David’s Navy

Part 2 Jan to May 1945 CR Whiteman PA 4866

Officer Training School

Date 26–1-45

All classes passed, Waiting for OTS

Well, a lot has happened since I last wrote & I only hope I can remember it all to tell you. First, thank you for Mum, for two letters which I received on Wed. night, when I came back from a concert. I couldn’t write last night (O.T.S. class) & both afternoons I have been fire-break party, so this is the first chance I’ve had to reply. (I am duty at library this week & I’ve just stood rounds, so am writing here tonight)

Let me begin with the most important items: our class passed out seamanship last Tuesday – we took from 10 am to 4:14 pm. so we had a thorough examination. The whole class passed out, everyone had a ‘GOOD’ except three of us who got ‘VERY GOOD’, but we don’t know the marks. Eric’s class had a different officer who only took ¾ hr. to pass out whole class, so you can see we went through most of the work; his class also, all passed out.

Next- the O.T.S. exam is on Monday & interviews on Wed. Last Thursday night was last class & I can see I’ll have to be careful; I know how to do most things, but I make a lot of silly mistakes, like copying down wrongly & multiplying, etc., incorrectly. With a bit of luck, I should get through that though – I hope. The other main item is all classes from 75 to 84 go on draft Monday (I’m 82). So all my cobbers who I came in with & leaving then. Guess where – to Torren’s pool. It certainly was quick we only passed out on Thursday & are leaving Monday. There was great excitement at lunchtime when we were told. Monty & I & another couple of lads (who missed on some class or were dentally unfit) are the only ones staying. It is not so good seeing them all go, still I guess we have to split up some time & now I’ll have to make sure of getting into O.T.S. Those going had to do ‘mad mile’ this afternoon i.e. go to the doctor, dentist, clothing officer, pay section etc. So much for that. Monty & I will have to do ‘working party’ until we here about results; if these are no good then we should go straight on draft, only I hope not to Torrens, as most go from there to Darwin. Graham Murray got drafted to ‘Lonsdale’ in Melbourne, which is mainly a destroyer pool – how’s his luck. Of course Eric went to Torrens, so you’ll probably see him in the near future.

Last weekend instead of taking leave to Melbourne, Monty, another lad, Tostevin, & I stayed at Depot & went over to Cowes on Sunday. Two Commanders, & their wives, wanted to go over, so 3 volunteers from our class were wanted for ‘crew’ of ‘Cerberus’ which was to take them there. As I had been wanting to go to Cowes it was an excellent opportunity. On Sat. morning we worked on ‘Doomba’ again - once more painting (have now painted black, grey & red on her) In the afternoon did some washing & went to bed early at night. Sunday morning left here about 9 & did a couple of hours fishing – still no luck for me, I can’t seem to ever catch a fish - & so pulled in at Cowes just after 11 am. We 3 went ashore (after Commander’s party, of course) & then Cerb. went out again to do some more fishing & was to return at 4:30. What beautiful place Cowes is. A super holiday resort. After a look around we met a gentleman who had thrown 60 smokes to the Cerb. when we pulled in the previous Thursday – he seemed to think we were returned heroes or something & he couldn’t do enough for us. He took us to his hotel & paid 15/- for our meal there, introduced us to nearly everyone there. His family was there also – he comes from Ballarat, & wants us to let him know whenever we are passing through, so he can bring us eats & drinks to the station. Certainly a great chap& certainly made a fuss of us. In the afternoon I went for a swim at the beach with a party from the hotel & when we left he gave us another 20 Craven A’s. So we had an extra day – quite unusual.

This week I’ve been to the pictures once & to a concert, the latter was pretty weak. After we passed out Tuesday we have been out sailing each day until today when we were working party. Yesterday I went to dentist & had one filled – there are three to go. I don’t know how they get there, but they do – only had one to be filled when I came in.

Have you heard about results yet, Gordon? Guess it must be coming out soon. Suppose you will have to think about going back to school soon. Yes Mum, I’m O.K. now thanks. Last Friday I went before M.O. & asked him to take me off the list. They weren’t doing anything & said they couldn’t cut it (‘corn’) out, so it was a waste of time. This weekend I’m ‘duty watch’ i.e. stay aboard, so will dip into washing again, & Persil. Sorry Dad, I haven’t got shoes yet, but haven’t forgotten them Our first slop day was last Wed. & couldn’t get hardly anything as there was an audit or something in clothing store. Should get them next fortnight. About photo Mum, looks like me just biding my time until I get a chance, everything shut in Melbourne, nothing open in afternoon. Glad to hear you won first heat of bowls Dad; - keep going. (apparently feet are a little better – hope so)

Hope all are O.K. had better close. (am sure I’ve missed quite a bit with all this important news), Cheerio

Dear Folks,

Maybe you can all make some use of contents. Sorry Dad, I can’t send any more smokes, but they have cut ration to 30 cigs. a week.

Rather lucky at present, having these in the canteen.

Well cheerio for now, thanks again for everything in my last parcel,

Date 3-2-45

Accepted into O.T.S.

First thanks for letters, Mum, I’ve had a couple (3, I’m afraid) since I last wrote & next – CONGRATULATIONS Gordon, old boy on passing Inter. I guess everyone is thrilled about it – not that I had any doubt about you passing it. One thing, son, you can’t say you beat me yet , because I got 5 subjects too. Take it from me you’ll find the Leaving pretty easy – you’d better try & beat me in that, & get your Leaving in the first year – that’s something to try to do!

I’m sorry Mum, to hear you missed my letter, am afraid this one will be a bit late too, but I’ve had all the O.T.S. business to do, will try & settle down to original timing again.

Trust you have already received telegram – it certainly is good news. At last I’ve got what I’ve always wanted to do – only hope I can go right through the school – with flying colours. I’ve certainly got something to work for now. As for address – until I give you the new one send letters to Mess 131, please.

On Monday we sat for Maths & on Tuesday found I’d passed – Monty missed it. About 30 ordinary seamen sat for it. On Thursday was the interview – reported in morning but had to come back in afternoon. It consisted of Commander of Depot & 2 (two) 2 ½ straight ringers (Lieut. -Commanders in perms.). They were fairly straight-forward questions – only in there for about 5 mins. so waited round until today dinner time when I inquired again at Block’s Office – after searching they found notice & with my name on it. It was a great surprise because I’d heard from 2 diff. chaps that I’d dipped. Still there it was & I had to report at 1300 to out-patients ward at hospital. There were seven ord. seamen who had passed & 10 ship’s company (chaps come in from sea.) So 17 are going over on Monday at 7:45 with sea bags & hammocks. Usually only about 50% pass out from the school, so I’ve got to ‘get my head down’. I passed the medical alright & went to dentist; was dentally fit (have had a couple filled in the last week). There was another S. Aus. passed, but dipped on medical. Tough luck, as he was a corker chap (Price, remember his father died last year at Adel. Oval). He is having another med. next Thursday so hope he gets through.

Tomorrow will go up the line but only till Sunday morning – must come back & get ready. Monty is going on draft on Thursday to “Penguin”, Sydney; we were duty last weekend, so didn’t go up to Melbourne.

I suppose I’ve left out the minor news over the last week or so, but have to think ahead more than back now. Will try & answer your letters Mum. Glad to hear you won first match in tournament, Marg. Hope you continue. Also Mrs. Kain got wine O.K. – E.K. may have been home by now. No, Nelson didn’t go to Torrens, he is doing a seamen’s course now; was doing coders but transferred. Trust parcel ‘went down’ O.K. Sorry Floyd missed Inter.

Well your letter seemed very full of news Mum, thanks; will have to close this off now & get to bed (& pack for tomorrow), sorry this only contains a few items, but expect you realise I feel a little excited.

Trust everyone is feeling great, - I certainly am, Cheerio for now

Date 6-2-45

New routine

Expect you’ve been expecting a letter before this, but this is about the first lot of spare time I’ve had – Wed. night is our free night.

Maybe I’ll start from the beginning. Well I went up the line Sat. stayed at Loc H. & came back Sunday morning with Monty. In the afternoon I did some washing & so packed & went to bed early. Monday morning I fell in & duly marched over here. (Sorry I can’t finish this even on my free night – I had to clean my gun (rifle, I should say), polish brass on gaiters & belt, clean & oil bayonet & numerous things which must be done. Seems more like a military school, than a Naval school. Cheerio for now)

Thursday eve.: Well today I received all your letters – thanks very much for them all, & for the congrats. So far this week we have mostly been drilling. As a result I have been so tired & sore I just drop into hammock at 10:30 \*& appear dead until woken. Actually they don’t give us enough time to realise how tired we really are; we just finish something & there is something else to be done – it is just as well too. Luckily we have had this drilling split by 3 navigation lessons. In the evening we have lectures till 8:30 & then have rounds. So from 9 to 10:30 is just about our own i.e. after cleaning gear, cap locker, etc. Anyway once I get to know routine I’m sure it is going to be good.

Also we have a compulsory swim each evening – that is not hard to take though. (we have just been told we have to scrub out lockers tonight – we have good size one here, 5 compartments & 1 large one for coat, rifle, sea bag etc. – so it looks like me finishing again.

Will try & write a sensible sized letter on the weekend. This will just be to give you my address & let you know I’m feeling fit & soon will be settling down.

Cheerio for now, will answer all your letters later.

Date 11-2-45

Routine Continued

Today I have some spare time, so will continue my letter. Actually this won’t be very long either, because I’ve got quite a bit of swotting (signals) to do. I think I had better tell you now not to expect any long epistles for a while. You see any spare time I do get I’ll want to study up on something or other, & over here you don’t get any second chances with anything.

Next (rather this) week we have got field training again, with navigation. At the end of the week we pass out in the former: we have to take of squad of new entries & teach & drill them. Then the following Monday, I think, we go out on the “Doomba” for about 3 weeks. I am not sure of this, so keep on addressing mail here. If correct I will let you know, in any case you will probably address mail here. The last week and today has been rather hot, as a result I have got quite burnt.

Each morning after breakfast we go to cleaning stations & then to divisions. After this we have signals & then to respective classes until about 4 pm. (of course dinner & then to cleaning stations again) After tea we go to sport, every night & then to swimming pool. So to supper & cleaning stat’s & then to lectures. When lectures end at 8:30 we have rounds at 8:45. From then on is for our odd jobs etc. So you can see the day is full, but even so it is a great life.

Sat afternoon I played in a cricket match against 15th course (ours is 18th) & we just lost – 179 to 169. 15th course passed final board last week & of the 11 that were left 10 got through; very good percentage. After the evening swim I went to the pictures. Picture parties are on Wed. & Sat. nights. I went along more for a break, as I won’t be able to go very frequently. This morning the school went to church parade. There I noticed all the new ‘middies’ who have only been back about a week. I suppose you’ll have to go back to school soon, Gordon. This afternoon when I’ve finished letters I’ll have plenty of swotting to do, so will answer your letters now.

Apparently you saw quite a few people on the day you received my telegram; I got a telegram from Rex. That lad Hogan didn’t get through the board – if you see Ek. again. Monty went to “Penguin” pool i.e. should get a draft very shortly. The leave here is every second weekend; should go up the line next Sat. Hope you had a good time at Mt. Lofty, Marg & everything went off well. No Mum don’t have to wear boots over here, but of course, we do while doing parade course. Thanks for reminding me about that poem Marg, but as I wrote it, I should be able to recall it easily!

Thanks very much for your note Dad & the content. There are 3 S. Aussies in the ship’s company that came over here. One by the name of Green; his sister was engaged to Don Feng. I hope the Leaving is more interesting for you Gordon, but at any time you’ll find it more so. Anyway all the best in your year’s work & sport, too, son.

Well better close, folks, cheerio & thanks once again, hope everyone is feeling fit,

Date 19-2-45

Sports & Exams

Hear (??) Here it is a week since I last wrote, so must drop a line tonight. We still have not had results of mid. Board – they certainly are taking a while about it. We are now in our tenth week (tomorrow) & they usually come out in 8th week. According to rumours, though, should be our tomorrow – here’s hoping!

Last week was a busy one. Only had two working days instead of four, & had our final nav. exam. on Friday. In the morning had our theory & in the afternoon, chart work. Both papers were extra – just suited me.

Am a little bit stiff too. Played in our baseball team (our course) Mond. Tues. & Wed. & on Thurs.. had a Curry Cup (wouldn’t mean much to you – is a type of very long relay race combining sprinting, long distance running, bike racing, obstacle, rowing, swimming & almost everything). I had a run & then was cox of our gig (6-oarded boat). The whole thing is very amusing. On Friday afternoon we had a cross-country run for the school. Another lad & I decided whoever lost would scrub both our gaiters that night. I don’t know whether it was the thought of this or not, but I came in 8th – very good I thought for me, seeing about 60 were running & it was 3 miles, or more. Even so I couldn’t quite catch my cobber, he came in 6th about 10 yards ahead – so I scrubbed the gaiters.

Sat. I was very stiff, but once again more running was arranged – a paper chase. I was away for about 2 hours, of course followed a false trail – finished up on the beach near Summers! We certainly are having plenty of sport – it makes you feel fit.

Thanks for your 3 letters Mum – very glad to receive them. By the way, the boys all said “Thank you for the nuts” – that’s to you. Yes, rang from Cowden’s, thought if you had gone to church, just wouldn’t get through; never mind though, it was nice to talk to someone. Hope Uncle & Aunt had a good time – guess so. Expect those sweets you made were nice – were they Gordon. I would have liked a few too. Do hope you, Marg have a beaut. holiday.

Well, that’s about the limit for now, cheerio, hope everyone is feeling extra,

Date 21-2-45

HMAS Doomba to Sydney

I trust you received telegram & parcel, Mum, & that you had a very enjoyable birthday. I think I have received about three letters from you, which I received on consecutive days & which I have not answered. Thank you for them; also for the papers Dad, I haven’t read the last lot yet.

Last week was very busy, especially Friday: we passed off the parade – took a squad of New Entries before the Gunnery Officer. In the afternoon we had a nav. exam.: I think I did alright in that.

Sat. morning left for Melbourne about 10 to 11 & when I arrived, rang Cowdens. Bill was home & went straight out & had lunch. He had to report that afternoon, went in & postponed it till Monday morning – is going to Darwin again for draft i.e. may go back & then come down to Melbourne again.

Had a very quiet weekend, just what I wanted – a rest. Stayed home at night & slept till 11:30 Sunday morning. In the afternoon went for a trip to Warrandyke – a very pretty spot about 12 miles away.

As you can see, am on the “Doomba”; & of course can’t tell you much. Will probably be out for about three weeks; please address letters as above until I tell you otherwise.

Had better answer those letters Mum; one I received was addressed to Mess 137 – it was a fairly old one, still there was something new in it. Got a letter from Mont. last week – apparently Balmoral is a pleasure resort. Also got a letter from Rex & Aunt May. No Mum, uniform is same as before, except we have to wear gaiters all the time. I don’t think it worthwhile sending magazines thanks – I’ve got plenty to read now! Price never came over to O.T.S. so suppose he didn’t get through. I suppose there would be about 70 in school. You are quite right C/R is Cadet Rating. ‘Cleaning stations’ are, for instance, cleaning brass work, sweeping verandahs etc.

Well, folks, must off to bed, sorry for big gap in letters, hope all are feeling great,

Date 26-2-45

Doomba to Sydney cont.

Thanks for all the letters which I received all - together, yesterday. I would have answered them last night but went to church – which made twice yesterday!

There is not much I can tell you except that I am enjoying life on Doomba, what with our cramped condition; there are seventeen of us living in a mess-deck about 9 by 12! Well, we have plenty of fun in that small area, anyway.

(Continued later)

Well, I don’t think I have known a week to pass as quickly as the last. Probably because life is so new. Since being at sea we have been standing 4-hour watches. Of course one of these is usually at night; e.g. might do the 12 to 4 pm. & then 8 to 12 p.m. So night & day is broken up & time just flies. We do various duties: officer of the watch, being most important: take position on bridge & plot position on chart & **are**, strictly speaking, in charge of ship. Of course there is an officer there too. The first night at sea I was pretty sick – yes, unfortunately. I crawled into hammock as soon as I could, & when I woke next morning had forgotten all about it. In other words from then on, I was O.K., not even a crook feeling & we had some fairly rough weather.

I think I had better answer some of previous letters – correction, there is only one, which I received today. Am so glad you liked the contents of parcel, Mum. Suppose you got a thrill when you found I’d stayed out at Bill’s. No, Mum, it was just an ordinary weekend: Sat. morning to Sunday night. Yes everyone seems to be splitting up now: I heard Ek. had gone to Darwin & that Monty has gone to the ‘Shropshire’!

The Duke & Duchess & officials visited F.N.D. last Sunday, but the only time I saw them was at Church. They all came to the morning service, but after that we had to go back to the ship, so that was all we saw of them. Of course the Depot was spic & span, especially our school, as you could guess. Still I don’t know much about it from that angle, as yet.

As far as study goes on board, there is not much facility for such, nor much time, as I’m always very tired.

The was bad luck about the Continental at bowling green – glad to hear you can play a few games now Dad. Those mushrooms sound delicious, I think I can smell them; still our scran on here is the best – no complaints at all.

That certainly should be a change for your holiday, Dad – trust you both have a very enjoyable stay & new surroundings suit you both. Also hope Ron & Rene have a pleasant few days up home.

Thanks for the photos Marg. – they could be a little better, some of them, don’t you think? Who is the happy jack in the white shirt? I’ve kept about half a dozen, Marg; i.e. if you don’t mind!!

My eyes are almost closed now & I’ve got to get up in the early hours of the morn., so will close for now, hoping everyone is ‘tops’ – I certainly am – cheerio for now

(Potential Officers (!), as we are referred to)

Date 11-3-45

Also Doomba from Sydney

Today you will be leaving on your holidays – do hope you have a very good time - & the trip is not too bad.

I received your last two letters (28th & 4th) on Thursday – thank you. I afraid I have been very irregular with writing, but of course mail service is rather awkward, on board. It is now almost three weeks since we left the school & we have another week to go. Time certainly has flown.

The “Doomba” is a coal burner & so, every week, we have to coal ship! I’m sure you’d laugh to see me – black from head to foot. It takes about a day to finish & as you can imagine, there is coal dust everywhere. We have had three coaling days so far. After it last Wed., we had about ¼ of an hour to clean & dress for going ashore for he night. I went out to Mrs. Cowden’s & she had just received a letter from you. They certainly treat me well; Before I left they gave a pineapple & a bag of tomatoes to bring back to the ship. No need to add they didn’t take long to go.

Apparently you enjoyed having Rene & family up home. Quite a crowd when Ron H. turned up too. Never-the-less you will be able to have a good rest now.

Yes I had remembered about Gordon’s birthday, but of course I’ve got no opportunity to get anything. I’ll write him a letter now.

Tonight I will be going to church – second time today. Went ashore to 8 am Communion this morning.

I seem to be stumped for matter, because there is quite a bit to tell, but of course, can’t yet; where I’ve been etc.

Never-the-less, this is, as you say Mum, just a few lines. Yes I am feeling very well (except last week when we ran into a gale & I was a ‘trifle empty’ in the stomach).

Well, cheerio for now, guess you are settled in by now!

Date 18-3-45

New OTS

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By now your holiday will be getting on – what is the West Coast like? I received two letters a few days ago & yesterday “Mail & Angus” – thank you.

On Monday we go back to Flinders so will have to settle to some really hard work again. When we get back they hold another Board; we don’t go before it, it is only a meeting of instructors etc. Trust I’ll get through O.K. If I do, then I stay on until the end of the course, & the final three Boards.

On Friday there was a big Naval march through Melbourne which we should have been in, if we weren’t on Doomba. We began practicing before we left, so we missed out on a lot of marching. I thought you might like to see how the O.T.S. marches so am enclosing a picture from one of the Melbourne papers.

While the march was on, we were coaling ship again – the fourth time. This time conditions were almost primitive; we came alongside another ship, some went below on her & shovelled the coal into wheat bags. These we hauled up on deck by hand, carried them across onto Doomba & dropped into our bunkers. It was just as well we only wanted 60 tons instead of the usual 160. After we finished - & got clean, which took me about an hour – I was absolutely black from head to foot, I went to a play “The Corn is Green” with Mrs. Cowden & Bina. Came back aboard Sat. morning & am going off again at 2 pm. this afternoon.

Next time you see Ron, tell him I’ve been meaning to write, will do so when I get back to the school. Hope he had a good time at Elliot, sounds as if he should!

By the way, I was hoping to be home for Easter, but heard a rumour yesterday that O.T.S. would only be given 1 ½ days leave – hope it is not the case. May only be able to get to Adelaide, but will let you know definitely next letter.

Well, afraid I have to close – just another of those usual notes – get dressed ready to go out to the Cowden’s – they are very nice people, the lot of them, & can’t do enough me. Well cheerio, hope holiday is going well & hope will see you soon,

Date 24-3-45

Back to OTS

Am back & settled into school again now & guess your holiday is nearing end. Thank you very much for the parcel which was waiting for me on return Needless to say it went very quickly. The cake was beautiful & so were biscuits – appreciated by all who partook; which was quite a few. Also one letter (14th) was waiting, thanks for that & other letter which received a couple of days ago dated 18th. Very glad to hear from you Dad, & so glad the rest is doing you both good & in such perfect weather. Quite a large mail you must have received Mum – was at Mrs Cowden’s last weekend – or at least for a night & then an afternoon. Got into some of Bill’s civvy clothes; what a relief! I do appreciate their kindness & homeyness. It should be very nice for both of you to be able to go & spend a weekend with Mr & Mrs Reid. So you like looking at the sea too Mum – it is the same sea, where ever you are. Yes, we can remember St. Thomas’ (church?), can’t we Dad; also the “Herzogin Cecile”, & quite a few things.

Suppose I can tell you now – we were lucky enough to strike a trip to Sydney & back on ‘Doomba’! What a thrill I got – especially going into that harbour – what a place. It is simply wonderful, all those bays & the bridge, which I went under & over twice. We were there for just over two days (one day coaling) & I got one night off. Went ashore with a cobber, had a whacking big meal at a hotel & then went to a dance at some girls’ hostel – his sister was staying there; what a surprise she got, seeing him come in. She is a teacher at Sydney High – only 21.

After returning to Melbourne, went to Geelong for a weekend – didn’t get any leave but went to church in morning & night. Last weekend, coaled again & got two nights & a Sunday afternoon leave – which I spent at Box-Hill. One night stayed in Melbourne & went to a picture show. Next night went to a play with Mrs Cowden.

On Monday afternoon got back to Flinders & so on Tuesday began lectures again. Turs. & Fri., did Anti-Gas & Chemical Warfare & had an exam which I’m afraid I flopped horribly in. Still can’t worry now. This afternoon played tennis at R.A.N.C.; during week played baseball & water polo (latter our team (18th course) won 3 to nil). We get plenty of sport, & play all new games, which I like. What I mean is I get a chance to learn most different sports.

Bad news for Easter – F.N.D. gets from Thursday to Tuesday night – we, O.T.S., get from Sat. afternoon to 9 am Mond. So can’t get home, which is a blow as there is so much I could tell you & want to talk about, but haven’t time here. From now on all time will have to go into notes etc., as we have a number of courses to do yet. So please excuse shortness etc. of my letters.

Should get results of middle Board next week. By the way – Ken Price came over last week, but not in Executive Branch. now. He is doing a special course of a month & a pair of ‘goggles’.

Guess I’ll have to stop, but not because of lack of news, hope you both come back home absolutely 100% after a thoroughly good holiday.

Cheerio for now, wish you all the best for Easter, will be thinking of you,

Date 1-4-45

Still OTS

Am writing this in Melbourne at Mrs. Cowden’s. Once again am being treated as if I am home – it certainly is great.

Well it was bad luck this morning, wasn’t it? I was looking forward to saying a few words to you & apparently I missed you by 5 minutes. I thought 9:30 would be a good time to catch the Whiteman family, but apparently the line was delayed an hour or more. This morning I went to church at 9 am. & came home expecting the booked call, but had to wait till about 11:30. It was a surprise to hear Uncle Frank, hope he & Auntie have a good stay.

Left F.N.D at 1 o’clock on Sat. & got out here about 4 o’clock. Went to the pictures with Mrs. Cowden & Bina at night. This afternoon have done some swotting & will be going back on the 9 am train tomorrow. Friday morning went to ante-communion at 7:30 & then to church at 10. For the rest of the day got down to work on my books. We haven’t had any results of mid. Board yet – expect them on Monday – tomorrow. On Friday have our final exam on navigation: I think should be O.K.; have one paper on theory & one on chart work.

Thanks for your last letters, Mum, Dad & Gordon. Mrs & Mr Cowden send their regards. Am glad you, Mum & Dad, feel & look so much better for that restful holiday. Apparently you both enjoyed that weekend with Mr & Mrs Reed – sounds a very interesting district. Glad you found use for that parcel Gordon – as if you wouldn’t! Congrats. on your cricketing – definitely an all-rounder, much better than I ever did.

I expect you have been expecting a few more letters than I have been writing Mum, well it’s not that I haven’t got anything to say, but have always got something or other that must be done & that means that. But I am feeling great myself. This is a rather disjointed letter, I’m afraid, have been trying to write, talk & listen to a play at the same time. Well, cheerio for now, hope everyone is not working too hard,

P.S. Trust you all had a happy Easter – I did, although was looking forward to seeing, & then leaving you.

Date 15-4-45

‘Acting’ First Lieut.

Afraid this will just be a note, once again spent the weekend at Mrs. Cowden’s & here it is 6:45 so haven’t got long. Tried to do a bit of swot today – have got another exam. next Friday – signals. In the morning have got semaphore & Morse reading & in the afternoon a 2-hour paper on theory – international & other codes.

Last week received your two letters – thanks – I meant to write a note before-hand; but there it is.

Once more played a lot of sport last week – one night played hockey – and not a bad game either. On Friday had instruction in & then played, rugby – well can’t get the hang of that yet properly; you ought to see the rows of bruises on my shins!

On Tuesday I am ‘acting First Lieut.’, which means I take charge of the school – more or less. Take prayers & divisions, inspection, & rounds at night. It doesn’t worry me a bit though, gradually get used to it over here.

Am trying to get one of those books “H.M.A.S.” Mum, but it seems as if there are none left – will try again though. Also would you tell Marg. that we have no chewies in canteen at present but as soon as I can get some will forward them on.

Have got another 5 weeks in the course Mum – not long you know – it will soon pass: have exams nearly every week, it seems. Yes Max is still at home – a very nice chap. Mrs. C. was pleased to get your letter, is writing next week. Bill is on his way home too.

I’m very sorry about Mr. Wood, if you see one of the family would you pass it on please. The concert certainly was a success wasn’t it? Glad Marg. got on well – what bad luck she had. Hope she had a very nice holiday at a new place. Don’t worry about me Mum, it is no good worrying when doing a course like mine, have a bit of confidence in yourself & you’re right.

I had a letter from Liz. Knapp too, would like me to go out some time – will as soon as I can.

Must rush off now, sorry this is so hurried, hope all are well & no complaints; cheerio for now,

Date 18-4-45

Passed OTS, Still Boards to sit & pass

I must thank you all for everything I received last week: a coupe from Mun, one from you Dad (was very pleased to receive it too), one from Marg (as you said ‘truly amazing’ but thanks a lot); also the nuts Dad & Arguses. Thanks for the congrats. – all I have to do now is keep going. The final boards are just over 3 weeks from now (where has the time gone) & we have got another two exams before them; then there are five boards in that fourth week. Sounds a lot, but can only hope for the best.

On Friday had our signals exam which is reckoned to be one of the hardest. The practical (reading Morse & semaphore) was fairly easy, but I don’t know how I got on in the theory. Never-the-less I think I should have passed. A chap soon knows though, if he hasn’t - he is just ‘on his way’. Last week was very busy. Had special jobs for three days & with the signals coming on was getting up at 4 am to do a bit of swot.

This morning went to Church - & it is a beautiful day, really too nice to be inside. Yesterday afternoon played baseball till after 4 & then at ¼ to 5 had a match of hockey. The latter was great fun – it really is a very good game. As soon as we started it began to rain & heavily, & at any one time there seemed to be more in the mud than after the ball. It really was very amusing, & it finished a draw – only 1 goal each. Played another couple of games of rugby last week & am just beginning to understand a bit. Also had our heat of Curry Cup (I’m coxswain, remember) but had some bad luck with arrangements & missed a place.

Next week we have got torps – I think, then two weeks gunnery & that’s the lot. I’m writing this in our nav. lecture room – I don’t think I’ve ever described this school & not because it’s not worth it: it is set away from main Depot & has beautiful gardens & lawns out in the front; at present everything seems to be flowering. We have trees (i.e. the scrub) all around the other sides, but of course we aren’t allowed out there. Will tell you more about the place – later.

About my washing Mum, luckily we have a dhobying firm here & most of mine

goes there – it has to. I just do underwear & hanks. Thanks Mum, I will certainly be looking out for that parcel. By the way if you have a spare pair of sox do you think I could have them please, also could you get me a singlet too (will enclose some coupons). You see, over here we don’t have any slop-days & so I can’t get any clothes at all. That’s why I couldn’t get those khaki sox & shoes.

Guess Marg will soon be home now – I think she was having a pretty good time (will send back letter, thanks) Would have been great for her to get to Melbourne for same weekend as mine. I didn’t realise Gambier was so close.

About leave Mum; if I get through I go over to the Wardroom (!!!) for a couple of months to do further course & would get leave from there. But if I don’t make it will probably be on my way to a ship with 24 hours. There possibly would be a chance of mid-winter leave, but don’t know definitely.

Glad Rex is O.K. and doing well, remember me to him next time you see him & tell him to write if it is his turn (shows how our corresponding is going).

Good work Gordon, on your cricketing. “6” was a good score for me, & you also got two wickets. How is the school work? Finding it easier than you thought aren’t you – I guess so.

So Paddy still has the taste for poultry, or was he just protecting the rights of our fowls.

Eric certainly knows talent when he sees it, if he puts such a good write up for Marg – will have to be more careful when judging his opinions in the future.

Well, it’s time I got out some books, so will have to close, once again. Cheerio and hope all are still extra well,

Date 29-4-45

Gunnery next week, closure

Once again, will be just a note – have spent the weekend out at Box Hill again & there is now only ½ hour before train goes. I meant to write this before but have been doing quite a bit of swot. today.

Arrived out here Sat. afternoon & went to a League footy match with Mr. Cowden. Guess what – found Bill home when I arrived – he was sorry he couldn’t ring you but had only a very short time in S.A., he came straight through. Is going in tomorrow to report – doesn’t know where or what he will be doing.

Went to bed early Sat. night (was very tired, now the course is getting near the end) & today have been stuck into my books – or tried to, anyway.

Last Friday had another exam – not too bad either. For the next fortnight have got gunnery; which is the last of the courses - & not before time. On Monday the previous course got their results. Only 50% finally got through & 5 of the 7 who dipped were middies! Doesn’t look so good, does it? On Wed. played a game of Aussie Rules against the wardroom – we won too. Sat. morning had a march past in the Depot: well I never knew there was so many personnel there; or maybe it seemed so long because we were in the front of the march.

You’re still on top form with cricket then Gordon – good work – what a record eh!

Anzac Day was just an ordinary day with us Mum. Thanks for the parcel, haven’t got it yet though. Yes I noticed that parcel of yours Dad, had been through the Depot. Why they don’t give us a slop day, because we may have to change the whole of our kit. Even though I like the papers , I think I might as well leave them off for the next few weeks, thanks. By the by, the wardroom is where the officers live & eat, Mum – I had a quiet laugh over that.

Thanks for telling me about a ‘nice fire’ Mum – it certainly is getting cold down our way now. Well, how did the holiday go - Marg – nice to be back at work I guess!

Mr. & Mrs. Cowden thanked you for & returned compliments – Mrs. says she’s been meaning to write back Mum.

Please excuse the scribble & hurried nature but the room is now full of everyone talking, so well once again say cheerio, & hope all are well,

Date 5-5-45

Gunnery over

Must thank you very much for the parcels which I received this week. What a surprise, finding that Turkish delight Mum – everything went in a very short time – it was extra thanks. Yesterday received other parcel – have managed to keep a few biscuits too. Already have on both singlet & sox, & both are a beaut fit – thank you.

Apparently there is a drought up your way – we still get a few showers now & then. Once again the week has just flown – plenty of sport too: yesterday a 5-mile run (4th this time) & today first played a game of soccer (& not bad either) & then a match of hockey. There is not much I haven’t played now.

Last Tuesday we lost another from our course, & another O/D too (only 4 of us left) – sounds a bit like “the ten little nigger boys”!

Glad you had such a good time Marg. Hope your cold is better by now Dad. Yes, got the letter from Rex; received quite a no. during the week. What makes you think ‘the strain is telling Mum’ – I hope I don’t sound that bad. Actually I am not worrying at all – you wouldn’t last long here if you did, I’m sure of that. I certainly feel if I could sleep for a week, though. Will be able to do that later.

Hope you did well in your term exams Gordon – guess you did O.K.

News today certainly seems near the end for Europe – guess Hitler is still looking through a lifter, or dropped, face.

Did gunnery all last week – passed out firing the 4” – next week more theory. Tomorrow, Sunday, am 1st Lieut. Again – rush the school off to church. On Monday another couple of courses coming over.

Once again this seems pretty short, well, not much longer, so cheerio for now. Hope all are fit.

P.S. On Wednesday got measured for our uniforms – here’s hoping I won’t have to cancel the order.

Date 12-5-45

VE Day, OTS over

I’m writing this a night earlier – why- because we have an extra day this weekend. We came up Friday morning & go back Sunday night – quite a leave! This is because of V-E day. I guess you were all thrilled at home with Wed’s. news – who wasn’t? I wonder how long the rest of the war will last? I wonder if they will close our school soon – am afraid so, though it shouldn’t interest me now; also expect results will be effected – rather a selfish consideration though.

Once more am enjoying my stay out here at Box Hill. Bill was home when I arrived, left Friday evening for Mildura – stationed there now.

Last week continued our gunnery course – had a crook instructor – couldn’t seem to teach a thing. Fired all manner of guns during the week; went over to Sommers one day for a A.A. shoot. On Thursday morning they sprang an oral exam onto us & told us we would get out written theory in the afternoon. One thing we got it over with; it wasn’t too bad except for a couple of questions we’d never been taught. So all our written exams are now over.

On Monday a new course came over & who was in it but Doug Gordon – I didn’t expect to see him. Also Bishop’s Robin’s son – in from sea.

I endeavoured to do quite a bit of swotting last week but wasn’t very successful. Two nights I got up at 12 & did two hours & went back to bed. Another couple of times I relied on another lad to shake me but he went to sleep again instead of waking me. I think everyone is pretty tired near the end of the course. One thing I had a beaut sleep last night – from 10 pm to 10 am.

Last Tuesday has a slop-day & put in for quite a list but didn’t get much of it. Got a pair of shoes, black (no khaki) sox & a singlet.

Well on Wed. we start our boards (with a capital B), so on Friday afternoon should know one way or the other. If I get through I’ll let you know quick enough; if I dip I think I should get about 7 days home leave, so let’s hope I’m not on the way home this time next week. Last fortnight one of the warrant officers here got a drat so now we will only have two boards on seamanship.

Glad to hear you at last got some rain. Hope you have thrown off that cold by now Dad. You certainly tempted me with that ‘hot piece of toast’ Mum. How did the exams go Gordon? – you should be on holidays soon, I suppose. By the by, I missed your second letter Mum, coming up to Melbourne on Friday, so can only answer the one. I am still ‘fighting fit’, especially with all the sport – so don’t keep worrying about me, Mum.

Although you won’t get this by Sunday, I’ll be thinking of you tomorrow, Mother’s Day, & hope you have a happy day, Mum. Will be going to church tomorrow morning.

Well, hope you all are in top spirits & everyone well – next letter from here should mean success, I know you all will be wishing me the best & I’ll certainly be doing my best; so here’s hoping,

Date 19-5-45

Commodore’s board still to do

Thanks for the letters which received last week (three of them).

On Monday we had instructional films all morning & lectures in the afternoon. Tuesday we had private study & on Wed the Boards began: - & they haven’t finished yet. For some unknown reason we have to wait ‘till next Tuesday for the Commodore’s Board instead of last Friday. Thus we won’t get our results till about 4:30 on Tuesday.

I was 4th in on Wed. & my next was Friday afternoon (that “W”). The first one wasn’t too bad, but I wouldn’t like to vouch for that second one. Then late Friday afternoon had the Commander’s Board – but got no indication there either; so once more have to wait around. If I have dipped, guess I might be on my way home Wednesday night – I have to look at it this way.

Never-the-less it is a great relief all the swotting over & a chap can stop & think about something other than exams. Friday night went to bed early & Sat. night went to the pictures: in the afternoon played rugby (if I’m here on Wed. next (??) I will be playing centre-forward for school) then later did some dhobeying & read – a magazine! This morning went to church & this afternoon went for a walk over to wards Somers - about 6 of us – it was a beautiful afternoon & we found quite of mushrooms which we brought back to the school & peeled & cleaned. The cook said he’s cook them for us, so we went out to the boiler & made some toast & whacko! Were they beaut. Haven’t had mushies on toast for years.

On V.E. day we had a special service in the drill hall for everyone. Hope you enjoyed your trip to Nuriootpa. Jon (Bill’s dog) is certainly huge – can’t say I like him very much, but not at all rough. I sleep out in the outside room with Max, if Bill’s home – up goes the stretcher. I certainly seem to fit in there O.K. & they are great to me.

You’ve got the right idea Gordon – off to social in the car!

Well, must close off now, hope you all very well & hope you get some good news shortly,

Date 23-5-45

Midshipman DA Whiteman!!

You can guess how thrilled I was yesterday when we received the decision. I guess I still can’t believe it – fully. Never-the-less, the fact remains that at last I’ve achieved what I have always wanted – by some great stroke of luck. And now there is a great sense of relief; because the last week has been a bit of a strain. I was last in everything. On Tuesday I was second to last to see the Commodore (that was quite a pleasant interview) & about 3:30 our course fell in outside our Commodore’s office – waiting; and once again I had to wait, as they went in one by one.

There were four of our course dipped (one middy – which leaves two that got through) & so the total ‘dips’ for the whole course was 50%; from 18 to 9.

This week we are doing engineering & next we do an assault course & get kitted up. That weekend we pick up our ‘tids’ & on Monday we become officers! - I hope. We won’t be going over to the wardroom as they are at present converting part of this school with a “Gunroom” (for Junior Officers – middies & subies) So we will go straight there on 4th June.

The next thing to look forward to is mid-winter leave – on June 23rd for a fortnight. I’ll certainly be waiting for that.

By the way could you send me that big case (the one you gave me Dad) & in it those light grey sport trousers please. Send it to 30 Ashted Rd., Box Hill - & I’ll just hope it gets there by the weekend after next.

Well, thanks for the telegram Dad & the letter Mum (no parcel as yet); I got the answer at 8 pm on Tuesday night. It certainly was quick.

There is tons I want to tell you all & I’m sure there are other things I’ll want you to send me over. Still there it is, will write again at weekend – but had to drop a line.

So cheerio for now

Lots of Love,

David (Midshipman!!!)

Date 28-5-45

Midshipman gear, celebration

I’m sorry I didn’t write over the weekend, but it just seemed to fly & then we were late home Sunday night, so didn’t have time then. Had another splendid weekend at my ‘second home’ – as they call it.

Went up on the early train Sat. morning, got to Melbourne about 9:20 & so did some shopping! Bought a cap, silk tie & scarf, epaulettes (that’s about all – has to be continued next Friday). Then our course assembled & went to Little Burke St. & had a Chinese dinner!

Continued Tuesday night: we then went to some pictures & so got out to Box Hill about 6:30 & stayed home & went to bed early. Stayed in bed Sunday morning & went to Hampden with Mr. C., Sunday afternoon. On Monday we had another exam – engineering; not too bad – the previous week we went crawling over the bottom of the swimming pool & smoke-filled rooms, with great breathing apparatus’s & oxygen bottles on.

Today we got all our gear. First received £32 from pay office – this is to buy everything, but it is not enough: our 2 suits and great coat come to £23 & the slops today cost just under £10 so it has all gone already. Also next Sat. have to buy 2 pr. of sheets, 4 pillow slips, pair of grey trousers & a few etc’s. Never-the-less, don’t think I’m grumbling! Tonight have been marking all new gear & it is spread everywhere; so will have to put away soon. Guess this will be short; seem to have just as much to do now it is all over.

We will probably going up the line next Friday to pick up our uniform. From then on we will be wearing out “tids”. So will pack up a parcel of gear I don’t want anymore, & send it home by mail. On the Sat. night we are all going to a dinner at some hotel – the big celebration of 18th course.

When we come back on Monday we will go to the Gunroom where we live (with our stewards to attend us!!) but use same address till I tell you of any other. I will describe gunroom & new life etc in (please excuse dirty page – it’s the last) subsequent letters. Of course we sleep in beds – stewards make them & clean our boots for the morning. It’s amazing, isn’t it?

Do you remember those silver sleeve links of mine, if you find them would you send them on please? Also Mum how about knitting me a short sleeve pullover, that is when you have time, of course. That is a V-neck please.

Thanks very much for that parcel Mum which I received today (that Turkish delight didn’t last long). I also got a parcel from C.W.A. (a pr. of khaki sox & a packet of B.O. soap!), would you please thank those concerned.

It was lovely to receive letters from you all with congrats, & it seems as if you are as pleased as I am – I hope so. No Mum, Green didn’t get through – why – I’ve got no idea, a great lad.

Well everyone is making a terrific row tonight & I’ve had so much in my mind to write, never-the-less, hope I will recall it all soon, must put my gear away too. So cheerio for now

Lots of Love, from you officer (?) son

David