for now – must do some washing tonight but will write again on the weekend. So, cheerio for now, hope all are feeling tops.

P.S. sent a telegram to Auntie Marg today, for birthday. Received two bundles of magazines, for which thanks.

Thought you might like this photo of the sailor, Mum. It was taken at the zoo last weekend, by one of the lads. How do you like it?

Well, cheerio for now. Hope all are tops

Date 17-12-44

Xmas hols coming up

Well, here goes probably the last letter, for 3 weeks anyway. From now on I will be pretty busy what with packing, washing et. - & mess cooking. Yes, I’ve got it again & just at the worst time, still in this block (H) the job is nowhere near as bad as back in the old block. I started the job at Friday lunchtime & we are getting it done in record time now. I was going to pack one of my blue bags today, but we (our class) have got a kit muster tomorrow afternoon, so I won’t be able to start until Tuesday night (Monday night I’ll be going to instruction)

We went out for another trip on the ‘Cerberus’ last Thursday & on Friday we were out sailing all day – it was extra. Friday afternoon I had a game of tennis. Sat. afternoon I did all my washing after which I went for a swim with Monty. It was a terrible day, one of the worst; very strong north wind accompanied with dust, & plenty of it. I hung all my clothes inside the mess, but even so they look just about as dirty as before I washed them. Anyway, last night I pressed them all & also my 2’s.

At 8:30 this morning I went up to the dental dept. Last weekend I lost a filling from my tooth & when I had anything hot or cold it played around a bit. So I told them it was aching & could they fix it up soon; result – they did it at 9 am. What a tooth, too! Boy I’ve never kicked so much in a dentist’s chair before. The nerve was exposed & he said he’d try & cover it, without having to remove it. After this I went to church & after dinner we were duty class down the wharf so had to stay there all afternoon, even though there was hardly anything to do. My tooth is O.K. now but it was aching right up to tea-time.

Thanks Mum & Marg for your letters. I hope the Pageant went off according to plan, but am sure it would if you were running it, Marg. Also thanks for Mail & Argus Dad. South Aussies all like the mail & as for the Argus, quite a no. get a laugh out of that. Last week’s was good eg. “Mrs Beinke causing ‘excitement’”, part about ‘old school tie’, & ‘snatch & grab thief – citizens beware’!

My thicker pair of pyjamas have come asunder, but the others are O.K. thanks, Mum. Your note Marg was appreciated & digested – glad A.M.P. can spare a little time for you to write to your brother.

Xmas leave is pretty definite, as far as Navy goes, but date not certain – should see you in a week’s time, though.

It certainly will be great to get home – everyone is getting excited in our mess. I’m sure you’d like to wash some of my gear properly Mum, I’m going to bring as much home as I can fit into two of those bags. I can guess what you just said “More work for me I suppose”; but I’ll act as apprentice Mum & learn the finer points.

Well, must stop now, so cheerio folks (hope the rooster is fat, I’m hungry) until I see you in Clare, S. Aust. Whacko!

Date 8-1-45

Back to FND after hols

Well, I’ve settled down here again, & am in top spirits – it’s not a bad old place. It seems as if I haven’t been away, until I think of the good time I had.

Today has been, & still is, very hot – one of the hottest we’ve had here I think, & I’ve just about returned to my old colour. When we got back we found we have a lot of new routine. Instead of two watches we are now having four & go up the line 3 weekends out of four, but – only from Sat. midday to Sunday night. So we want to be able to do any shopping at all – I’ll have to see what I can do about that book of yours Marg. The idea of all this is to give us more working hours & less ‘gash’ time. We have to pull our weight & help the war effort more!

Home leave is now cut down to once every 3 months instead of once a month (after the first 3 months) as it used to be. So we can’t possibly get back to S. Aus. except once every 3 months. We now work till 4:30 instead of 3:30 every night & also have instruction Sat. mornings. You can see they’ve ‘stepped up production’.

Hope you had a good rest in town Mum. After we felt town we went to Goodwood & didn’t leave there till 8 pm. All of us (Ek, Nels, Murray & Mont) all got in same compartment & we had an extra trip back. I thought the trip back would be crook but we had an extra time. The others had parcels this time & we eat them one by one (by the way I’m eating well already – must have been pining for the Depot). We had a sleep of about 6 hours too; took the backs & bottoms out of the two seats & lay them on the floor. Four of us slept across these, & it proved a comfortable bed. The train had no corridor & so was quite wide. There was a glass door into our end compartment, so we closed it & put a bar behind it & so had comparative privacy – until 5 o’clock when they started to wash (wash room was in our compartment).

At Ballarat we had breakfast – sausages & spud; also went down street & bought fruit & drinks. Got to Melbourne about 12:15 & after an hour’s waiting to hand in mess-gear, had till 2 pm free. Went straight to Dug-out & had a beaut. meal, & wandered back.

After another hour’s waiting we left for here & arrived just after five. We got settled in here with less trouble than I expected & after supper had a good scrub down in shower & went to bed & slept till ‘wakey, wakey’.

Today our class went out on ‘Cerberus’ again & had a good time – perfect day out on the water. After supper went down to O.T.S. class & so came back to write this – so please excuse shortness & scribble. Must drop another note to Clare, so will close, hoping all are as I left; guess you can see I don’t mind coming back.

Date 16–1-45

Up the line, Using Persil

What a surprise it was today when I got that parcel, & what a beaut., too. Thank you, Gordon for that flag. case – it was very good of you to get it & just the ideal thing. From now on I won’t be able to get anything in Melbourne, so I certainly haven’t got one yet – not that you can get a good one now.

Also thanks very much for the cakes & nuts Mum – I’ll be able to put one aside (i.e. cakes); also for ‘Mail’. I got the parcel this afternoon & then tonight I got your letter & one from Marg D. – so things couldn’t be much better (there goes another few nuts, there’s not many left already).

Well tonight my eye is O.K. & my foot feels a lot better. The last two days I’ve been going to sick bay twice a day – an old wreck. It’s like this, when in Melbourne at the Dug-out I went to the post hospital there – to have a look at that thing on my foot. She (specialist) said it was a vorato-pap….. etc etc. & told me to go to M.O. next day & get treatment to have it burned out – she wouldn’t touch it. So went to M.O. & he said it was – a corn – a bit a come down, wasn’t it, after she had told me it was infectious & not wait round (Now Wed. afternoon). Well they put some corn cure on it and next morning when they were removing the plaster, they also took the skin off the sole of my foot – for no extra charge. So what with crook foot & eye I have been looking a wreck. Both are much better today.

Yesterday our class was working party on the ‘Doomba’ – O.T.S. training ship – in the morning we got her ready for sea, but she didn’t go, so in the afternoon we went on painting her. I trapped painting the water line with black paint, still it was good fun. Today we had a ‘mock’ pass-out; we should pass out end of this week, or next. Tomorrow we are going out in the ‘Cerb’ again.

Last Sat. morning after a couple of hours working party, we got ready for divisions, after which we left for Melbourne; got up about 1 pm. There were six of us together the whole weekend, so you can see we had quite a bit of fun. We tried to get in at Toc H & Navy House but couldn’t so left our bags at the former. After we had done this & been to the Dug-out for a meal there wasn’t much of the afternoon left. Nels and I met a couple of lads from N.A.P. here and had a yarn to them. That night was certainly busy for us – we went out to East Melbourne after tea (they wanted a lot of sailors) but there were far too many lads there so we decided against it. From here we went via a few trams to St. Kilda & Luna Park. After another look here and a few rides we went across road to Palm Grove for about ½ hour. At 12 we went up to Melbourne & had a beaut. fish supper and so & to Toc H. Still no beds so finished up – guess where – in the army truck. This took us out to Nth Melb. Town Hall, where they gave us a pallias & a couple of blankets & so we stretched out on the floor.

At 7:30 they woke us up, & when dressed went to a community centre for breakfast & them walked into the city. (Classy residence, what -we have booked in at Toc H already for next weekend). In Melbourne we picked up tickets to a Country Club at Toorak. A very nice place in the middle of a park: tennis, miniature golf, table tennis, dancing. Had lunch there & stayed most of the afternoon, when we returned to Dug-out, and had a couple of dances, another meal & so off to the train.

Last night I did quite a stack of washing (i.e. before I began this) & today washed my no. 2’s – all with Persil, Mum, & I have cast aside all other old fashioned washing methods – end of quote.

Will answer your letter, Mum. No-one was allowed on Goody station but there was quite a crowd on roadway & we waited there about 20 mins. Glad you had a good rest after I left, Mum, hope you are now feeling 100%. How is Bill C’s luck – 30 days leave. Yes, we now have four watches which means we go up the line 3 weekends out of four, but only for just over the day. We can’t get up to buy anything at all – so I don’t know about that book Marg anyway I’ll hang onto it. Nels, Eric & I & a couple of cobbers & Eddie (N.S.W’s) went up together last weekend, but that doesn’t mean every time we’ll be together. We are getting used to work till 4:30 now; there is not much ‘gash’ time at present with O.T.S. classes, swotting, seamanship, writing etc. By the way, Mum, Eric certainly appreciated that note from you – he’ll probably be writing soon.

Well, there must be plenty more to say but will close for now, hope you can read this scrawl (please excuse dirty marks, blots etc); trust everyone is feeling great.

P.S. Don’t forget to let me know about results, Gordon.

**Letter from Eric**

Dear Mrs. Whiteman,

Just a few lines to thank you very much for thinking of me on the 15th and dropping me a note, it was very good of you and I also wish to thank you for having mum around, I guess she must get pretty lonely at times with us all away, although this life is very good. I hope that it is not long before we are all back in the old home town once again

Dave and I have been trying our hand once again at washing or dhobying as it is called in this outfit, - and we have both come to the decision that Persil cannot be done without, in fact Dave can’t believe it yet, that clothes can become so white with so little work – don’t think that the “Persil Company” is paying me half a crown for the advertisement but we think that it really is good stuff.

Well seeing that I am not much chop at letter writing I’ll come to a close – hoping that you are keeping well, and do not strain your eyesight in reading this scrawl, thanks once again for everything.