

Strong Tide Running ~
The War Diary of
James William Ridley Dixon,
Leading Seaman

H.M.A.S. *Australia* 1914-1918

Service No: 2873



Transcribed and edited by Cheryl Hayden

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HMAS Australia (Photo courtesy Museum of HMAS *Cerberus*)

Introduction

This diary has lived inside my grandfather's navy 'ditty box' for more than a century. After his death in 1958, his wife, Edna, kept the box and its contents safe, as did his daughter, Joyce after Edna's death in 1978. It has remained with the family ever since.

Over the years, I have sat down to read the diary on a couple of occasions but it lived in Melbourne, and I had moved to Brisbane. I never found the time to peruse it thoroughly. Now, having transcribed it, I have begun to ponder over the sheer wonder of its existence. This is not a diary of an episode of conflict, or part of a war. It is a diary of the entirety of World War I as experienced by a gunner aboard the new Royal Australian Navy's flagship, *HMAS Australia*.



Inside the ditty box

By the end of the war, James (Jim) Dixon (1895-1958) was ranked Leading Seaman and he served as a gunner. His commitment to keeping the diary is, of itself, quite

remarkable, and it reveals a man with a strong sense of the unfolding of history. Dixon's story, however, is another thing. While dominated by tedium and drudgery, it is underscored by a dry wit and the ability to observe and enjoy small pleasures. And so we find that the endless reportage of coaling, painting, grommet making and gunnery practice are interspersed with observations about the weather, the beauty of snow on mountain ranges and the joy of some recreational sailing in the ship's cutter. There are accidents, deaths, burials at sea, concerts and moving pictures, royal visits, sea bathing, boxing tournaments and regattas. We witness the introduction of new aircraft technology and numerous 'near misses', including Dixon's own tumble into the sea. Life aboard the *Australia*, as the months and years of World War I slide by, comes to life in this diary. Finally, we join Dixon aboard a troop ship on the journey home and sense his pleasure during a week's fun in the sun while in quarantine at Portsea.

Further insight comes from a letter written to Jim after the war by an old shipmate in Yorkshire. He provides some more detail of life aboard the *Australia*, particularly through a series of 'do you remembers', including 'the sensation of the great seas coming over the bow'.

In transcribing the diary, I have made very few changes. Jim's clear handwriting made the task easy and his expression belies his having left school at the age of 13 years. I have corrected his few spelling errors – he simply could not spell 'anchor', always omitting the 'h' – and, on occasions, the tense of a verb. I have added the occasional punctuation mark for clarity of meaning. One word that is now culturally taboo I have chosen to replace. I have placed the new word – one used frequently at the time – in square brackets. I have also created chapters for each year, highlighted the start of each month and created paragraphs for ease of reading. His page numbering is shown in square brackets. The title, *Strong Tide Running*, I have taken from his own words, written on 12 July 1916.

The diary was written in two parts: for the most part it is a journal of daily life, with a few gaps, starting with Jim's joining the navy in 1913 and ending with his discharge in May 1919. The second part begins at the other end of the book, which, while there is no obvious front or back to the notebook, I have referred to as the 'back' of the diary. Here, Jim has recorded information such as the firing capacity of enemy ships, diagrams of battle formation, and what appear to be transcripts of official government communiques. He has also included a poetic tribute to the crew of the submarine, *AEI*, which sank off Rabaul at the very start of the war, during the battle for German-held territory in Papua New Guinea. As flagship, the *Australia* led this important naval victory. It was certainly something to

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celebrate. Yet the sorrow that came with the loss of even one vessel comes through loudly in my grandfather's poetic tribute to the *AEI* and the men who drowned when it sank. Perhaps this explains why he does not mention the loss of the *Indefatigable*, fellow member of the 2nd Battle Cruiser Squadron (B. C. S.), during the Battle of Jutland, which happened while the *Australia* was out of action.

From a family perspective, this diary brings to life a man who is today barely a memory. Grandpa died when I was three years old; all I can recall is sitting on his lap by his and Grandma's kitchen window in West Preston. There is no one left with any clearer memory of him. What we have, in addition to the diary, are his medals, a plethora of cards, letters and documents, and some items he brought back home with him: a 'sweetheart' garnet brooch bought in Edinburgh for his mother and, from Colombo, on the journey home, a family of ebony and ivory elephants and a walking stick. We also have a beautiful, bright, steel clipper, mounted on glass, which Jim made during lunch-breaks at the St Georges Road Tramway Workshops in Melbourne during the 1940s. This he gave to my mother on the occasion of her 21st birthday in 1948. I have come to understand only now that this clipper represents a cherished memory of some happy days he spent on Scapa Flow, sailing in the *Australia*'s clipper with his shipmates in the summer of July 1917 and landing on an empty beach to boil up some tea and have dinner.



Jim's cutter and two of the elephants purchased in Colombo.
(Photos courtesy of Marg Drohan)

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As the diary is almost entirely reportage, it is impossible to gauge my grandfather's opinion of the events in which he was caught up. Dixon was only five when his Liverpool-born father disappeared from their lives, dying on the Western Australian goldfields. What did he think, then, knowing that back home his only family – that of his mother – was of German descent? For obvious reasons, this German heritage was never discussed and little is known about it.

I hope that researchers interested in naval life during World War I will find the diary of James William Ridley Dixon of some value. Really, though, it is for Jim's great-granddaughter, Sara, and his great-great-granddaughter, Sophie, with much love; and a tribute to the memory of my mother, Joyce, who adored him. And, of course, for Jim.

Cheryl Hayden, PhD.
Brisbane, Australia
2 August 2022



With Jim and Edna, West Preston, 1954.

Before the War

Jim Dixon was the third child of four born to James and Catherine Dixon. He was five years old when his father left to seek his fortune on the Western Australian goldfields. James Dixon never returned and it is understood that he died there in c. 1900. Catherine was left in Eaglehawk, near Bendigo, with four children under ten years and no obvious means of supporting them. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that as soon as each child was old enough to leave school, at age 13, they were sent away to work. Jim's older sister was sent to Benalla to live with their German-born grandparents. His second sister went to work for an aunt and her husband who had a 'mixed business' in St Kilda, Melbourne. Jim, the third child, followed her to St Kilda soon afterwards. Only the youngest, Jim's brother, stayed at home in Eaglehawk.



Jim Dixon, aged about 12 years, second from right, with his brother and two sisters. (Photo: family collection)

Jim hated working for his uncle and aunt. According to his daughter, Joyce, the aunt *'...really got her pound of flesh, as Dad had to get up early, about 4am or maybe earlier, harness the horses and take horse and cart to Victoria Market to buy fruit and veg for the business. Then [he] had to work through the day until the shop closed at 10pm.'* In 1913, his

sister married an English seaman *'who had come from a very well-to-do family in Manchester...'*¹

Was it this gentleman seaman who suggested to Jim that the new Royal Australian Navy might offer a career? We do not know. However, Joyce writes that *'...when he saw signs and posters to "Join the Navy, see the world, free uniforms, meals and be paid..." it must have seemed very attractive.'* And so, just a month shy of his 18th birthday, James William Ridley Dixon left the drudgery of a St Kilda mixed business and went to sea.

¹ Joyce's notebook

The war diary of James William Ridley Dixon

[1] Life in the R. A. Navy

I joined the navy on 15th April 1913 in my 18th year in life. I did six weeks in the Williamstown depot when I was sent to the HMAS *Encounter* on the date of 21st May 1913. Spent some time at Geelong and later went into dock at Williamstown. After docking, left Melbourne for Sydney on Oct 2nd. Arrived on 4th where we joined the HMAS *Australia* and gave a search-light display. Left on 19th and arrived in Melbourne on 21st leaving for Port Lincoln on 16th Nov, arrived on 18th, when I was sent to the HMAS *Australia* on Nov 19th 1913. Left Port Lincoln for Hobart 17/12/13. Arrived on 20th.² Left on 13.2.14 for Glenelg, Adelaide, arrived 16.2.14, left 20.2.14 left again on 5/3/14 arrived in Sydney some time and docked at Cockatoo dock. Left Sydney on 15/6/14 for the Islands near Queensland where we would practise war routine.



Dixon aboard HMAS *Encounter*. Dixon states he was sent to HMAS *Australia* in November 1913, so the date on the photograph may be wrong. (Photo: Dixon's ditty box)

² On 22 January 1914, Dixon became an Able Seaman (War Service Record, Australian War Memorial)

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Arrived at Kennedy Sound on 19/6/14, left for Palm Islands on 15/6/14 [2] arrived on 26/6/14 and we [are] practising night firing man, arm and man boats, torpedo attacks and everything concerning war, and we had a couple of runs ashore on account of the rocks so we had to walk through the water and there were only a few blacks there. Left on 28/7/14 for Bundaberg where we stayed 2 days and [I] was making arrangements for leave in Brisbane, but on the 30th we got orders to proceed to Sydney at a speed of 20 knots.³ We left at 10 o'clock at night and arrived in Sydney at 11am on 1st of Aug. Lighter came alongside the Starb[oard] side with coal, and on the port side we were getting in ammunition of all sorts and preparing for war. The first night we had 3 hours sleep in coaling rig⁴ and the next night the same sleep and the only men allowed ashore were those that were married and had their wives in Sydney and they had 4 hours leave, but others that had friends in Sydney could send for them to say goodbye [3] to them.

On Tuesday 4th of August 1914 [ie: war declared] we left Sydney at 8pm and had sentries on the turrets to keep boats from coming too close, and as soon as we got under weigh the Commander told us that we were out to look for our friends, which were the Germans, so we cleared ship for action and we are on our way north.⁵ On 7th we passed Kennedy Sound and we are working war routine in three watches, the red, white and blue watches. On 9th, Sundays routine, and at 6am the *Parramatta* met us and at 10am the *Sydney* and the other 2 destroyers met us. On 11th we exercised clear ship for action and threw a lot of gear over the side.

After that we went to General Quarters⁶ and packed up at 10am, and it was piped 'everybody forward' and the Admiral made a speech telling us that the same night we were going to make a night attack on Symons Haven sending the *Sydney* and three destroyers in to see if the German ships were there and the *Australia* and *Encounter* waited outside for them about 10 mile away. And the Admiral [4] said if we meet the German ships he said [sic] he would show the people if it was [a] tinpot navy; but as it happened there were no German ships there, and in the morning on 12th we were going in to meet the *Sydney* and destroyers and we came across a 2-masted bark and put up a signal for her to come to us but she took no notice but went as fast as she could so we just loaded a 4" gun and fired it across her bows

³ Diary of Stan Gedling's diary, Australian War Memorial, (2). The *Australia*, *Melbourne*, *Encounter*, *Yarra* and *Warrego* were off the coast of Pinalba, Hervey Bay, on 30 July. (Gedling was aboard HMAS *Melbourne*.)

⁴ 'Coaling rig' is the appropriate dress for coaling. So they were sleeping in working uniform. 'Clean into coaling rig' means to dress oneself for coaling. 'Clean into painting rig' is also referred to. <https://www.gunplot.net/main/content/jack-speak-sailors-dictionary>

⁵ War was declared on this day. See Gedling's description of *Australia*'s departure (p. 3)

⁶ General Quarters = Battle Stations

and her sails came down like a flash of lightning so we lowered a cutter and went for the Captain of her and tried to get all the information that we could out of him, but he said he was a Dutchman out fishing and said he saw the German ships in the harbour but they have gone again, so we let him go and then went in to meet the *Sydney* and three destroyers, and there was nothing in there but them.

On 11th we kept 1st degree and kept good lookouts. On 12th, the *Encounter* came across a 1-funnel steamer and signalled to her and asked her her name [5] and she signalled back *Zambesi* belonging to an English company so they let her go but later they found out that she did not belong to an English company so they went after her again and have taken her as a prize, and they found out that she had a lot of wireless gear aboard her so they put a prize crew aboard her with pistols side-arms and some of their kit.⁷

On 14th the Captain told us that we are on our way to Port Moresby to coal. On 15th, coaled ship taking in 1,400 tons of coal and 800 tons of oil. Finished at 8 o'clock, cleaned up by 11pm and turned in at 12pm and turned out at 5am. Got under weigh at 6am for Noumea⁸ arrived there on 21st, coaled ship taking in 2,500 tons, finished at 2am next morning, slept till 6.30 and then carried on clearing up ship and piped down in the afternoon. Left Noumea on 23/8/14 for Fiji with two troop ships with New Zealand troops aboard them, and we had with us the *Montcalm*, [which was] a French ship, the *Psyche*, *Pyramus*, *Philomel* [and] *Melbourne*.

[6] Carried out war routine and arrive in Fiji 26/8/14. Left Fiji for Somo [Samoa?] on 27/8/14 [and] had pretty rough weather. Arrived on 30th and we sent the *Psyche* in the harbour with the white flag hoisted at the yard arm and to ask them if they wanted to surrender so they said they would; but they would not take their flag down so we left some troops there and we swept the harbour for mines but found none. We hoisted the colours on the 30/8/14 on a Sunday and we had a Sunday on the 31/8/14 on account of passing 180 Mar.⁹ Left Samoa on 31/8/14 for Suva, the capital of Fiji, to coal ship, the *Montcalm* and *Melbourne* coming with us; and we are carrying out a different routine, one watch on all night, and the other two in their hammocks, and the ones that have all night in, work all day.

[September 1914] Arrived in Fiji on 2/9/14 took in 1,800 tons of coal and the people from ashore sent off a lot of bananas to the ship's company and the blacks were selling big bunches for 1/- [one shilling] and it took one all his time to curry [carry?] them. [7] The

⁷ Jim's account could be erroneous as there was a British ship called *Zambesi* on its way to Sydney.

⁸ Spelled 'Newmere' in diary.

⁹ Should be 'Mer' to denote the 180 Meridian – the International Date Line.

Montcalm left Suva on 2/9/14. We left on 3rd and the *Melbourne* left with us but went a different course under sealed orders. We carried out 3rd degree of vigilance and on the 7th we fired one round out of each gun with a full charge. On the 8th we fired one round of cannon out of each 4-inch and fired 6 pounder sub-calibre at a target for practice. On the 9th we met the Sub-marines *AE1* and *AE2*, *Encounter*, destroyers, [and] *Melbourne*. One troop ship hospital ship, the *Grantalla*, and Colliers. 14 ships in all, the name of the meeting place was Rosilard Island. On the 10th we do physical drill in the morning and now that it is so hot they pipe hands to bathe afterwards and they put the salt water hoses on one another.

Arrived in Symons Haven on 11th. Captured a small German ship, the *Sumatra*, and we put a prize crew aboard her. The people ashore were asked if they wanted to surrender and give up the wireless station and they said we would have to fight for it. So they landed the troops and landed the crews off the destroyers [8] and the blacks were mostly up trees and they shot some of our hands, and they had some blacks in the trenches as well as up the trees and our sailors got around them in every direction and the advance guard were very good shots and every time the blacks put their heads above the trench they were shot over and one of the Germans ran out and surrendered, and a sailor smartly ran up with his bayonet fixed and took his rifle and took the blacks in the trench prisoners and now we have a lot of prisoners aboard the ship, and they are getting treated very well and Mr Jackson a Lieutenant gave them pipes and red aprons and caps and they looked very well and one of them could speak English pretty well.

On 12th, in the morning while we were at gun quarters there was two hands in the 2nd cutter and the pin came out of one of the falls and the two of them fell into the sea.¹⁰ One chap hurt himself and sung out to the other chap so he swam and got a life buoy that had been thrown over to them and took it to the other chap [9] then he got one for himself and the place was alive with sharks. The life boat was lowered and both hands were saved, one chap being recommended for the medal and he has got it. At Rabaul we had about 7 killed and 11 wounded and we would have had a lot more only for one black who stepped out from the bush and told them that there was a mine on one of the roads close by, so they took the black aboard one of the destroyers. On the 12th, we buried one of the sailors that died aboard the ship. He died from wounds and was buried at sea and after we buried him we coaled ship

¹⁰ The pins should only be released when the boat is ready to be lowered into the sea and in a position that is well clear of any waves, at which point the 'out pins' order is given. It seems that in this incident, the mechanism holding the pin in place was faulty and released the pin too soon. My thanks to John Douglas OAM, Museum of HMAS *Cerberus*.

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taking in 1,600 tons and in the afternoon we got out nets. On the 13th we fired a salute after we had captured the place.¹¹



HMAS *Australia* at Rabaul. (Photo courtesy Museum of HMAS *Cerberus*.)



Burial at Sea. (Photo/postcard, Dixon's ditty box.)

¹¹ A flag commemorating the victory at Rabaul is on display at the Museum of HMAS *Cerberus* in Victoria, Australia. It is one of the museum's most prized exhibits. (Thanks to Cmdr Helen Ward)

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On 14th, we got in provisions. On 14th left Symons Haven for Sydney but when we were out a couple of days we altered course and came back again to Symons Haven. Arrived 19th and coaled, taking in 1,260 [tons and] finished at 12pm same night. It is supposed that we have lost one of the sub-marines.¹² Left Symons Haven [10] on 21 and cruising around the Islands and the *Sydney* has left us for another place. The *Yarra* has damaged her propeller and she has gone away to have it fixed up.

We have captured a lot of boats around here and one of them they have put wireless on it and 2 – 3 pounders and 2 max. and it helps to patrol the harbour. On 22nd called in at Rabaul, stopped there for a couple of hours and then went out again, taking with us the *Montcalm*, *Encounter*, and troop ship *Berrima*. As soon as we left we cleared ship for action and went to General Quarters, replace gear, at 10.30am pipe down in the afternoon.

On 23rd we just got nicely settled in our hammocks when they piped 1st degree would be kept. Arrived at Wheloms Haven¹³ on 24 and they have surrendered and we left the same night. On 25th in the morning about 2 o'clock it went 'man and arm ship' as they thought they saw the German ships and we manned the guns quickly and only half dressed, and we brought the guns to the ready; but as we got closer we discovered [11] that they were fishing boats so we got the order to unload and turn in again.

Arrived at Symons Haven on the 26th 9.14 [and] took in 1,000 tons of coal. On 28th we painted ship and provisioned ship. In the evening we got out nets. On 29th got in more provisions and in the night patrolled the harbour. On 30th went to General Quarters in the fore-noon and ships duty in the afternoon. [October 1914] On 1st.10.14 coaled, taking in 350 tons, and the same night all the ships left the harbour and are going North, and came back on 2nd and coaled taking in 250 tons. On 3rd, harbour routine and in the evening we had a small concert and moving pictures and at half past ten an order came through for the *Montcalm*, *Sydney* and ourselves to get under weigh. On 4th we are line abreast and on our way to Suva and to make it our future naval base.

On 5th, we have rigged a canvas bath on the upper deck and after we do our physical drill they pipe hands to bathe. During the fore-noon we went to General Quarters and fired one round out of each gun. Arrived at Suva on 12.10.14. On 15th coaled ship, taking in [12] 1,700 tons. Started at 1.30pm and finished at 3am next morning. On 16th we provisioned ship; same on 17th. On 18th, Sundays routine. Left Suva for Soma [Samoa] on 17th for Soma [sic]

¹² The *AEI* was sunk off the coast of Papua New Guinea on 14 September 1914. The wreck was not found until 2017. See Dixon's tribute, Back of Diary.

¹³ Wilhelmshaven in Rabaul

went around the Islands and came back to Suva again. Arrived on 23rd. Coaled, taking in 1,100 tons. On 24th we had a run ashore, 3 hours to each watch. On 26th did firing. On 28th did firing and in the evening we came across an American liner so one of our officers went aboard her to have a look at her papers and she had just left Sydney, so we let her go again. Arrived back in Suva on 30th. Coaled ship taking in 900 tons.

[November 1914] On 1.11.14 the *Moresby* came in and we sent a provision party aboard her to transfer all the provisions to the *Aorangi*. On 2nd painting ship. On 3rd, we went out and on 4th the *Montcalm* left us for Noumea. On 6th did firing. Arrived at Suva on 7th. Coaled ship taking in 750 tons. On 8th, got in provisions and later ourselves and a collier left for Fanning Island where we will receive further instructions orders by cable. On 9th, Sundays routine. We are carrying out 2nd degree. On 12th we fired one round from each gun. On 13th while at sea we got out nets and piped hands to swim over the side. Arrived at Fanning Island on 14th [13] and coaled under weigh, taking in 1,500 tons, and after we finished we went on our way.

On 21st we had sports aboard the ship. On 26th arrived at Camelia Bay in Mexico, where we met the Japanese cruisers *Hizen* [battle]ship, *Indgumo* (Cruiser)¹⁴ [and] *Asama* (Cruiser) and we coaled taking in 2,500 tons but could not finish on account of the swell, so we finished the next day, and in the night we proceeded to sea with the 3 Japs, and the *Newcastle* left before us. We are proceeding to the Galapagos Islands.

The *Newcastle* visited Mangarillo¹⁵ yesterday and reported fighting between Colima and Manzanillo bay. Telegraph wires cut and no communication beyond Manzanillo, and Colima may be cut at any time. Whole country is up. *Newcastle* left Manzanillo at 5pm and is now proceeding to Cocos Islands and hence to Galapagos Islands. 28th, at sea. 29th started a new routine 2nd degree. [December 1914] On 2nd *Newcastle* visited Cocos Islands and nothing there. Island uninhabited. *Newcastle* re-joined fleet this afternoon. Arrived at Galapagos Islands on 3rd and coaled ship taking in 1,224 tons [14] On 4th cleared up ship and went out patrolling while the Japs coaled. On 5th went in again and in the evening the *Newcastle* and a collier went out, and later ourselves and the 3 Japs went out. On 6th we met the *Newcastle* and are single line ahead.

On 7th we met 2 more of our colliers and they are now following up astern. Through the day we were painting the ship's side while at sea. During the fore-noon, we went to

¹⁴ Probably *Idzumo*.

¹⁵ Probably Manzanillo (Mexico).

General Quarters. It has been put on the notice board: In accordance with Admiralty orders I am proceeding to Gulf of Panama to examine Perlas Island.¹⁶ On 8th at sea and keeping 1st degree. In the night while the guns crews were closed up we saw a light in the distance and after some time the *Newcastle* was sent to see what it was, and when she got close to it she switched on the search-lights and found out that it was S.S. *Trafalgar* of Glasgow bound for Melbourne, and we thought there were other ships there but when the moon came up [15] we could see that it was only the dark clouds and we had even brought our guns to the half-cock, but later brought them to the cease firing position.

On 9th at sea. On 10th cleared ship for action in the morning and then went to General Quarters. The *Newcastle* and *Assama* went to Perlas Is. and San Miguel Bay to examine them. They left about 5am and we have left the Japs' flagship behind to wait for 4 colliers, and one Jap and ourselves have gone another course. We arrived at Pinas Bay, a place about 70 miles from Panama, on 10th and the Japs Admiral came aboard and said himself and all under his command wish Admiral Patey¹⁷ and his squadron good bye and good luck, and we are sorry to leave you, and also [sorry] that we did not meet the enemy in your company. Soon after the admiral left the ship, we got under weigh and as we were going out we gave 3 cheers and they gave 3 cheers in return and had the search lights going while we were leaving the harbour, and we are now on our way to Panama. Arrived on [16] 11th and they said ships of over 430 feet in length and 28-ft draught are not allowed to enter the canal, therefore the *Australia* cannot pass through and now we are returning to Pinas Bay to coal.

Arrived on 11th, coaled on 12th taking in 1,300 tons. On 12th clearing up ship. On 14th left Pinas Bay and proceeding to Callao. In the morning we saw a steamer and we fired a 3-pounder blank at her, but she did not stop, so we fired another one and that did not make any difference so after a while we fired a 4-inch and then she stopped and when we got close to her we found out that she was an English ship from Liverpool so we let her carry on. Later on we passed the *Newcastle* and she has a look out right up at the top of the mast. On 15th, at sea. On 16th at sea. 17th at sea. On 18th, arrived at Callao and fired 2 salutes one for their Admiral and one for the Country.

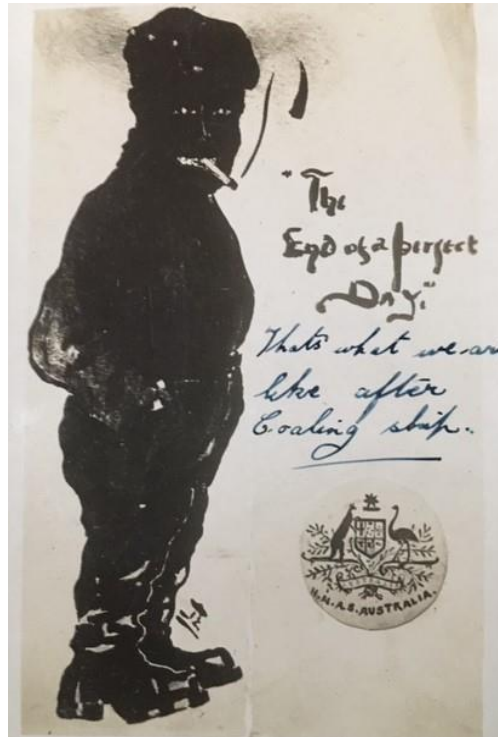
On 19th, got in provisions then got under weigh. On 20th passed some Peruvian ships. On 21st, at sea and cleared ship for action and then went to General Quarters [17] and at 11am packed up and then carried out sea routine. In the afternoon we saw an American mail boat.

¹⁶ Las Perlas or Pearl Islands.

¹⁷ Admiral George Patey

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In the evening we went to fire stations and the water was switched on, Derricks topped, and everything fixed up in 6 min. On 22nd at sea. On 23rd at sea. On 24th at sea and called at Felix Island and met 2 colliers and then got under weigh again but the colliers went on a different course to us. On 25th Sunday routine.¹⁸ On 26th arrived at Valparaiso and started coaling out of lighters and took in 2,300 tons working in 3 watches, 6 hours on and 6 off, and in the watch off we got in provisions.



The End of a Perfect Day (Dixon's ditty box)

Left on 27th. On 28th at sea. On 29th, passed the *Kent*, the *Arama* and a collier. On 30th having pretty rough weather. On 31/12/14 we entered the Magellan Straits early in the morning and the mountains both sides of us were covered in snow. At 11.30am masts of a ship were seen and General Quarters was sounded off; but later we found out that it was the *Carnarvon* so we packed up and went to dinner and just [18] [1.1.15] after dinner we came quite close to her and she lowered a boat and they came over to us and then when her boat returned she went on her course and we went on ours. At 8pm we anchored and carried out 2 degree B. At 3am on 1/1/15, we got under weigh and at 8.30am we had passed through the straits.¹⁹

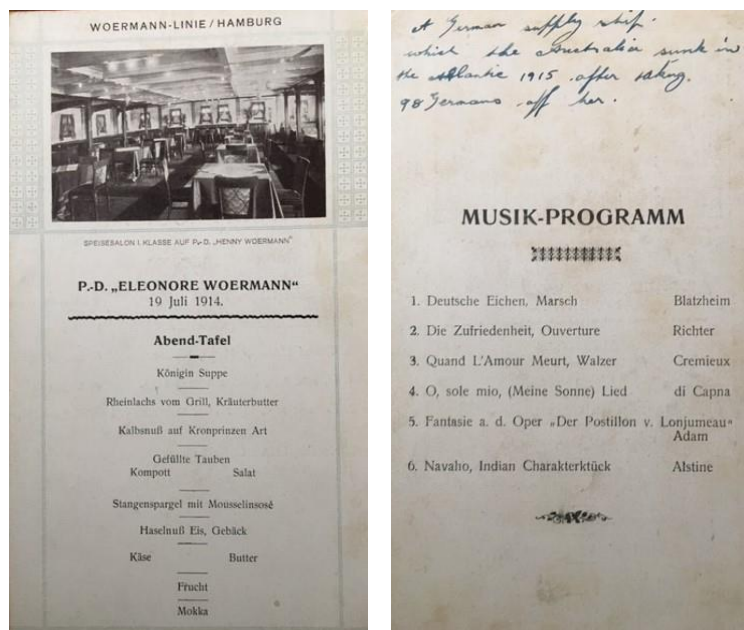
¹⁸ Christmas Day

¹⁹ For charts of HMAS *Australia*'s voyage: [Charts Showing HMAS Australia's Activities - August 1914 to January 1915 | Royal Australian Navy](#)

1915

[1 Jan 1915][18 cont] During the fore-noon we went through an evolution prepare to be taken in tow and then replaced gear and in the afternoon pipe down.²⁰ On 2nd, at sea, and something has happened to our propeller and we are only doing about 9 knots. On 3rd, arrived at Port Stanley and coaled, taking in 1,900 tons, and the divers are working about the propeller. On 4th, cleared up ship and taking in provisions. Left Port Stanley on 5th at 3am in the morning carrying out 3rd degree. In the afternoon passed the Celtic White Star line with an armament of eight 6-inch guns.

On 6th, we sighted a steamer and chased her for a few hours and at 6 mins to 8pm we fired a 12-inch gun to stop her and she stopped at once, as she was in our [19] range. When we got close to her we could see she was a German supply ship, the *S.S. Elinore Woermann* and she had a crew of 99 in all, so we sent the cutters over to her and the crew came aboard our ship in her boats and our cutters and they brought their clothes with them. We had the search-lights on her all the time. At 20 mins past eleven when all her crew was aboard here, we fired two 12-inch and four 4-inch shells at her and she sank at 12pm and as she went down her steam boat was left at the top and it looked a very pretty sight.²¹ The boats that the crew came across in were scuttled and let loose. We have now got sentries over them and they are prisoners of war.



A souvenir from the captured *Eleonora Woermann*. (Dixon's ditty box.)

²⁰ An evolution is a series of manoeuvres, in this case to prepare for being towed.

²¹ Dixon's daughter noted later: "Dad ... told me how the [German] Captain cried as the ship went down."

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On 7th, at sea. On 8th, at sea. On 9th, at sea. On 10th, at sea and Sundays routine, and the Germans went to church with us. In the evening we passed a small boat with a lot of blacks in it. On 11th passed a Swedish ship. On 12th arrived at Abrolhos Rocks and coaled ship, taking in 1,700 tons [20], and there were 3 colliers and one battle ship the *Canopus* there, and you could just see the top of the masts of a collier that had been sunk. On 13th, at sea. On 14th, ditto. On 15th, ditto and in the afternoon passed the Fernando De Noronta Islands and we were flying the Brazilian ensign. In the evening we passed a ship flying a Dutch flag and we found out that she was a Dutch ship so we let her carry on her way. We are carrying out a degree called 2nd B.

On 17th, at sea. Sundays Routine and had church, and the German prisoners came too. On 18th, at sea and the acting S. Gunner's class fired 4 rounds of 4-inch. On 19th, arrived at St Vicente and coaled, taking in 1,400 tons and some oil. On 20th cleaning ship and there is one of our ships here called the *Vengeance* and there are a lot of other ships here and amongst them are some German ships. In the afternoon we got under weigh and are on our way to Plymouth.

On 21st, at sea and we are having pretty rough weather [21][8.2.1915] On 22nd, same. On 23rd, same. On 24th, same, and carrying out Sundays Routine and the German prisoners came to church again. On 25th, at sea. On 26th, same. On 27th, same and it is still pretty rough weather. On 28.1.15, arrived at Plymouth at 3am in the morning and when we got into harbour we unrigged all voice pipes and things used in night defence, docked and then had a sleep from 4am till 6am. Peace routine is now being carried out and leave is given of a night and [also] four days to each watch.²² On 29th, in dock and so on until the 8th 2.15 and we had provisioned while in dock.²³

[February 1915] On 8th went out of dock and went alongside of a coaling wharf where we got in ammunition. Cordite 12-inch Lyddite-capped common shells, 4-inch common and sent out some 4-inch Lyddite.²⁴ On 9th same. On 10th coaled taking in 2,300 tons and washed down by 6pm same night and gave leave to Port watch. On 11th same and night leave was given to the Starb[oard] Watch and told that the [22] ship was under sailing orders. On 12th the hands were piped to clean into the rig of the day for going out of harbour. Left the wharf at 4pm and when we got down the harbour a little way we lowered a cutter and we tied up to

²² Dixon took leave from 28 January for four days, and spent it in Plymouth and London (see Back of Diary).

²³ Seems to suggest that Dixon had four days' leave at this time – probably from 4-7 February, as he was back by 8 February.

²⁴ An explosive.

Strong Tide Running

a buoy. At dark we got under weigh again and there were search-lights going all along the coast. Before we left the wharf we had our masts lowered 15 feet. On 12th, carrying out 1st degree. On 13th, 2 degree A and always got guns closed up. We are having pretty rough seas and no one is allowed on the forecastle deck. On 14th, it has calmed down a bit.

On 15th, went to General Quarters in the forenoon and got up some practice shop [sic] with N.T. and in the first did some sub-calibre and night firing. On 16th, cleared ship for action in the morning and during the forenoon we fired some 12-inch practice at some islands that were covered [23] in snow, firing one turret across decks. After firing we replaced gear and there are a lot of trawlers up here. On 17.2.15, arrived at the Firth of Forth early in the morning and there are a lot of our Battle cruisers here. We coaled, taking in 1,500 tons. On 18th, got out nets in the morning and then out again the evening and left them out.

On 19th, refitting brails and anything that wants doing to the nets. In the afternoon we painted the ship's side and painted a destroyer on it. In the evening we got another boat – a steam pinnace – to be used by the Admiral. On 20th, carrying out Harbour Routine and we have now got a maxim gun fitted for air-craft. On 21st, went to General Quarters and then harbour Routine again. On 22nd, harbour routine and of a night we have 2 emergency guns crews. We have now got to get all the oil and 40 tons of provisions out of the ship. [24] On 23rd, still getting provisions out and in the evening got in nets. On 24th, painted the funnels white and then put black blotches over it so as to make it hard to take a range from it. On 25th, coaled, taking in 250 tons, and then painted down aloft. On 26th, painting ship.

On 27th, the hands were called early and the ship got clean and then the hands cleaned in No 2 and the King came aboard at 10am, and all hands marched past him and saluted, but before he came aboard everybody had a postcard of the King and Queen given them. He was aboard for a short time and it was pipe down in the afternoon. At 3pm the hands manned ship and as the King passed we cheered. On 28th, we are having snow storms. We went to divisions and then church and then pipe down.

[March 1915] On 1.3.15, hands painting ship. On 2nd, ditto. [26]²⁵ 1st March 1915. On 3rd, Harbour Routine and in the evening practice N[ight] Defence. On 4th, went to General Quarters in the forenoon and got out nets in the afternoon and in again. On 5th, practice N Defence in the evening. On 6th, Saturdays Routine. On 7th, Sundays Routine. Admiral Patey has left. At 3.15pm we started un-mooring ship and when it got dark all the fleet got under weigh and carrying out 1st degree. On 8th, we are doing tactics and doing 12-inch sub-calibre

²⁵ There is no page 25 in the diary. Simple pagination error on Dixon's part.

Strong Tide Running

firing and 8 rounds out of each 4-inch gun. We have now got a Rear Admiral on board, Packingham.²⁶ On 9th, did sub-calibre firing. On 10th, fired 4-inch practice and sub-calibre from 12-inch and we are firing at targets like a periscope at the distance [sic] and after we finish firing, we run it down.

On 11th, came in early in the morning and coaled, taking in 1,250 tons, and cleaned ship in the afternoon. On 12th, we are burying one of our seamen today. On 13th, another seaman. [27] The ship's company got some very nice wreathes for the graves and the bodies were buried ashore here. On 14th, the hands go on route marches of an afternoon. On 15th, in the morning air bedding, during the forenoon [get] out nets and in the afternoon so many hands went on a route march. On 16th, still got the nets out. On 17th, we have heard that one of our stokers is dead and the ship's company got about £20 for wreaths. On 18th, he was buried and we have had a lot of snow and the decks have about 4 inches of snow on them. On 19th, still lying with nets out. On 20th, same. On 21st, Sundays Routine. On 22nd, coaled ship, taking in 300 tons, and then cleaned ship and hands have been told off [sic] to put life lines around the boats. After even quarters we got the nets out again and then got them aft and at 7pm we got them in, and got in boats and got ready for getting under weigh.

[28] On 23rd, still have route marches in the evening. Got in all boats again. On 24th, still in harbour. On 25th same. On 26th buried another shipmate. On 27th Harbour R. On 28th, same and we are still sending a lot of the ship's company to the hospital. On 29th, at 6.30pm all the fleet got under weigh and arrived back again early in the morning on 30th. On 30th we coaled taking in 400 tons and then cleaned up ship. On 31st we went to General Quarters in the forenoon and then carrying out peace routine.

[April 1915] On 1st Harbour R and have sent some fever cases to the hospital. On 2nd, 3rd and 4th, same. On 5.4.15 we got under weigh when it was dark about 9.15pm, and went out at 24 knots and carried out 1st degree. On 6th we went to General Quarters and did sub-calibre firing in the turrets and about 4 rounds a gun of 4-inch, and after we finished we ran the targets down. Piped down in the afternoon. On 7th, cleaned ship during forenoon and piped down in the [29] afternoon and in the First Watch we got out a target and did night firing using search-lights. Finished about 10pm and then ran down the target. On 8th, in the morning watch we were on our own but we picked up the other 4 ships of our class during the forenoon and we have light cruisers scouting about us. Arrived in harbour at 11pm and it was half past 2am when we finished mooring ship. On 9th, coaled ship, taking in 1,214 tons of

²⁶ Rear-Admiral Sir W. C. Pakenham.

coal, and then clean ship. On 10th, Harbour R and we have got a gun on the after deck for anti-aircraft. On 11th, Sundays R and proceeded to sea carrying out 1st degree. On 12th, sea routine. On 13th, ditto. On 14th, ditto, and picked up a lot of destroyers. Arrived in harbour same night.

On 15th, hands called at 3.30am. Prepared for coaling and took in 850 tons and tested gun sights during afternoon. On 16th, Harbour R. 17th, ditto and at 10.30pm we went to sea in company with 1st B. C. S. and Destroyers.²⁷ On 18th, cleared everything away for action but never met anything [30] [May ~~March~~ 1915] as we are travelling at speed of 22 knots. On 19th, at sea and having bad weather and went in harbour a[nd] moored ship at 12pm. On 20th, hands called at 4.30am and started coaling at 5.30am and finished at 10am, taking in 920 tons. On 21st, got under weigh at 20 knots [at?] 12pm and steamed at 20 knots. On 22nd, at sea. On 23rd, there were two trawlers near us and in the afternoon we sighted a sub-marine and the *Indomitable* rammed it. Arrived in harbour at 11.30pm same night. On 24th, coaled ship, taking in 900 tons. On 25th, Sundays R.²⁸ On 26th, painting ship and provisioning ship. On 27th, painting ship. On 28th, Harbour R. On 29th, we are burning waste and oil to make out that we were going to sea. On 30th, Harbour R.

[May 1915] On 1st, one of the picket boat's crew – myself²⁹ – was giving one of the others a hand into the boat when both fell into the ditch and the tide was that strong that Gilbert was carried away with it, and I was pulled in with a boat hook [31] and Staples got the boat away and when he got close to him the stoker, Magrath³⁰, dived in after him and brought him to the boat, and I took the boat back while Staples got the water out of Gilbert.³¹ On 2nd, Sundays Routine, and Gilbert is a lot better but very weak. During the day we unmoored and shifted positions and moored up again. On 3rd, the boat's crew had to go before the Commander.³² On 4th we are still in harbour and the B. Crew have got to see the Captain and he said we did very well and recommended Magrath for the Life Saving Medal.³³

²⁷ B.C.S. – Battle Cruiser Squadron

²⁸ Note: this day was to become known as ANZAC day.

²⁹ The word 'myself' has been inserted later.

³⁰ The word 'Magrath' has been inserted later.

³¹ Elsewhere, Dixon reveals that he served as picket boat crew for over a year. ("The Navy List of 1914 shows 634 boats in service. HMAS *Australia* (1) carried two picket boats built by the Thames Ironworks, London in 1911. Existing plans show they were built for "The Colonial Cruiser Australia"." – see: <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/letter-picket-boats/>)

³² This suggests that the picket boat crew had to answer questions about Dixon and Gilbert falling into the sea. Commander is Hyde.

³³ Dixon is identifying as part of 'B Crew'.



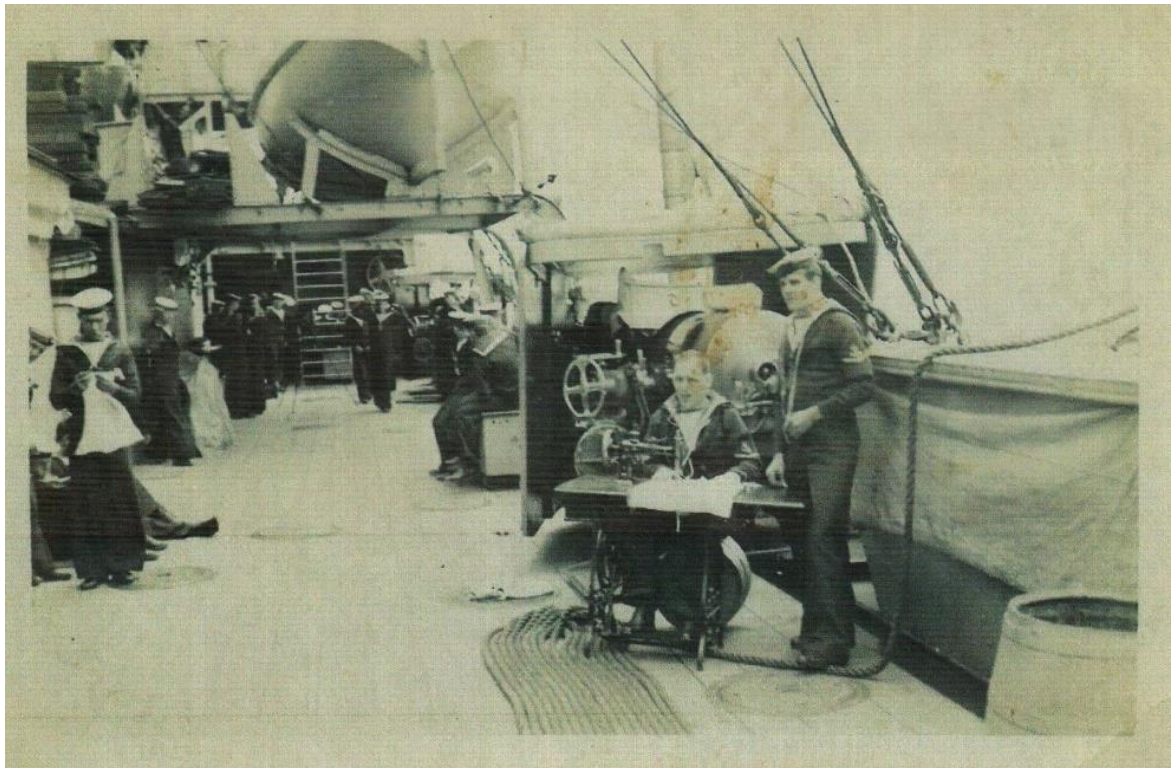
One of HMAS *Australia*'s picket boats. (Postcard: Dixon's ditty box.)

On 5, Harbour R. On 6th, Harbour R and during They exercise Gunnery [sic].³⁴ On 7th, exercised Clear Ship for action and then went to G. Quarters. At 10.30pm replace gear and then daily routine and the rig of the day is No. 5 for the first time up here. On 8th, Harbour R. On 9th, Sundays Routine. On 10th, Harbour R and landing parties go ashore every day. On 11th, Commander Hyde has left the ship and Commander Walsh is Acting Commander. On 12th, coaled ship [32] taking 300 tons and then cleared up ship and painted Super S[tructure?] and in the evening moving pictures on the cable deck. On 13th, the Fleet is having a boxing competition and a lot of our chaps were going to the *Dominion* but could not go on account of being under quarantine. We still have gun drill during the forenoon and evening. On 14th, exercised clear ship for action and then went to G. Quarters; in the afternoon harbour routine. At 10.30pm both watches for exercise and prepare for sea and we have lit up, and we are under 1 hour's notice; piped down at 11pm and did not go to sea. On 15th, Saturdays R and in the afternoon hands scrub hammocks and wash blankets.

³⁴ It seems that Dixon was perhaps interrupted and did not finish a sentence before resuming.

Strong Tide Running

On 16th, Sundays R and we have a new Chaplain from Hobart. Ship is out of quarantine. A few days ago there was a collection made for the Leith Fever hospital and got over £200. On 17th, Harbour R and in the afternoon all the Fleet lit up. At 9.30pm all the B. C. left the harbour accompanied by L. C. and Destroyers. On 18th, at sea [33] and during the forenoon exercised clear ships for action and then went to General Quarters. Pipe down in afternoon. The *Lion* left the Fleet at 5.30pm to go North, leaving us in charge. In the morning watch about 7.30am the *New Zealand* nearly had a collision with us, and they hoisted the two black balls meaning that they were not under control, so we closed watertight doors and got on ahead of her, and everything was alright. Arrived in harbour at 12pm and finished mooring at 1.15am on the 19th, and then turned in and turned out again at 5am, and coaled, taking in 585 tons and cleared up ship in the afternoon and took in some provisions. On 20th, we are getting out A Percing [sic] shell and getting in A. P. Leddite in lieu. 48 rounds to each turret. On 21st, Harbour Routine and make and mend in the afternoon.³⁵



'Make and Mend' aboard HMAS *Australia*.
(Photo courtesy Museum of HMAS *Cerberus*)

³⁵ Hands spent time making and mending clothes.

Strong Tide Running

On 22nd, Saturdays R and they are enclosing some of the 4-inch guns. On 23rd, Sundays R. On 24th, ditto. On 25th, paint ship. On 26th, Harbour R and the *Iron Duke* is here. At 10pm the *Iron Duke* [34] went out. On 28th Harbour R. On 29th proceeded at 11pm. On 30th, at sea. Sunday R. On 31st at sea.

[June 1915] On 1.6.15, arrived in harbour at 3am, moored by 4am and coaled taking in 650 tons. On 2nd, got out nets during the forenoon and furled them again. On 3rd, Harbour R. 4th and 5th, ditto. On 6th, unmoored and shifted position. On 7th, Harbour R. 8th, ditto. On 9th, coaled, taking in 200 tons. In the evening carrying out war routine. On 10th at 8am, peace R. On 11th at 10.15pm, proceeded to sea. On 12th, at sea and in the evening did a 4-inch firing 8 rounds per gun between 10 and 12pm, and it was quite daylight. On 12th, war routine and Jellicoe's fleet is in sight. In the evening we cleared ship for action, and the light cruisers went to the rear and at 7pm a collier came in sight towing a target. Then we went to General Quarters and as each ship passed they fired at it. We fired 4 rounds of 12-inch out of each gun, firing 2 turrets across decks. We are up near Iceland and it is pretty cold.

On 14th, still at sea and in the morning one of our sea planes was flying overhead. A lot of our [35] Destroyers and light cruisers passed past us. Later the Grand Fleet joined us and we did manoeuvres and then they left us. It is light here nearly all night. During the dog watch we fired a few rounds out of the anti-aircraft gun. On 15th, arrived in harbour at 10am [and] started coaling at 11am, taking in 1,300 tons, and then clean ship. On 16th, harbour R. On 17th, Harbour R. On 18th, ditto. On 19th, in the evening they piped hands to bathe and a lot went in.



'Hands to bathe' on HMAS *Australia*. (Photo courtesy Museum of HMAS *Cerberus*.)

Strong Tide Running

On 20th, Sundays R and in the evening provision ship. On 21st Harbour R. On 22nd, in the evening exercised night defence. On 23rd, Harbour R. On 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, ditto. On 28th, the *Inflex* and *Indom* came in. 29th, Harbour R. 30th, started coaling at 5.30am, finishing at 7am, took in 280 tons. Piped hands to bathe. On 31st, Harbour R.³⁶ [July 1915] On 1.7.15, 2nd and 3rd, harbour R. On 4th, Sundays R and in the evening hands to bathe. On 5th, Harbour R. On 6th, Harbour R and in the evening we got a new barge. On 7th, harbour R. On 8th, so many hands landed from each ship [36] and the Archbishop of York gave a lecture.

On 9th, Harbour R. On 10th, ditto. On 11th, the Captain told us we were going to have a few days leave and gave a lecture about it. At 9.30 am, the light cruisers went out and the B. C. went out, the *N. Z.* carrying the flag, which she hoisted at 3pm. On 12th, at sea with the 1st [and] 2nd B. C. S.³⁷ and at 9.30pm we left the fleet with two dest[royers].

On 13th, arrived at Invergordon in the forenoon and anchored, and at 1pm went into a floating dock and the liberty men caught the 8pm train and had 4 days leave. Harbour Watch first and ~~the train arrived in London at~~ arrived back at 11pm on 17th, and Port watch went on 18th at 6am, fares free.³⁸ [On]19th, ship still in dock and part of the watch has from 4 till 6 leave of an evening. On 20th, left dock at 5am and we are laying at Cromarty. At 4pm collier came along side, also oil ship. On 21st started coaling at 4am, finished at 3pm and cleared ship [and] took in 1,050 tons. On 22nd, Port Watch arrived back at noon and [we] went to sea [37] at 9pm.

Arrived at Scapa Flow at 4am on 23rd and anchored. At 4pm we got under weigh and did sub-calibre firing out of the 12-inch and 4-inch firing and we did the firing in the harbour and we had a trawler towing the target. Anchored at 7.30pm. Carrying out harbour R. On 24th, did 4-inch and sub-calibre firing. Anchored at 10am. Started coaling at 11.30 am and finished at 12.30pm [and] took in 260 tons and clean ship. And after the coaling, L. S. Peebles dropped dead just after we finished. He had a growth on the heart. On 25th Sundays R and got under weigh and started running torpedos, and we lost sight of the first one we fired and we had the 2 cutters and a picket boat looking for it. At 8.30 we got under weigh again and the torpedo was seen from the ship and hoisted in by 9pm, and we did not fire any more. Anchored at 10pm.

³⁶ Being June, this should be 30th.

³⁷ Battle Cruiser Squadron, see: <https://wartimememoriesproject.com/greatwar/allied/battalion.php?pid=>

³⁸ Dixon, as picket boat crew, was Harbour Watch.

On 26th, L. S. Peebles was buried ashore here and I was field-guns crew and we had to march about 4 miles to the cemetery.

[38] At Scapa Flow. There are a lot of battle ships there and three dummy ships. At noon went to sea and 2 destroyers came with us. In the last dog watch we prepared for coaling. On 27th, arrived at Firth of Forth and moored at 3.30am and in the afternoon provision ship. On 28th, Harbour R. At 9pm some Light Cruisers and destroyers went out. Also *N. Zealand, Indefatigable*. On 29th, at 7am cleared ship for action. Cleared up decks and went to breakfast. Then went to divisions, everyone having their life saving collars. Then went to General Quarters. Packed up at 11.30am, went to dinner and we have got 2 turrets and 4-inch guns closed up. On 30th, at sea, and in the evening prepared for coaling.

On 31st, arrived at Firth of Forth at 3.20am. Collier came alongside at 5am. Started coaling at 5.30am, taking in 820 tons, and we also took in oil. Finished at 9.20am and then cleaned ship. Our run was successful and we backed up some destroyers that sank some armed trawlers.

[39] [August 1915] On 1st, Harbour R and one of our officers is dead, Mr Hodgkinson. On 2nd, Harbour R. On 3rd, Harbour R and a funeral party is taking him to the station where he is being sent down the line. On 4th, Harbour R. On 5th, painting ship. On 6th, one of our cooks mates is dead. On 7th, Harbour R. On 8th, he was buried. On 9th at 9.45 secure nets for sea and we are getting in all boats, and we are under 1 hour's notice. On 9th some light cruisers went out. On 10th, at 4am, light cruisers came in and we are still carrying out harbour R. On 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th Harbour R and landing R.

On 15th, Sundays R, and after divisions everybody was fallen in forward and the Admiral presented the D.S.M. to Kinniburgh A. B. for his bravery during the action between the *Emden* and *Sydney*.³⁹ He threw burning cordite over the ship's side and was all burnt and we have two more of the *Sydney*'s crew aboard here and they were placed in a prominent position as they also had been wounded. [40] The Admiral gave a very good speech and we gave 3 cheers for the Empire. On 16th, Harbour R and under 2 hours' notice and destroyers and B. S. have been going out and coming in.

On 17th, Harbour R. On 18th we are getting in all boats in the fore-noon and we are under ½ an hour notice and after dark the 1st B. C. S. went out. After evening quarters they piped hands to bathe. On 19th, Harbour Routine. On 20th, Harbour R. On 21st, Saturdays R.

³⁹ Distinguished Service Medal to Able Seaman Joseph Kinniburgh, R.A.N. 2907. See: https://www.naval-history.net/WW1Battle-HMAS_Sydney_v_SMS_Emden_1914-Battle_of_Cocos_Island.htm

Strong Tide Running

On 22nd, Sundays R. On 23rd, at 4am, 1st B. C. S. came in. During the fore-noon we aired bedding. On 24th, Harbour R. On 25th, Harbour R. On 26th, unmoored and shifted position and moored again, and we are prepared for coaling. On 27th started coaling at 5.30am taking in 250 tons, finished at 6.30am. In the afternoon painted down aloft. On 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, Harbour R, and we are under 2 hours' notice and a lot of destroyers and light cruisers have been going out.

[September 1915] On 1st, 1st part of Starb[oard] watch was called at 4.15am and unmoored and shifted positions and carrying out Harbour R. [41] On 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th Harbour R, and on the 5th the *Lion* shifted billets from alongside of us to right ahead of us, and nearer the bridge. On 6th, 7th Harbour R, and we are sending about 100 hands to work about the dock. We are also preparing for coaling. On 8th, called hands at 4.15 am and started coaling at 5.15am, finished at 6.15 am, taking in 227 tons, then clean ship. In the morning we had a concert and invited 150 hands from different ships and we were taking some of the *Tiger's* hands back to the ship, and when we were coming back, the *Lion's* boat ran into ours and broke our stern piece.

On 9th, Harbour R. On 10th, at 7.30am, 1st and 3rd B. C. S. went out. On 11th, we are under 2 ½ hours' notice by day and 1 hour's notice by night, and we have sent about 100 hands to work about the dock. On 12th, the 1st and 3rd B. C. S. are in again and they are coaling. We are still under the same notice and the hands sleep in their war billets. The Admiral's barge is sent over to the dockyard every [42] evening. On 13th, we have been shifting moorings all day and preparing for coaling. We are still under 1 hour's notice. On 14th, called the hands at 4.30am. Coaled, taking in 250 tons. On 15th, Harbour R. and been shifting billets again. On 16, Harbour R and in the evening practice night defence. On 17th, Harbour R. During the forenoon, we went to General Quarters and the *Warspite* came in.

On 18th, Saturdays R. On 19th, Sundays R, and some light cruisers came in. On 20th, 21st, Harbour R and landing parties and football parties. On 22nd, at 3am *Warspite* went out. Landing parties. At 6.30pm, 3rd B. C. S. went out and destroyers. On 23rd, Harbour R and no landing parties on account of it raining. On 24th, called part of the watch at 5.15am and shifted moorings. At 9.15am General Quarters. Packed up at 10.30am. In the afternoon, landing parties. On 25th, Saturdays R and L. S. Basham court martial came off, and he had Thring the Salistor [solicitor?] and Basham got 12 months and his ticket, and we are shifting moorings.

In the evening [43] we had Prince Lew of Banockburg aboard here.⁴⁰ On 27th Harbour R and they are serving out winter clothing. Landing parties and football parties still go ashore. On 28th, in the evening we had Admiral Jellicoe on here. On 28th, the *Indom* and *Inflex* have come in, but the *Invince* is still out. During the forenoon we got out nets and then got them in again, and secured them for sea. At 4pm, 3 armed merchant ships came in. At 5pm, 4 destroyers, the *Indefatigable* and ourselves have gone out. The Destroyers have left us on account of it being rough. We arrived at Scapa Flow at noon on 30th and anchored, got out boats and got under weigh and ran torpedos. Anchored at 6.15pm and got in boats. [October 1915] On 1.10.15, hands we[re] called at 5am and coaled, taking in 800 tons. We got under weigh at 1pm and did Sub-calibre firing out of 12-inch and 4-inch packed up at 5pm, anchored at 5.30. On 2.10.15 firing 303 out of 4-inch and Sub-calibre out of 12-inch. In the evening at 8pm, we did 4-inch firing and finished at 9.30pm. On 3rd, Sundays R.

[44] On 4th, hands were called at 5am to prepare for coaling. At 6am we started and took in 150 tons and then clean ship. At 12.45pm, the *New Zealand*, *Indefatigable*, ourselves and 12 destroyers and 1 light cruiser proceeded to Cromarty and arrived at 12pm. Anchored and then got out steam boats. On 5th, we are waiting for the fog to clear off to go out and do 12-inch firing. On 6th, Harbour R and there is still a heavy fog, and a lot of destroyers and light cruisers are going out and coming in. On 7th, at 9.30am, the *Queen Elizabeth* and 2nd B. C. S. proceeded to sea during the forenoon; cleared ship for action and went to General Quarters and did 12-inch firing. We fired 32 rounds. The *Queen Elizabeth* and *Indefatigable* doing Directive firing. We fired at range from 16,000 to 18,000 yards. The 2nd B. C. S. then left the *Queen Elizabeth* and proceeded to the Firth of Forth. In the afternoon, we sighted a lot of trawlers which looked like a lot of destroyers and we went to General Quarters and packed up when we [45] found out what they were. Later we met the *Invincible* and she joined us.

On 8th, arrived in harbour at 9.30am and coaled, taking in 780 tons. In the afternoon, clean ship. On 9th, Saturdays R. On 10th, Sundays R. On 11th during the forenoon we got out nets. Nearly every day we have different gunnery drills. On 12th, during the forenoon we had loader drill and in the evening exercised night defence. On 13th, Harbour R. 3rd B.C. S went out. On 14th, we have had the *Canada* in here for about a fortnight. She has 10 to 14-inch guns and she went out today. On 15th, we went to General Quarters and all the picket boats of

⁴⁰ Prince Louis of Battenburg, who in 1917 became Lord Mountbatten. He had been appointed First Sea Lord in 1912.

the fleet had their masts shipped, some flying Q flag representing B. C. and others flying h flag representing destroyers, and they were supposed to be attacking us and then an A. Plane flew overhead and we manned the H[igh] A[n]gle gun for practice.⁴¹ Packed up at 11am. On 16th, Saturdays R, and landing parties and football parties go ashore nearly every day.

[46] On 17th, Sundays R and landing parties and 3rd B. C. S. came in and coaled. On 18th, Harbour R and no landing parties on account of rain. The ship is being listed to clean below the water line. In the evening about 8pm, B. C. S. went out and we are securing nets for sea and rigged night defence and we are under short notice and the hands are sleeping in their war billets. On 17th [should be 19th?] still in harbour and there are no landing parties. In the evening we exercised night defence. On 20th, Harbour R and in the evening we were going to have a concert, but it was delayed on account of us being under short notice. At 10pm the H. A. Gun was manned and watches were closed up at it all night, and it was supposed to be an air raid about 20 miles away, but we did not see any. During the forenoon one of our H Planes was flying about here. We go to gun drill every day. On 21st, Harbour R. On 22nd, ditto. During the forenoon we went to General Quarters and then got out [47] nets.

While at General Quarters a small Bullin [balloon?] was sent up for practice for the H. A. guns crew. Then return gear. During the forenoon the B. C. S. came in all except the *Queen Mary*. In the afternoon, Harbour R. In the evening M[oving?] Pictures. On 23rd, Harbour R. On 24th, under 2 ½ hours notice. On 25th Harbour R. On 26th, Harbour R, and in the evening exercised night defence. On 27th, coaled, taking in 300 tons and then clean ship. On 28th, landing parties and in the evening some Gernalists [Journalists?] came aboard. On 29th, Harbour R. On 30th, landing parties and football parties, and in the evening some of the B fleet went out. On 31st, Sundays R, and in the evening we were under 1 hour's notice.

[November 1915] On 1st 11.15 Harbour R and under 4 hours' notice again. Landing parties go ashore. On 2nd, Harbour R and exercised N. [night] Defence. On 3rd, the *N. Zealand* went out during the forenoon. On 4th, Harbour R and gun-drill.

[48] On 4th General Quarters during the forenoon and, in the afternoon, Harbour R. On 6th, Saturdays R and in the forenoon, all the B. C. went out excepting the *Indefatigable* and ourselves. On 7th, Sundays R. On 8th, early in the morning a collier struck a buoy and she sank, but you could see the top of the masts and funnel. At 8.30am, the B.C. came in. Gun drill during the forenoon. In the afternoon, landing parties. On 9th, Harbour R. On 10th, ditto, and there is snow on the hills. On 11th, we are having it pretty choppy here. On 12th, coaled,

⁴¹ High angle gun.

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taking in 250 tons; in the afternoon, make and mend clothes. On 13th, Saturdays R. On 14th, Sundays R. On 15th, Harbour R. Landing parties, football parties and gun drill. On 16th, Harbour R. We have now got a motor launch and got rid of the old one. Gun drill during the day and exercise night defence in the evening.

On 17th, Harbour R. On 18th, we are under short notice and the [49] Grand Duke that we have had aboard here for some time was taken up to one to one of the light cruisers and then he went up to the Grand fleet. At 9pm a lot of light cruisers went out. On 19th, we have had a very heavy fog and [it] lasted all day. In the evening some light cruisers went out. On 20th, Saturdays Routine. On 21st, Sundays R. and the fog is still very thick. On 22nd, Harbour R. Landing parties, gun drill. During the forenoon the *Warspite* came in. Landing P. in the afternoon. On 23rd, gun drill during the day. In the evening the *Warspite* went out. At 6pm, the *Lion* turned her flag over to the *Prince[ss]Royal*.

On 24th, at 9am, the *Lion* went out and the *New Zealand* came in. On 25th coaled ship, taking in 220 tons, and then clean ship. On 26th, Harbour R. On 27th, Sat Routine. On 28th, Landing parties and at 6.30pm some light cruisers went out and we rigged night defence and all Battle Cruisers went out. On 29th went to General Quarters in the forenoon and firing up targets. Then 2nd B. C. got out a target and had it in tow and did sub-calibre firing [50] out of 12-inch. The weather is very fine. On 30th, we are having it a bit rough and it is dark at 4pm.

[December 1915] On 1st, still at sea and during the forenoon we went to General Quarters and got out a target and did 4-inch firing, 6 rounds a gun. In the afternoon, we each towed a target and did sub-calibre firing out of the 12-inch and got out a box kite and fired one round at it but as we were altering course it came down, so we did not fire the High Angle gun again although that round went very close. In the evening, we prepared for coaling. Arrived at Scapa Flow at 10.30pm. Anchored and then worked main derrick and got out 1 steam boat. Harbour R. The *Tiger* and *Indefatigable* also came in with us [and] we left the remainder of the fleet in the evening.

On 2nd, started coaling at 9am, took in 1200 tons, finished at 3.15. Cleaned up ship by 3.30pm. On 3rd, we are having a fair amount of snow and the hills all around are covered in snow, and [it] looks very nice. During the forenoon, we got under weigh and did sub-calibre firing out of 12-inch [51] in harbour. In the afternoon, we did 303 out of 4-inch at anchor and in the evening got under weigh and did night firing, 1-inch out of 4-inch in harbour, and then anchored.

On 4th, got under weigh during the forenoon and did 6-pounder sub-calibre out of 12-inch; did it in harbour and anchored at 12am, and during the forenoon about 17 ships of the

Grand Fleet came in and the *Warspite* and *Biram* [ie: *Barham*] had had a collision at sea and was [were?] damaged a little.⁴² On 5th, Sundays R and we are anchored amongst the Grand Fleet for the weekend. On 6th, we got under weigh and anchored a little bit away from the fleet and w[ere] going to do firing but it was too bad a weather. During the forenoon, we went to General Quarters. Harbour R. At 3pm, we got under weigh and anchored amongst the fleet again, and in the night kept anchor watch.

On 7th, during the forenoon, we did 1-inch out of the 4-inch. At 3pm the 3 ships got under and are under weigh [sic] for the Firth of Forth. On 8th arrived at the Firth of Forth at 8.30am and collier came [52] alongside and we took in 720 tons. Finished at 12.30 noon. The remainder of the fleet is here. On 9th, provisioned ship. Harbour R. On 10th, *Princess Royal* came in after being away for about 10 days. We are carrying out harbour R and there are landing parties. On 11th, Saturdays R. On 12th, Sundays R, and during the night the *Tiger* went out. On 13th, Harbour R and gun drill during the day and had the divers working under the ship about the screw. In the evening, voluntary night school. On 14th during the forenoon we got out nets and then got them in again. Then the picket boat went away with a model ship in the bows and we went to control drill. Harbour R. On 15th, Harbour R and gun drill and landing parties and football parties and in the nights we always have 4-inch and high-angle guns crews and they sleep in certain places. On 16th, got out nets during the forenoon and make and mend in the afternoon. On 17th, during the forenoon we cleared ship for action and then went to General Quarters. [53] During the forenoon the *Britannia* came in. In the afternoon clean ship.

On 18th Saturdays R. On 19th, Sundays R. On 20th, gun drill during the forenoon and landing parties and football parties in the afternoon. On 21st, control drill, loader drill and gun layers and trainers to laying teacher in the afternoon [sic]. Getting in provisions and there are no landing parties as we are under short notice 2½ hours. At 6.15 blue and red watch went to night defence and at 6.30 repel torpedo boat attack. Pack up at 6.45pm but the evening's routine was washed out. [inserted later:] 21st, *Tiger* came in at about 9pm. On 22nd, coal ship, taking in 210 tons, and then clean ship. In the evening red and blue watches went to night defence. No landings under short notice. On 23rd gunnery drill during the forenoon and we are under 4 hours' notice and there are landing parties. The *Tiger* has had a big floating crane alongside of her all day and doing something to one of their turrets. In the evening red and

⁴² Collision occurred 3rd Dec. https://www.naval-history.net/OWShips-WW1-01-HMS_Warspite.htm

white watch went to night [54] defence and [red?] watch at the 4-inch guns and white watch to loader drill and then sounded off repel torpedo boat attack. During the day there was the usual landing parties (21st there was an accident with the cutter. A J bolt [or I bolt?] came out of the strut and the cutter and davits went with a run and did a lot of damage to one of the guns, and the armourers party were working about it up till 10pm.)

On 23rd they served out the Christmas turkeys to be got ready for cooking. On 24th, Harbour R and under 4 hours' notice. On 25th, Christmas Day and called the hands at 6.45am, hands to breakfast, cold ham. Clean mess deck and flats. Hands to clean. Divisions and church. At 11.30am dinner: Turkey, potatoes and sprouts and mince pies and pudding and all the mess deck is decorated and the hands are allowed to smoke on the mess deck, but no drink was allowed this Christmas. At 3.30, tea. Cake. 4.30 clear up decks and starting ship. 5pm evening quarters and nobody was allowed ashore today as we are under short notice. But we did not have a Bad Christmas, 25.12.15. [55] An Australian mail arrived today and some parcels. On 26th, Sundays R. Leave chits for addresses were given out. On 27th, Harbour R and gun drills.

On 28th, all the Local S Gunners and act G. L .2 left the ship at 6.30am and went to a ship called the *Prince Charles*, and got under weigh in her and went out near May Island, about 7 miles from the bridge. There were about 40 of us, the gunnery Lieu[tenant], 2 gunners and two gunners mates. We each fired 6 rounds of 6 pounder at a range of about 700 yards and the G.L 2 fired 12 rounds of 12 pounder between them (3 men). We had a small range finder for taking the ranges and there were two 6-pounders and one 12-pounder guns. We arrived back at the ship at 6pm and got the empty cylinders in board.⁴³

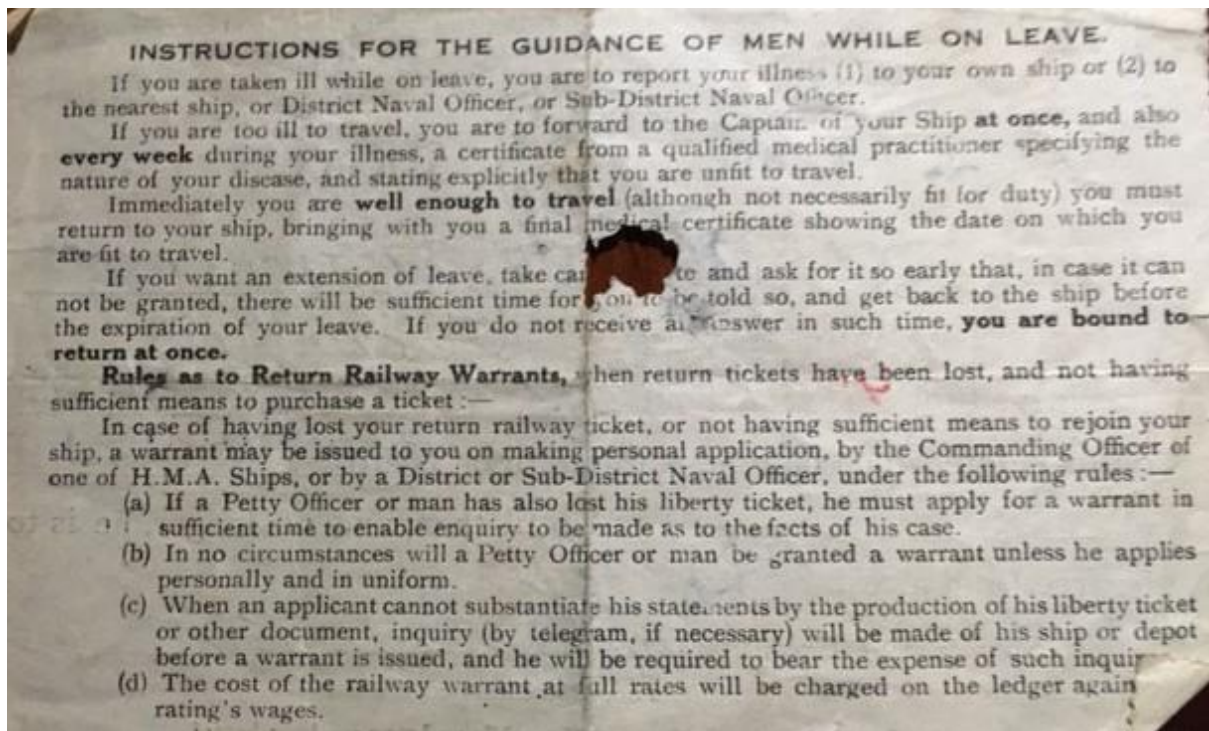
On 29th, hands paint ship. We have now got a notice on the board that they want the men to volunteer to make grommets for 9-inch projectiles in their own time.⁴⁴ They have a few hands making them in service time but they are not making enough. They want 100,000. On 30th, during the forenoon we went to General Quarters and all the picket [56] boats of the fleet had their masts up and they we[re] supposed to be the attacking ship. In the evening, white and blue watches went to night defence and at 6.30 night action. 6.45 pack up and they sounded off high angle guns crew for exercise.

⁴³ Dixon obviously took part in this exercise

⁴⁴ A grommet is a rope loop made of 3 strands of rope spliced together. The making of these is referred to 49 times in Dixon's diary. The making of these items, in their spare time, was a chore that appears to have been resented. However they were essential for frontline ammunition, and this may explain why every so often crew from the *Australia* was sent to the front line in France to report back to the ship's company. Dixon's spelling is 'gromets' and the text has been emended.

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On 31st, painting ship. Leave for officers and P[etty] O[fficer]s. There have been no landing parties the last couple of days.



Leave instructions. (Dixon's ditty box)

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[56 cont] On 1st.1.16, Saturdays R and Landing parties, and it is a bit choppy here during the night. The *Prince Charles* broke her capstan and drifted down the stream and they sent the picket boat after her to see what had happened, but she had anchored and was alright. On 2nd, Sundays R and the weather is much better today. Landing parties. At 3.30pm, part of the watch prepared for coaling. On 3rd, coaled, taking in 270 tons and then clean ship. On 4th, Harbour R and guns drill. In the evening, night defence. On 5th there is a fraft [sic] on on [sic] the board for Australia.⁴⁵ [57] In the evening at 4.30pm all the B. C. S. got under weigh. Went to N. Defence. On 6th at sea doing manoeuvres. During the forenoon, went to General Quarters. In the afternoon, 4-in[ch] guns and 2 turrets closed up. The 1st and 2nd B. C. S. are together.

On 7th, manoeuvres. Went to Divisions. After div, man and arm ship and we got out a target and fired 6 rounds a gun of 4-inch and then went to dinner. In the afternoon, Control drill. During the afternoon, the 3rd B. C. S. is with us. We are having fairly good weather. On 8th, it has come up fairly rough and during the forenoon a man – A.B. – got washed over the side from the *N. Z.*

We are doing manoeuvres. Arrived in harbour at 11pm, finished mooring at 12.15pm and then carried out harbour R and called the duty guns and searchlights. On 9th, called the hands at 5.50am, fall in at 6am and prepare for coaling, had breakfast and then coaled, taking in 1,107 tons. Finished 1.30pm and then [58] clean ship. Finished at 4.30pm; hands to clean. During the day we took in oil. On 10th, had Saturdays R. and in the afternoon a lot [of] Christmas stockings we[re] served out that were sent from Australia, also a lot of parcels. On 11th, about 9am our director tower was hoisted in and the crane came alongside. Gun drill during the day. The crane lifted the Tower and placed it in position and the crane shoved off at 12.30pm. [‘noon’ inserted above]

On 12th, gun drill and landing parties. During the forenoon a draft of boys from Australia came aboard. A.B., L.S. and P.O.⁴⁶ [and?] hands make and mend clothes. At 6.30pm, the *Chesterfield*, the store ship, came alongside and we took in provisions. On 13th, gun drill during the forenoon and in the evening 2 watches to night defence, and then exercise night action. 1 watch at loader drill. There is a notice on the board that the Commonwealth

⁴⁵ The later reference for 12th Jan. suggests that this refers to Australia, not the HMAS *Australia*

⁴⁶ Able seamen, Leading seamen, Petty Officers.

regrets that the presents that were sent from Australia went down [59] in the *Geelong*. She collided with another ship in the Mediterranean.⁴⁷ On 14th, Harbour R. Landing parties, gun drill. On 15th, Saturdays R and in the evening the *Chesterfield* came alongside Store Ship.

On 16th, Sundays R and landing parties. On 17th, during the morning watch, the *Indomitable* went out. At 10am rig night defence and getting in boats. We are under short notice. At noon, under longer notice and leave for officers. On 18th, collier came alongside at 7.20am and we coaled, taking in 255 tons and then clean ship. At noon, hands to clean in a painting rig and did painting. At 4.15pm, return night defence gear. We are having fairly good weather. On 19th, Harbour R. Landing P[arties] for P[etty] O[fficers], gun drill, and it is very rough here today and when they were getting the picket boat in, in the night, they poured oil in the water to calm it a bit. I am in the picket boat and we had a fairly rough time.

[60] On 20th, it is still pretty rough. Gun drill during the forenoon. Landing P for P.O. Hands make and mend in the afternoon. White and Red watches to night defence and then repel torpedo boat attack. There are a list of names on the board that will be care and maintenance party while the ship's company are on leave. Gun drill. General Quarters [word 'Cormeat' inserted] party. On 22nd, we are having pretty rough weather. On 24th, it is still pretty rough and in the evening the *N. Zealand's* M. Launch [motor launch?] broke away and they had the searchlights going to pick her up. Landing parties for P.O. and F[oot]ball parties. On 25th, coaled, taking in 150 tons and then clean ship. Some time ago there were 2 men from each ship sent to the front and the two that went from our ship are back and gave lectures and they have bombs, grenades and different things from the front.

[61] On 26th, the hands were called at 5am. Fall in at 5.30am and prepare for sea and rig night defence and get up ammunition. At 8.15am a lot of destroyers and the 2nd B. C. S. went out, and we have a lot of destroyers. Leaders are ahead of us. During the forenoon we went to General Quarters. Submarine and anti-aircraft guns closed up in the afternoon. At evening quarters, everybody had to take their life saving collars with them, and those that did not have them were served out with them. On 27th, we are up near the ———. Went to General Quarters during the forenoon. Pipe down in the afternoon. In the evening they paid money and served out different cap ribbons: *Victory*, *Vivid* and *H.M.S.* for us to wear on leave. On 28th, went to General Quarters during the forenoon and had 4-inch and 2 turrets closed up in the afternoon.

⁴⁷ The *Geelong* sank on 1st Jan 1916 with no loss of life.

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On 29th, arrived in Firth of Forth at 8.15am and prepared for coaling. Coaled at [62] taking in 1,000 tons at noon the first B. C. S. went out. After coaling, clean ship. Finished at 6pm. We had lovely weather all the time at sea. On 30th, we had Saturdays R until 10am and then hands to clean sprays at 10.55am and carried out Sundays R. [February 1916] 1.2.16 and the captain spoke to the ship's company not to speak of any of the ship's movements. The Irish Party went on leave at 4pm and the Admiral has gone aboard the *N. Zealand*, and his staff and we are leaving. 2nd, Pick[et] Boat as Barge. The hands are sleeping in their war billets and the red watch is being called at 2am to unmoor ship and we went to Newcastle or South Shields, arrived at 12 noon. Docked in a floating dock and proceeded on leave until the 8th at 3pm. I spent mine in Manchester and Liverpool, which I enjoyed very much. On 8th arrived back and there are a few adrift.⁴⁸ At 5pm hands fell in and we cleaned ship which was very dirty.



Dixon's leave ticket for Jan-Feb 1916. (Dixon's ditty box)

The care and maintenance [63] party went at 4pm. On 9th cleaning ship and at 4pm went out of dock. During the afternoon we prepared for coaling and we had a and pilot aboard for coming in and going out and we are under weigh with 4 destroyers for Firth of Forth. Arrived at 11pm and moored ship. At 3.30 the hands were called to prepare for sea as we went under short notice so we started stowing the coal bags and coaling gear and when we

⁴⁸ Hands not back from leave.

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had stowed half of it away we went under 2 hours' notice, so we cleaned in a coaling rig and had breakfast, fell in at 6.30am and got ready for coaling again and got out the picket boat and started coaling at 8am, taking in 500 tons and took in oil, finished during the forenoon at 12 went to dinner Starb[oard] watch to clean out pipes at 1.15pm and clean ship. At 2.30pm the *Chesterfield* came along and we got in provisions and port watch to clean at 4pm carried on [64] getting in provisions finished 4.45pm and we are working watch at watch and we are under 4 hours' notice now. There are still a few coming back off leave that were adrift. At 10pm, the starb watch was required to secure main derrick and gear for sea and unmoor, and we are making an awful lot of smoke.

At 10.45pm, white watch close up and the 1st, 2nd and 3rd B. C. S. proceeded to sea and some destroyers and light cruisers. On 11th, went to breakfast at 6.45am and at 7.30am sounded off General Quarters but there was nothing doing. At 9.5am [sic] division and then General Quarters again and we have got everything ready for immediate action. At 10.30 pack up and pipe down the white watch being ~~closed up~~ [inserted: 'at their guns'] and have got 2 turrets always closed up. During the forenoon we passed a couple of trawlers. On 12th, got into harbour. The hands were called at 5am to prepare for coaling. Got into the Firth of Forth all B. C. S. and the destroyers at 7am coaled and oiled taking in 700 tons of coal and then went of [to?] dinner. In the [65] afternoon clean ship. On 13th, Sundays R. On 14th, we have started summer's routine and the hands are called at 5.30am. The *Indefatigable* has gone out. During the forenoon we shifted billets, went a little closer to the N. Z. We are having it pretty cold and had a fair amount of snow this afternoon.

On 15th, painting ship. At evening quarters each seaman was served out with so much rope each, and we have got to make 3 grommets each night and take them to divisions next day. They are for 9-inch projectiles at the front. The weather is a bit better today. On 16th, the hands could not carry on painting as the weather was rough and raining. We gave in the grommets at divisions and [were] served out more rope at evening quarters, and we are getting in more coils of rope and carpenters' stores.

At 6.30 Red and blue watches went to night defence and at 7pm exercise night action. Pack up at 7.15pm. On 17th, hands paint ship and it is a very nice day. Gave in grommets at divisions. On 18th, still making grommets. After divisions [66] we cleared ship for action and then went to General Quarters. Pack up at 10.30am. The hands have finished painting the outside part of the ship. It is snowing today. On 19th, Saturdays R and it is a lovely day. On 20th, Sundays R and after the Captain had inspected the divisions everybody fell in forward and he said he was very well satisfied [with] the way the ship's company came back off leave

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and the way that we were getting on with war munitions, making base plates for projectiles, slings for carrying ammunition, and we had made 4,700 grommets since they started serving the rope out to the ship's company. He also said the gunnery drills [were] a very necessary thing to help well up in as for if [sic] the great day comes off.

On 21st, Harbour R. Landing parties. On 22nd, Harbour R. Landing parties, football parties, and in the evening, night defence. On 23rd, during the forenoon, we got out nets and then got them in again. At 10am watch muster on the forecastle, special sea duty-men muster at their [67] stations and we shifted stations billets. During the first dog [watch] prepare for coaling and rig port stump mast derricks. On 24th, hands were called at 5.30am. Fall in at 6.30 for coaling, taking in 250 tons. Went to breakfast and then clean ship. At 12 noon, hands to dinner and clean. Fall in at 1.30pm. Usual routine. The *Indefatigable* is back again. On 25th, we are having it pretty cold and plenty of hailstones. During the forenoon, General Quarters. On 26th, Saturdays R; at 11.30am 1st of Port watch muster on forecastle at 12 noon. A lot of destroyer leaders and destroyers went out and all the B. C. followed. Pipe down in the afternoon. On 27th, Sunday. Went to divisions and prayers at 9am, then G. Quarters and the grand fleet is close by. About 80 ships in all. Destroyers, L. C., B. S. and B. Cruisers. Pack up G Q at 10am, pipe down. On 28th, carried out harbour R except forenoon watch men, and prepare for coaling. The *Queen Mary* was not with us when we were out. She left for dock a few days before we went out.

Arrive in Queensferry at 10am. Started [68] coaling at 10.30am, taking in 700 tons. Finished at 2.30pm, then clean ship. Finished at 6pm. On 29th, Harbour R. [March 1916] On 1st, we are under short notice. Gunnery drill during the day and night defence at 6.15 and exercise night action at 6.30pm. On 2nd, we are still under short notice. Gunnery drills during the forenoon. On 3rd, we are not under short notice now and there are landing parties and football parties. In the night at 11.30pm, the *Chesterfield*, the provisions ship, came alongside and the port watch provisioned ship. Finished at 2am. On 4th, Saturdays Routine. Landing parties. We have been having very good weather the last week or so. During the forenoon the *Chesterfield* came alongside for empty casks.

During the evening, the Admiral's barge went over to the dockyard to moor up for the night, 2 stokers and 1 seaman stopping in the boat, and in the morning a signal came off to the ship that no life could be got into the stokers Justice 1st class stoker and Mathews, P.O., so they sent over a picket boat to bring the barge back and they got to work to try and bring them back to life [69] but nothing could be done, they had gone too far. [insert at bottom of p. 68: During the forenoon, we shifted billets.] They had slept down the stoke-hold and

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covered over the ventilation and went to sleep and never woke up again. During the forenoon, the bodies left the ship for the hospital ashore here. During the evening we collected money on the mess deck for wreaths for them.

On 6th, at 10am, rig night defence. At 11.30am, all B. C. S. light cruisers and destroyers are putting to sea at 12.30, going under the bridge. At 1.30pm, hands went to General Quarter stations and it was piped that the German high sea fleet was off the Dutch coast in strong force. We are passing some of our B. S. now, the Commonwealth class. We are having pretty rough weather. On 7th, arrived back in Firth of Forth at 4.30am and the decks are covered in snow about 2 inches deep. We moored ship with bower and sheet-anchor as when we went ~~out~~ were ~~last~~ unmooring to go out we lost 6 shackles of cable and Bower anchor. At 6am, coaled, taking in 410 tons, finished at 9am, then clean ship. In the afternoon [70] landing party.



A snow fight on the decks of HMAS *Australia*. (Dixon's ditty box)

We have not got the anchor and cable back again. On 7th, in the evening Chief Stoker Stevens gave a lecture on his experience at the Front. He was away from the ship a few weeks. On 8th, during the forenoon, shifted billets. Landing parties in the afternoon. On 9th, during the forenoon, a funeral party landed for the burial of Justice, 1st Class Stoker, age 20. In the first dog, a funeral party landed to take Mathews to the train, where he was sent down the line. At 6.15, red and blue watch to night defence exercise. At 6.30, repel torpedo boat attack. Pack up at 7pm. On 10th, we are still giving in grommets every morning. After

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divisions, we went to General Quarters, packed up at 10.15am. Light cruisers and destroyers are always going out and coming in. On 11th, Saturdays R during the forenoon. At 10am, 2nd picket boat and barge were sent to the dockyard, leaving 2 hands in each, and we are under short notice. At 11.5am, light cruisers, destroyers and 1st, 2nd and 3rd B. C. S. proceeded to sea. At 5pm we are preparing for coaling. We are having a little snow.

[71] Arrived in Forth of Firth at 8.45pm and coaled, taking in 250 tons, and it was snowing all the time. At 12.30pm, hands fall out. On 12th, clean ship in morning till breakfast. Hands to clean in No 4 and then carried out Sundays R. The *Lion* coaled this morning. We are under short notice and the barge and the picket boat are in at the dockyard and they are hoisting the 1st picket boat inboard. On 13th, we went under 4 hours' notice at 8am. Gunnery drills during the day. We have been under quarantine for mumps for some time and the doctor inspects us at evening quarters every day.

At about 7.30pm we went under short notice and we have secured everything for sea and sleeping in war billets. On 14th, at 2.30pm, some destroyers and 2nd B. C. S proceeded to sea, passed under the bridge at 3pm. There is a notice on the board telling us the number of grommets made by the fleet. We made in the last week 6,975; the [total] number made by the 1st, 2nd and 3rd B. C. S. is 183,940. On 15th, arrived at Scapa Flow at 6.30am. Prepare for coaling. Breakfast and then coal ship, taking in 350 tons. [72] Finished and cleaned ship by 12 noon. During the afternoon got under weigh and did 6 pounder sub-calibre firing out of turrets. In the evening, moored again and we are shipping 1-inch aiming rifle in the 4-inch. At 6.15pm White and Red watch close up. Did 1-inch aiming firing and at 6.30 Blue watch close up and also did firing.

On 16th, at 7.45am got under weigh and did torpedo running and while we were waiting to pick up torpedos we were making grommets. At 11.30am, anchored. During the afternoon did sub-calibre firing out of foremost 4-inch guns. At anchor and mending coal bags. In the evening got under weigh again and then anchored up near the Battle fleet. (On 15th, at 10.35pm, the duty guns crews were called out and had to keep 2 hours watches all night as there was an air raid, but did not come over here.) On 17th, during the forenoon, got out a big target and a trawler towed it. We got under weigh and did sub-calibre firing out of 12-inch and 4-inch guns. Anchored again at 10.15am. During the afternoon, Boys and training classes did sub-calibre firing out of 4-inch targets, being towed by picket boat. [73] The remainder of the hands pipe down. In the evening, did sub-calibre firing out of 4-inch using search lights. At 4pm a provision ship came alongside and we got in potatoes and meat.

Strong Tide Running

On 18th, in the morning we got out the barge, picket boat and 2nd cutter and left them here while the 2nd B. C. S. went out to Pentland Firth to do directive fire and also a few destroyers were with us. We fired 7 salvos at a range of about 10 to 11,000 yards. When returning to Scapa Flow we were going at a speed of about 15 knots and there was a thick fog came down across and [we] were steering straight for land and only a couple of hundred yards off when a luck happened: the fog lifted and we altered course in time. Arrived back at Scapa at 11am and we are preparing for coaling. In the afternoon, shifted billets and went over nearer the Battle Fleet. During the afternoon, scrub decks, clean paint work and bright work. On 19th, Sundays R. On 20th, hands were called at 6am, clean in a coaling rig. Collier came alongside at 6.30, started coaling 6.45, taking in 328 tons, and then clean ship. In the afternoon, paint superstructure.

[74] On 21st, during the forenoon, the 2nd B. C. S. shifted from the battle fleet and anchored again and training classes were firing .303 out of 4 guns and then all trainers of 4-inch guns were doing firing. During the afternoon, training classes to maxim rifle and pistol firing. At 5pm, we have got in all boats and secured everything for sea at 5.15pm. Got under weigh for Queensferry, Firth of Forth. On 22nd, arrived in harbour at 7.45am and coaled, taking in 260 tons. After coaling, oil ship came alongside and we took in oil. In the afternoon, hands clean in a painting rig and we are painting over the cruiser that was painted on the side and the ship's side is all one colour now, light grey. Early in the 1st dog watch we got in some ammunition.

On 23rd, Harbour R. At 11.30pm, both watches for exercise were called to prepare for sea. Sent the 2nd picket boat into the dockyard, the barge being already there. After the watches had finished they turned in. The red watch turning out early to get the ship under weigh. At 5.15am, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, B. C. S. [inserted later: "the 10 B. cruisers"] and a lot [75] of destroyers and light cruisers proceeded to sea. During the forenoon, we went to General Quarters. Packed up at 10.30am, then pipe down at 4pm evening quarters, then control drill and rig night defence and clearing away all the lifesaving rafts, and it is on the notice board that there is [a] small operation in view with the Harwich force and that the B. C. S. are to act as a support.

In the evening, they piped damp [one word with obscure spelling: respirators?]. On 25th, at sea, having fairly fine weather. At 3.30am the morning watch men were called and had cocoa. At 4am the remainder of the hands were called and they had cocoa, and then the hands went to General Quarters. At 7.30am, half the guns crews went to breakfast. At 8am, close up again and then the remainder went to breakfast, and we have got all the mess tables

[and] stools on the deck, and the ship cleared for action. At 8.30am, sounded off General Quarters and the high angle guns crew is closed up. During the forenoon, we passed a Dutch trawler and after some time we altered course 16 points [76] and passed her again, and about 20 mins later altered course 16 points again and passed her again, and we are cruising around while the Harwich force is making the raid.⁴⁹ At 11.30am, went to dinner the same as the other meals, and then sounded off General Quarters again. At 3.30pm, tea the same way and all the mess tables and stools are still on the deck.

At 6pm, we passed the Harwich For[ce] about 18 destroyers and 2 Destroyers Leaders, and the destroyers that we had with us as an escort have left us. At 6.15pm sounded off 2 watches to night defence, and we are working war watch and stand-by watch as we are expecting a Destroyer attack. All the watches are having a pretty hard time this time at sea. The red watch have been around the guns for 26 hours. Packed up the stand-by watch at 2am as it is getting rough. On 26th, after breakfast, cleared up ship again and at 9am, clear ship for action and went to General Quarters. During the afternoon, only had duty submarine guns and anti-air guns closed up, and it is getting very rough. Had a very rough night, and shipping a lot of water.

On 27th, arrive in harbour [77] at 10am and coaled, taking in 1,150 tons. Finished at 3.30 and then clean ship. There is a notice on the board that no one is to mention what took place while we were out.⁵⁰ On 28th, Harbour R and provision ship in the evening. On 29th, Harbour R, and we are getting nets ready for going out as something has happened to the tor[pedo?] nets outside, but we never got the nets out. Destroyers are going out and coming in. We are painting ship; everything light grey. On 30th, control drill, loader drill during the forenoon. Landing parties and football parties during the afternoon, and still painting. In the evening exercise night action. On 31st, went to General Quarters during the forenoon. In the afternoon, carry on painting.

⁴⁹ “On 24 March 1916, the Harwich Force set out on a raid by [seaplanes](#) launched by the [seaplane carrier *Vindex*](#) against a German airship base believed to be at Hoyer on the coast of [Schleswig](#), with *Medusa* sailing as part of the escort. The air attack was launched early in the morning of 25 March.” [HMS *Medusa* \(1915\) - Wikipedia](#)

⁵⁰ As part of the Harwich Force raid on 25 March 1916, two incidents occurred. “The British light cruiser HMS *Cleopatra* had rammed the German destroyer SMS G194, cutting it in half and causing it to sink. It then collided with HMS *Undaunted*, which took several days to reach safety. In another incident on the same day, while under attack by German aircraft off the Danish coast, HMS *Medusa* collided with HMS *Laverock*. *Medusa* sank and *Laverock* rescued her crew.” <http://www.centenaryww1orange.com.au/events/25-march-1916/>

[April 1916] On 1st 4.16, Saturdays R. In the evening we got some Christmas presents from Australia. We are under short notice. On 2nd, Sundays R and still under short notice. In the evening at 8.30pm, anti-aircraft gun was sounded off and we keep watches around the H. A. Gun all night and it was piped if the alarm is sounded, the hands will go below the armoured deck. [78] On 3rd, we have seen no zepps and we have been under 2 ½ hours' notice, 1 hour during the night. During the afternoon the *Dominion* went in dock here. On 4th, during the forenoon, control drill; Harbour R. The Port watch landed in the afternoon for a route march. The *Zealander* came out of dock here this afternoon; in the evening two watches closed up around the guns and then exercise repel torpedo boat attack. On 5th coaled taking in 210 tons and then clean ship in the afternoon. Starb watch landed in the evening. The hands were served out with a piece of rope to make 15-inch grommets. On 6th, Harbour R. Port Watch landed in the afternoon. Night defence in the evening. At evening quarters they served out more rope for 15-inch grommets. On 7th, General Quarters during the forenoon and Starb. watch landed for a route march in the afternoon. No grommets tonight. Destroyers and light cruisers are always going out and coming in. We have racing boats crews go away of an evening now.

On 8th, Saturday Routine in the [79] afternoon; landing parties and football parties. Racing boats crews went away in the evening. On 9th, Sundays R. On 10th, gunnery drill and landing parties in the afternoon. On 11th, control drill in the forenoon, football parties in the afternoon. In the evening at 6.15pm night defence, red watch forward and white watch to the loader. At 6.30pm, exercise night action; pack up at 6.45pm. On 12th, gunnery drills and landing parties and football parties during the afternoon and [at] 6.15pm exercise night defence. Pack up at 6.45.

On 14th, hands fall in at 6am and prepare for General drills given by the flagship, *Lion*. We are preparing for 'out nets'⁵¹ at 7.30 went to breakfast at 8.30am all the seamen fell in and the Commander read out all evolutions at 9am went to physics at 9.15am fall in for drills, the first being out all wire hawsers time [blank space] "fall in". In all hawsers time [blank space] Out nets time [blank space] in nets time "fall in" away all boats peill [sic] around your own squadron and then replace gear during the afternoon clear up and [80] refit brails and gear.⁵² On 15th, Saturdays R and at 1.15pm, the 1st B. C. S. went out. On 16th, Sundays R. On 17th, gunnery drills. Harbour R. On 18th, during the forenoon had Director

⁵¹ Editor's quotation marks

⁵² A lack of punctuation and blank spaces have rendered this paragraph difficult.

test. At 7.30am the *Dreadnought* came in here and anchored. In the afternoon, she went into dock. On 19th, during the forenoon, went to General Quarters. In the afternoon, prepare for coaling. At evening quarters served out grommets for the first time for about a week. We are having a fair amount of rain this month and while it is raining there are no landing parties, but football parties go. On 20th, Harbour R. In the afternoon, make and mend, in the evening went under short notice and prepare for sea, and in all boats, leaving barge and 2nd picket boat behind. At 8pm it was piped hands sleep in your war billets. On 21st 4. 16 the morning watch was called at 3.20am and to cocoa. At 4am, muster on the forecastle. At 5am, went out and we are having fine weather. We are going out to support for the light cruisers and destroyers while they sweep the Scata [Scapa?] Rock and the 2nd B. F. [81] is to support us. In the evening a signal came through to cease the operation.

On 22nd, in the morning the B. C. F. is with us and a good few destroyers and light cruisers. At 9.15am, went to General Quarters; at 11.15am after battery, and 2 turrets crews to dinner. At 12, the ones that have had dinner close up and the others close up after they had finished. Went to General Quarters. During the afternoon a thick fog came on and at 3.30 was very thick. At 3.45pm, the *New Zealand* came steaming towards us, towards our bows, and we both must have put our helm hard over, and we came broadside on. She bumped our starb. side and she listed to port, getting her brail davit under a wire hawser and grass line that we had flaked [sic] out to take a destroyer alongside that same evening to oil, and they pulled it in aboard the *N. Z.*⁵³ She steamed out of sight and a few minutes later came steaming across our bow and we caught her with a glancing blow near A turret, and we both slew round and came broadside on again, her portside to our starboard side. We have closed all W/T [water-tight?] doors. On *N. Z.* they have sounded off collision [82] stations away, all boats, get your boats ready for going out and close W.T. doors, and she has disappeared again in the fog. We are making a little water and the boys mess-deck is badly damaged and also the bows. The carpenters are sureing [sic] up the side with shures and mess stools and we have pretty well stopped and have gone to General Quarters. After a little while, we started steaming at 15 knots, but had to ease to 12 as the damage would not stand it. At 9pm, 2 destroyers came up as an escort and we are on our way to harbour, and no mention of the occurrence.

On 23rd prayers in the morning. The Gen. Control arrived in harbour. At 3pm the *N. Z.* is here at Firth of Forth with tugs alongside, and at 5.30pm went into Rys [Rosyth] Dock. At

⁵³ History has blamed the *Australia* for ramming the *N. Z.* . <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/scapa-flow-revisited/>

7.30pm, 1st B. C. S. came in. At 9.45pm, we got under weigh. On 24th, arrived at South Shields and docked in floating dock by 7.30am, and we chipped both port propellers. We are having night leave. They have given out chits to be filled in with our address while on long leave.

On 25th, [83] during the forenoon we got ready for sea, stopped all leave and started to raise steam, but belayed [sic] again and piped usual leave. We have had the Admiral with us for a couple of days but [he] has gone North again. They are very uncertain whether they can fix us up here, and they are patching us up so we will be able to go somewhere else. Hands are chipping the side and red-leading it. On 27th, in dock and night leave. On 28th, ditto. In the collision, the *N. Z.* caught her propeller below [the *Australia*'s] 2 turret, and left a big hole there. On 29th, night leave. On 30th, paid money during the forenoon and Sundays R. Flooded the dock during the afternoon. The leave is only until 11pm tonight.

[May 1916] On 1st, started to go out of the dock at 1pm and had a pilot aboard. Also when we came in he was aboard. We have made a little water under 2 turret again. We have an escort of destroyers and we are steaming to the south. At 9pm, arrived at the Humber and anchored. On 2nd, got under weigh, steaming southward and we have an escort with us [83] and we are passing plenty of ships that have been sunk, and you can just see the top of their masts, and we are passing a lot of mark buoys. Arrive at the Nore at the mouth of the Thames at 2.15pm, and we passed a couple of the new boats: submarines, torpedo boats Lizard class. We anchored and at 2.30pm got out nets and on the Starb. side only got them out up to just before 2 turret and could not get them out any further forward on account of the booms being off. While at anchor, there are three 4-inch guns closed up and keeping a look out for submarines and zeppelins.

On 3rd, got under weigh at 8.30am with an escort and we have passed some more ships that have been sunk. At 12 noon we anchored owing to a very thick fog and there are a lot of merchant ships anchored here. We are near the straits of Dover. At 4pm, the H.A. guns crew was closed up as it had been reported that 2 German Fokkers were somewhere about and there are 2 French sea planes flying overhead. At 5.15, the fog lifted and we got under weigh again. At 6pm [85] an airship could be seen. At about 7pm, the fog came on again, very thick again, and we are still under weigh. We have been using our siren while under weigh through the fog. During the forenoon, a small fire broke out. Some coal bags caught fire that were stowed near the funnel, but the hoses were put on it and [it was] soon put out, but about 100 bags must have been destroyed. On 4th, arrived at Plymouth at 11am and went

into No 9 dock during the afternoon, but did not pump out the dock. It is very fine weather here. In the evening, gave leave to starb watch and part of port.

On 5th, the dockyard hands are working day and night and we are having night leave for watch and part. [sic] On 6th, at 2.30, hands proceeded on leave and to return on 17th. There were a care and maintenance party of --- left aboard. On 7th, the C. and M. party are working in 2 watches, port and starb. and have usual night leave. At 1pm, a party came aboard from the Depot and shifted us into another dock, No. 8. The dockyard Mates [86] are still working day and night. On 8th, ditto. On 9th, ditto. 10th, 11th, 12th, same. They are still working day and night on the ship and having a general refit taking the tops off the turrets, re-corking the decks, putting new corkiscene in the superstructure, and they have taken some of the armour plate off the side.

On 13th, 16 hands came back from hospital that have had the mumps. We have doctors inspection every morning and the Staff Surgeon has the mumps. On 14th, hands called at 6.30, fall in at 7am, clear up decks, breakfast at 7.45am, Divisions at 10am then pipe down. At 4pm, fire stations which we have every night while in dock. We have returned 8 torpedo booms that [were] damaged through the collision. On 17th, the hands that were on leave came back, and care and maintenance party went on leave. On 28th, Care and M party arrived back.⁵⁴ On 29th, during the forenoon the ship went out of the dock and in the afternoon coaled out of lighters on portside, taking [87] in 1,700 tons, and then after we finished we went into dock again.

On 30th, testing sights and they have shifted the H.A gun from the afterdeck to up on a platform on the centre superstructure, and all the turrets have range finders on them now. At 3pm, went out of the dock again and made fast to a buoy and they have given leave to a few hands. During the evening, we went to man and arm ship. All the leave is up at 10.30pm. On 31st, called the hands at 4.45am; fall in at 5am and we got under weigh. Dropped anchor again just before we got to the net defence to adjust compasses; went to General Quarters during the forenoon and at 11am got under weigh again. We have 2 destroyers with us. During the afternoon, the clocks on board were put back an hour.

[June 1916] On 1st and 2nd, at sea and we are coming around the west coast of Ireland, carrying out war routine. On the evening of the 2nd, did a steam trial doing a speed of 26 knots easy steaming. On 3rd, at 2.30am, an escort of 2 destroyers met us near some L[ight?] house on one of [88] the islands north of Scotland. We are having it pretty light during the

⁵⁴ Suggests that Dixon was part of the Care and Maintenance party

night and from 2.30am only have submarine gun crews closed up. Arrived at Scapa Flow at about 5am and started coaling at 8am, taking in 13,00 [sic] tons, finished at 3.30pm. We have had the news of the big naval action in the which 3 B.C. [battle cruisers] and a lot of our small craft was sunk.⁵⁵ On 4th, Sundays . Had church during the forenoon and all the ships are flying the white ensign half-mast. During the afternoon we got under weigh; went to General Quarters and did 6-pounder sub-calibre firing out of 12-inch and 1 in[ch] out of 4-inch guns. Packed up at about 4pm and dropped anchor again. Again we did the firing in harbour. On 5th, got under weigh during the forenoon and did 4-inch firing in harbour and we are having an awful lot of rain and the G. Layers had to use their open sight. We fired about 9 rounds per gun. We dropped anchor again during the dinner hour. On 6th, got under weigh at 8am and did sub-calibre firing out of 12-inch and 4-inch guns, and ran a couple of torpedos [89] and we are preparing for coaling and it is still raining. Dropped anchor again during the dinner hour and started coaling at 1.15pm, taking in 150 tons, and then clean ship. We have the duty guns crews still sleep[ing] in the super structure.

On 7th, got under weigh during the forenoon and in the afternoon, did 4-inch and sub-calibre firing out of 12-inch in harbour. Anchored again during the evening. On 8th, during the forenoon got under weigh and did directive firing at 13,000 yards in the Pentland Firth. Nine salvoes there were, also some of the battle ships doing firing. We finished at 12 noon and the[n] with an escort of 2 destroyers proceeded to Queensferry Firth of Forth at a speed of about 20 knots. At 6pm, a relief escort of 4 destroyers came up and the other 2 returned to their base. At 11pm, the clocks were put on one hour. Arrived at Queensferry at 2am, moored by 3am. Started coaling at 5.30, taking in 350 tons and we are filling the reserve bruntiors [sic] with it. Then clean ship. The *Lion*, *Tiger*, *P[rincess] Royal*, and *Warspite* are over at the docks. [90] In the evening we prepared for ammunitioning. On 10th, ammunition ship, sending off the Lyddite and getting in A.P.L and getting in practice for 4-inch and 12-inch, and sending out 4-inch common [sic – cannon?]. During the [words missing] *P[rincess] Royal* came out of dock and went out under the bridge and the *Inflex* went into dock.

On 11th, Sundays R and after divisions the ship's company was fallen in on Quarter deck and the Admiral gave a speech on what took place during the action, and he said he was on the fore-bridge all the time.⁵⁶ The 1st B. C. S. was first to engage the enemy and the 5 BF

⁵⁵ Battle of Jutland, fought 31st May-1st June 1916.

⁵⁶ Jellicoe was booed by many following the routing of the British fleet. The *Australia*'s fellow BSC, *Indefatigable* went down with the loss of 1000 lives. Dixon's lack of enthusiasm for the admiral can perhaps be seen in this light. The crew of *Australia* must have felt the loss of the *Indefatigable* keenly.

was with them about 5 mile astern, but they did not take long to get into position, going at a speed of 26 knots. During the action they got 64,000 horsepower out of the *N. Z.* and she fired 467 rounds and was only hit once herself on the bottom part of the Z turret. The Battle Fleet from Scapa Flow came down at a speed of 19 knots and only engaged the enemy for 6 minutes, and only had about 6 casualties, and the German fleet seemed to disappear and they never got trace of them again.

[91] On 12th, harbour R and during the forenoon gunnery turret drill and control drill. On 13th, Ditto. On 14th, Some L. Cruisers went out early in the morning and we went under short notice – 2 ½ hours. On 15th, Harbour R and painting SuperS and turrets. During the afternoon, the P.O. we[re] landing and then they had to get out of the boats and come in board again. But later went ashore and had to report themselves every [h]our at the pier.

On 16th, during the forenoon, Saturdays R ~~and at 2.30pm~~ the dinner time hands cleaned in No 2 at noon. During the forenoon at 8.5am [sic] and landing, landed with gaters on to keep the road clear for the King. At 2.15, Divisions was sounded off and at 2.40pm the King came aboard and the ship's company marched past and saluted as we passed. Admiral Beatty was also there. The ship's company fell in along the portside after they had passed him on the Starboard side. He was not aboard the ship quite an hour when he left in a barge and the ship's company [92] stood to attention as he passed. At 5pm the hands manned ship [on] the portside and as the King passed, we gave 3 cheers for H[is] M[ajesty] the King. On 17th, a party landed at different times during the day to line the pier at Queensferry to keep the crowd back while the King visited the ships that had been in action and that were under repair.

On the 18th during the forenoon, the destroyer *Nereus* came alongside and the ship's company can have a run around the ship. In the evening she left us to go outside and do firing the next day. We had gunnery during the day. On 19th, a couple more destroyers came alongside. On 20th, during the forenoon different turrets to drills 4 guns to loader [sic] and in the evening, exercise night action. This evening a destroyer, the *Lizard*, came alongside and we are giving them a picture show on the cable deck. We are having very nice weather lately./// While we were away from here under repairs, the B. S. of the K. Edward class shifted from here./ Hands piped down at 10.30 now on account of [it] being so light./ [93] 21st, hands were called at 4.45am, fall in for coaling at 5.20am, taking in 200 tons, and then clean ship. After the collier shoved off, the destroyer came alongside again. On 22nd, Harbour R and the hands are making grommets again. On 23rd, ditto. On 24th, Saturdays R. On 25th, the *Southampton* is out of dock again. Sundays R. During the day went a.s. [alongside?] the

Lion's buoy. On 26th, gunnery drills during the day. Different turrets to drill at different times. At 12 noon, the *Lion* came out of dock and dropped anchor. The only damage you can see done to her now is her mid-ship turret. When we went to the *Lion's* buoy we also got the telephone.

On 27th, Harbour R. On 28th, the *Lion* went out about 6.30am. On 28th, paint ship during the afternoon; landing party and football parties. At 9.30pm, went under 2 ½ hours' notice. On 29th, went to General Quarters during the forenoon and pipe [down] during the afternoon, and in the evening supply coaling gear and prepare for coaling. During the afternoon there was football parties. We have now got a special [94] range finder aboard for air craft. On 30th, coaled, taking in 180 tons, then clean ship. [July 1916] On 1st, at 5am we shifted from the buoy and moored. We are having plenty of rain. We are getting in 53 tons of metal to stow around the magazines. On 2nd, the *Tiger* came out of dock about 6am and tied up to the *Lion's* buoy and has the flag.⁵⁷ About 7am, the *Canada* came in [blank space of about two words' length] Sundays R and they are still getting in the blue metal. On 3rd, Harbour R, and Director party are going over to the dockyard for exercise. Gunnery drills during the day. On 4th, they have put small boxes on different bulkheads with candles and matches in, and marked action only and the oil lamps have candles in now instead of oil.

In the evening we had a concert on the Quarter deck and had the hawning [awning?] spread. We invited 50 hands from each B. C. and so many from the destroyers. Just after the concert started, it came on to rain and there was not enough room under the hawning for all hands, otherwise the concert [95] was not too bad. On 5th, during the afternoon so many hands landed for a dance party at the Y.M.C.A. We have had the divers down looking at the propellers today. On 6th, harbour R. On 7th, sent to General Quarters during the forenoon. On 8th, we have discovered that they have fired a torpedo at General Quarters on the Friday, and we have the cutters sweeping for it and sending the divers down for it. The *Lion* is back again with her mid-ship turret out. In the afternoon, hands make and mend.

On 9th, Sundays routine and during the forenoon, had direct test. Control parties. During the day, the *Ajax* came in and docked here. The *Lion* has also docked here. We are still sweeping for the torpedo. We have the destroyer *Nereus* alongside of us again. We nearly always have a destroyer alongside now. In the evening some light cruisers and destroyers went out. On 10th, the *Ajax* came out of dock and went up the harbour. She has 10-12.5 and also 4-inch guns. We are still looking for the torpedo but packed up at noon on

⁵⁷ The *Tiger* is flagship while *Lion* is in dock

account of the tide being too strong for the divers. Gunner drills [96] during the day and there is a party working about the *Lion* over in the dock. No parties went ashore today as we are under short notice.

During the afternoon prepare for coaling. We have had an awful lot of rain lately. On 9th, the 5th B. C. went out. On 11th, coal ship, taking in 175 tons, then clean ship. They have given up looking for the torpedo and the divers went aboard the *N. Z.* today for a lecture on diving. We are still under short notice. On 12th, during the forenoon, 4 L[ight] cruisers and destroyers came in and [in] the evening 4 L-cruisers and 2 destroyers came in and we have gone under 4 hours' notice again. Today, we got the torpedo nets and everything appertaining to them out of the ship. We are still sending a dockyard party over to work about the *Lion*. They are rigging stages for chipping and painting her.

On 13.7.16, first thing in the morning, one watch clean in a painting rig to wash the ship's side. During the forenoon there was a party told off to go over to the dockyard to get the nets out of the drifter. [97] During the afternoon, ditto, and we are also painting down aloft. On 14th, went to General Quarters during the forenoon. Harbour R in the afternoon. On 15th, Saturdays R and during the afternoon scrub hammocks and wash clothes. At 6pm, a signal came through to raise steam for 22 knots and [we/they] had it by 6.50pm. We are getting boats in and preparing for sea and the barge has gone over to the dockyard and the 2nd picket boat has the pay papers and all, ready to go to the dockyard with 1 AB and 2 stokers.⁵⁸

At 12pm, we took away 3 cot-cases and they went to hospital. During the night the signal came through to go under 2 or 2 ½ hours' notice. On 15th, there was a court of inquiry about the Lost Torpedo aboard the *N. Z.*⁵⁹ On 16th, we are under 2 ½ hours' notice. Sunday R. On 17th, during the forenoon a lot of dockyard men came aboard and they are taking up the Corkiscene from around the different turrets in the flats on the same deck as the messes. On 18th, same, and landing party in the afternoon. They are putting down moorings for us and we were working about them until 12pm. [98] On 18th at 7.15pm, exercise night defence, repel torpedo boat attack. In the evenings we have moving pictures about 3 times a week, each night being for different ratings. On 19th, during the forenoon a big party of about 150 hands landed for the opening of a new dock-rig No 2. On 20th, we are still under 2 ½ hours' notice. Landing party in the afternoon. During the forenoon, coaled, taking in 220 tons, starting at 6am and finished at 7am. During the afternoon the Bishop of London came aboard and spoke

⁵⁸ Dixon may have been the A.B.

⁵⁹ That is, the inquiry was held aboard the *New Zealand*. The torpedo belonged to *Australia*.

to the officers and ship's company and gave a pray[er] that when we went into action that we would come through alright.

The *Tiger* has left the *Lion*'s buoy and shifted up the harbour a bit. During the day the *Lion* came out of Rosyth dock and went to her buoy and taking over the flag. She has still got her midship turret out. On 21st, During the forenoon went to Gen Quarters, packed up at 10.30am. There is a pretty thick fog this morning. Landing parties during the afternoon. [99] During the forenoon, the *Princess Royal* came in. The *Warspite* came out of Rosyth dock, went up the harbour [to the] ammunition ship. Proceeded to sea during the night. At 8pm, the *Inflexible* went into Rosyth dock. Ship's company proceeding on leave. On 21st, we also provisioned ship. On 22nd, still under 2 ½ hours' notice. We have sent a party to the dockyard to rig stages around the *Inflex*.

We are painting ship. During the afternoon, football parties. On 23rd, Sundays R. On 24th, Mr Fisher [large blank space about 2/3 of a line] came aboard and spoke to the ship's company.⁶⁰ Our concert party gave a concert at the Y.M.C.A. during the afternoon so many from each ship attended. We are under 4 hours' notice. On 25th, gunnery drills during the forenoon. We have gone under 2 ½ hours again. We are having fairly foggy weather past noon. On 26th, harbour R. Landing parties in the afternoon. In the evening, at 6pm, they piped hands to bathe as it had been a very fine day.

[100] On 27th, during the forenoon different gunnery drills. During the afternoon hands make and mend clothes, and landing parties, football and swimming parties. Lately of a night they have had searchlights on up into the sky and I think they are mostly from shore. We have a bit of a rifle range on board and anyone can do firing if they wish. We are having very fine weather at present. We still make grommets on an evening for 9.2 projectiles. On 28th, during the forenoon went to General Quarters. Landing parties during the afternoon and we are under 4 hours' notice. We are getting in the 1-inch plates to go on the deck just above the magazines in the flats, and the watch was working getting them in until about 11pm. About 1.30am they had the H.A. guns crew out and closed up. On 29th, still getting in plates. During the afternoon, football parties and swimming parties. On 30th, Sundays R. In the evening served out next of kin chits to be filled in and gave them in on pay day. On 31st, we are under [101] 2 ½ hours' notice. They are still working about the plates on the deck and putting them in place. Different gunnery drills during the day.

⁶⁰ Most likely Andrew Fisher, former Australian Prime Minister, who on 1 January 1916 became Australia's High Commissioner in London. He had been instrumental in overseeing the expansion of the R.A.N. It may be that Dixon was unsure who he was.

[August 1916] On 1st.8.16, under 4 hours' notice. Football parties during the afternoon. During the forenoon, the *Indomitable* went into dock. We are getting ready for ammunitioning ship. Some of the light cruisers keep going out and coming in. On 2nd, during the forenoon the *Canada* came out of Rosyth dock and is lying up the harbour. We are having it a bit choppy and windy weather. ~~Gunnery drills during the day.~~ During the day, ammunition ship, getting out common Lyddite and getting in A. P. Lyddite and a new projectile called Trotle [sic]. On 3rd, gunnery drills during the forenoon. In the afternoon pipe down and we have prepared for coaling. On 4th, coaled, taking in 240 tons. During the afternoon and evening getting in plates and placing them. They are 1-inch plates and weigh 40lb to the square ft. On 5th, Saturdays R and during the afternoon [102] working about plates. In the evening a lot of trawlers, numbered [and] marked Holland and flying the Dutch flag, were towed up the Firth under the bridge. It is supposed that they were manned by Germans and laying mines. During the evening we went under one hour's notice and prepared for sea, getting in all boats including the barge. We have put the clock back one hour and got under weigh at 9pm. 1st and 2nd B. C. S., light C. and destroyers. In the 1st and 2nd B. C. S. were the *Lion*, *Tiger*, *Princess Royal*, *Australia*, *N. Zealand* and *Inflex*. Just as we were going out the aeroplane ship went into Rosyth dock.

On 6th, during the forenoon about 9am the destroyers made a screen of smoke around us which lasted about a quarter of an hour and looked very well. Arrived at Scapa Flow at 1pm. Collier came alongside at 2.5pm [2.05?], started at 2.30pm, taking in 300 tons. Finished at 3.55pm. As we were passing the B. F. arriving in Scapa, the B. F. manned ship and gave 3 cheers for the B. C. S. The weather is very nice here today and some of the hands [103] off of the B. S. are in swimming. On 7.8.16, during the forenoon got under weigh and dropped anchor away from the fleet and did .303 firing out of 4-inch. During the afternoon, pipe down. In the evening, fired a couple of torpedos and did 1-inch out of 4-inch guns. On 8th, during the forenoon got under weigh but dropped anchor again owing to a very heavy fog. About 11.30am got under weigh again, also the *Inflex*. At 1pm, 3 destroyers practised an attack on us which looked very pretty and they did very good firing. Both us and the *Inflex* then carried out 6-pounder sub-calibre firing out of turrets. Anchored with the fleet again at 4pm and a provision ship came alongside and we got in potatoes and meat. On 9th, during the forenoon, got under weigh and anchored away from the fleet and the picket boat is towing a target, and we are firing .303 out of 4-inch guns. Also during the afternoon and we are doing 4-inch loader drill. During the first watch we were going to night defence [104] stations but owing to the very thick fog it was cancelled.

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There are always sea planes up here. During the day there has been a mine layer cruising around here very much like a destroyer but has only got 2 guns on her, and to make her look like a destroyer they have canvas screens with torpedo tubes and guns painted on it.

At 4pm some of the hands went in for a swim. On 10th, did 6-pounder sub-calibre out of turrets and .303 out of 4-inch. On 11th, was going to do firing but fog was too thick. During the afternoon coaled, taking in 350 tons. On 12th, Saturdays R during the forenoon, pipe down during the afternoon and we have got up practice P[arties?] for doing 4-inch firing. Went out to do our firing from 11 to 12pm, dropped the target, and when we switched the searchlights on to find it, could not. Early in the evening we did sub-calibre firing out of 12-inch guns, but did not do our 4-inch firing. On 13th, Sundays R and ~~at about 11.30pm~~ got during the afternoon so many [105] hands went in the picket boat out to the target to paint it black and white so as it will be able to [be found]. At about 11.30pm we got under weigh, switched on the searchlights and the port side opened fire at a range of 1,600 yards firing 4 rounds per gun with a reduced charge doing very good firing. After the port side had finished, the lights were switched off and then we altered course so as to get the target off the starboard side and carried out the firing the same way, but not quite so good firing. Dropped anchor again about 12.30pm [should be 12.30a.m?, as they were out at night].

On 14th, the hands were called early and scrubbed hammocks. During the afternoon we went to General Control and we were going to do 12-inch firing, but the weather was not good enough. In the evening, the fog came on very much thicker. On 15th, gunnery drills. Control drill during the afternoon. On 16th, the fog has cleared off and at 11pm [should be 'am'] the *Lion* and *Princess Royal* [*'Inflex'* inserted later] got under weigh. At about 11.30 us and the *Tiger* and *N. Z.* [106] got under weigh and went outside into the Pentland Firth, and at about 1.15pm started firing at a range of 7,000 yards, firing 4 rounds per gun excepting left gun of Q. which fired 3 and then had a misfire. After the firing was finished we went back to Scapa Flow. Got in the boats which we left behind while we did the firing, which was the barge, picket boat and cutter. We fired Q turret across decks. At 5.30pm all the B. C. S. ships got under weigh with an escort of destroyers.

On 17th, arrived at the Firth of Forth and moored at 11.15am. At 11.45am collier came alongside and we coaled, taking in 450 tons, starting at 12.30pm and finished at 2.45pm. At 3pm went to tea and then clean ship. In the evening got in some potatoes. The weather is much better here than it was up north. On 18th, during the afternoon went under short notice and all leave for officers and landing parties stopped. During the afternoon we were preparing for sea. Early in the evening the fleet unmoored and lying with both anchors [107] down. At

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7pm, the light cruisers and destroyers started to go out; about 15 light cruisers altogether and the *Engadine*, the sea plane ship, followed. At 7.20pm the B. C. S. got under weigh, ships being *Lion*, *Princess Royal*, *Tiger* [being] 1st B. C. S.; *Australia*, *New Zealand*, *Inflex* [being] 2nd B. C. S.; the *Indomitable* being over at Rosyth dock.

On 19th, during the morning at 7.15 the *Nottingham* light cruiser was torpedoed and sank. We have the Grand Fleet with us. Some of the day they were quite close to us and then other times you could just see the smoke of them. During the afternoon, the *Falmouth* was torpedoed and we are keeping a sharp lookout for submarines. One of the ships of the Grand Fleet has had an observation balloon up all day. About 4.30pm it was reported that the enemy was about 20 miles off our port bow. We got all ready for immate [sic. probably 'imminent', or perhaps 'immediate'] action. Served out respirators and cotton wool and the order was passed to the turrets that the first three rounds would be common [sic]. The B. C. got into battle formation, the 1st B. C. S. taking the lead and then the 2nd B. C. S. [108] and we were very close together. The 5th B. C. S. was about 5 miles off our port quarter and the Grand Fleet was a good way astern of them. The L. Cruisers came to the rear. It was about 2.30 when the enemy was sighted. At 5.15pm, 2 zepps were sighted. They seemed to be about 20 miles away from us. The *Falmouth* was one of the closest to them. There was either 2 or 3. I saw 2 but it must have been to catch us in a trap, as just as the *Falmouth* opened fire on them, she was torpedoed. She proceeded to Newcastle. During the evening there [were] torpedos fired at the B. C. but they did not find their mark. When we were chasing the enemy we were doing between 21 and 24 knots but never got close enough to engage the enemy. We were at General Quarters all day and at 9pm usual night defence and keeping a very good lookout, and the guns were in the half-cock position as we thought they might have a torpedo boat attack on us. We are now proceeding [109] into harbour.

On 20th 8.16, arrived at Rosyth. At 4pm the hands prepared for coaling. Arrived in harbour at 4.30am, started coaling at 6.30, taking in 570 tons. Finished at 9.15. At 9.30am went to breakfast then clean ship and at 12.30 went to dinner and being Sunday we cleaned in No 5 and pipe down. Evening quarters at 5pm. During the day there has been about 16 Dutch trawlers brought in here. During the afternoon, there was leave for P.O. and Officers. On 21st, during the day, got in plates and the dockyard men are working about them, putting them around the turrets. We also provisioned ship today. The *Indomitable* has left from over at Rosyth dock and has gone up ahead of the *Inflex*. On 22nd, during the forenoon at 9am, the *Indomitable* went out. We are still getting in the plates for the deck. During the afternoon, landing parties and football parties. During the evening 2 new destroyers came in, the *Mentor*

and the *Murray*. On 23rd, during the forenoon, we unmoored got under weigh and made fast to a [110] buoy a little bit closer to the bridge. Made fast at 11am. During the afternoon, landing parties. On 24th, we are painting ship. We were also painting on 23rd. On 24th, during the afternoon pipe down, in the evening getting in plates. A notice has been put on the board referring to censoring letters. It is as follows: *The ship's company's letters will in future be censored by the Officer of their Division and will be collected by the C.P.O. of the Divisions and given to the Officer of the Division at whatever time is convenient for the off[icer] of the Division.*

On 25th, during the forenoon went to General Quarters. During the afternoon, landing parties. On 26th, Saturdays R. During the afternoon, scrub hammocks. During the forenoon, the *Warspite* came in and has gone into Rosyth Dock. On 27th, Sundays R. A lot more trawlers were brought in. During the forenoon a part of the watch got in stores. At 3.45pm two of our new air ships, the [gap – names of airships omitted] came right over the Firth of Forth, flying from over [111] North Queensferry way and after they had flown over the Fleet, they turned around and went back the same way as they came. They did not fly at a very great height or at a very great speed. They just looked like 3 torpedos stuck together, and the same colour. They did not make much noise.

On 28th, gunnery drills during the day. We are still getting in plates for the deck. On 29th, at 9.30am the *Collingwood* arrived here. On 30th, there is a big submarine alongside the *Lion* and has one gun on it. We still make grommets for 9.2 projectiles. In the evening a loader competition came off and the stokers won it. On 31st, at 9am the red watch of 4-inch guns crews closed up forward and the white watch aft, and the *Submare* is practising making attacks on us. At 9.20am the *Indomitable* came in. At 9.30am we went to General Quarters. The *Indomitable* escort has also come in. At 10.30am pack up General Quarters and carrying on placing fenders for coaling. [112] In the evening after evening quarters, supply coaling gear.

[September 1916] On 1.9.16, hands were called at 5am, fall in at 5.45 for coaling, taking in 220 tons, then breakfast and clean, and then clean ship. In the evening the 4-inch guns crews loader competition came off but not finished yet, the best time being 2 mins 7 sec for 2 runs, having 2 misfires and having to shift lock. We are having pretty windy weather now, and had a little rain this evening. On 2nd, Saturdays R. In the evening the loader competition came off and the quickest time for 20 rounds. On 3rd, Sundays R. On 4th, during the forenoon a big landing party landed in No 3 and gaiters, and did a bit of drill. During the

afternoon we went under short notice and we are preparing for sea. At 7.45pm we got under weigh, the *Australia*, *Inflex* and the *Indomitable*, also some light cruisers and destroyers.

On 5th, at sea, and when the hands went to divisions they had to take their life savers and identification discs. We were at [113] action stations all day. On 6th, the hands were called at 5.30am to prepare for coaling. At about 7am there was a mine reported off the port bow which we went very close to. We are having very foggy weather and we are taking soundings with the sounding machine. Arrived in Queensferry at 10am. Tied up to the buoy. The *Lion* is out and the *Tiger* has taken over the flag and got the *Lion*'s buoy. We started coaling at 1pm after dinner, taking in 610 tons. Finished at 2.45pm. Then clean ship.

The Dutch trawlers that were brought in here are going out again, being towed out. During the evening the *Engadine* went out. On 7th to 8th during the forenoon the *Canada* came in and went into dock. /on 7th [sic] Landing parties and football parties. On 8th in the morning the launch rudder was lost and the divers were sent down for it, but [it] was not found. At 9.30 General Quarters. At 10am sounded off high angle [114] guns crew for exercise and gave them a bit of drill. At 10.30am pack up and the hands carry on their usual routine. During the afternoon we had boxing aboard here, about 8 fights, but only one chap from this ship boxed. The remainder were from other ships. The boxing was finished at 3.30pm and then the hands went to tea. At 5.30pm hands went to evening quarters and get their grommets and clean hammocks. In the evening we had pictures. On 9th, Saturdays R. Up all bags, air night clothing and grommets to Divisions, scrub hammock during the afternoon. On 10th, Sundays R. On 11th, landing parties during the afternoon. On 12th, ditto and we are having it a bit choppy and also cold. We are making grommets every night. On 13th still a bit choppy. In the afternoon landing parties. On 14th, *Canada* came out of Rosyth dock and has gone [out/up] the harbour.

[115] On 14th, during the day painting down aloft. The weather is a bit better. During the afternoon, football parties. On 15th, General Quarters during the forenoon, pipe down during the afternoon and the Semi Final of the boxing is on board the *Tiger* today. During the day, the *Canada* and *Collis* went out.⁶¹ Light cruisers keep going out and coming in, also destroyers. On 16th, during the forenoon Saturdays R. In the afternoon one watch getting in plates, the remainder pipe down. The Finals of the boxing tournament came off on board the *Tiger* today. Our ship did not get any firsts, but a couple got prizes. After the boxing, [the] Admiral presented the prizes and then spoke to the hands telling them that the last action, the

⁶¹ 'Collis' could be an abbreviation for *Colossus*.

Jutland Battle, was only half and the other half is to come, and he believes that they will have another go.

On 17th, Sundays R. On 18th, hands were called at 5am and to clean in a coaling rig, and coaled, taking in 205 tons. [116] During the forenoon, the *Princess Royal* went out. Was out for a few hours and then came in again. On 19th, provisioned ship. We are still getting plates in and in places they are putting down the corkerscene. On 20th, about 8.15am the *New Zealand* went into Rosyth docks ~~and the ship's company have proceeded on leave.~~ We still make grommets every evening for 9.2 projectiles. During the evening some hands were working about the plates getting them in place. On 21st, ~~usual R.~~ [inserted: At 9am got under weigh and just went outside for range taking exercise] Pipe down in afternoon. On 22nd arrived in at 12 noon. Hands went to General Quarters during the forenoon, landing parties during [word missing] and football parties during the afternoon. We are getting a lot of Australian soldiers aboard here.

On 23rd, Saturdays R and in the afternoon scrub hammocks. On 24th, Sunday R and it is a very nice day. Early this morning the *Lion* came in and she has her new turret in, and she is coaling ship. On 25th, Harbour R and in the night went under [117] short notice. On 26th, at 4.15am the hands were called, fall in at 4.30am to prepare for sea. [inserted: On 26th, the *St Vincent* came in here] We are under one hour's notice. After we had secured for sea the hands got their heads down again. During the forenoon we went under 4 hours' notice again, in the afternoon usual leave for officers and P.O., also landing parties. We still make grommets in the evening. On 27th, coal ship starting at 6.25am and finished at 7.25am, taking in 220 tons. Then clean ship. On 28th, the dockyard men are still working about the plates. During the afternoon, football parties. In the evening, exercise night defence. This afternoon, the *Warspite* and *Colossus* went out. The weather has not been too good lately. On 29th, we are under one hour's notice. Went to General Quarters during the forenoon. In the evening went under 4 hours' notice again.

On 30th, Saturdays R. At 11.30am the destroyers went out and then the B. C.^o the *Lion*, *Princess Royal*, *Tiger* and *New Zealand* [118] in the 1st B. C. S. and *Australia*, *Indomitable* and *Inflex* in the 2nd B. C. S. We went under the bridge at 11.45am and we have one of our latest air ships with us, flying well in front of us off our starboard bow. During the afternoon pipe down excepting the watch closed up at the guns. At about 3pm the air ship returned. During the 1st dog watch the destroyers were making smoke screens. One destroyer, which looked to us as if she was on fire, was making a smoke screen by a fire on the after part of her deck. Later, she came pretty close to us and I think that a smoke screen made that

way would not be much good, but the smoke screen caused by smoke of the funnels looks splendid.

[October 1916] On 1st.10. 16, arrived at Scapa at about 7am and got out picket boats and barge, and then coal[ed] ship, taking in 350 tons. There have been two observation balloons up all day and they are made fast to ship. Just after we finished coaling [119] an old patten air ship came towards this way. It is a lovely day compared to the weather south. We have started wearing jerseys and blue caps today. It is Sunday today and pipe down this afternoon, but control drill this evening. At 8.30pm high angle guns crew was sounded off as a signal came through to prepare for a zeppelin raid. There were three guns crews kept watches, one the first, one the middle and one the morning. Searchlights were also kept closed up. But the zepps did not come here.

On 2nd, we got under weigh during the forenoon and did 6-pounder sub-calibre firing, and during the firing the No 2 in A turret took bad through the fumes of the cordite and has been bad all day. After we finished the sub-calibre firing out of the turret we went back to our anchorage and during the afternoon the picket boat towed a target and we did 1-inch firing out of 4-inch guns. In the evening did the same firing [120] using searchlights. On 3rd, did sub-calibre firing out of 4-inch guns. In the evening did torpedo running and then anchored with the fleet again. On 4th, most of the battle ships have been out and just came in this morning. We have been doing .303 out of 4-inch guns. On 5th, during the afternoon got under weigh and at 2.15pm General Quarters was sounded off and we did 6-pounder sub-calibre firing out of 12-inch guns and during the firing Tanner in Q turret was knocked out by the fumes of the cordite. Early in the evening we anchored with the fleet again and we have prepared for coaling.

On the 6th, coaled ship taking in 250 tons. In the evening, got under weigh and did torpedo running then anchored with the fleet again until it got dark and then got under weigh again and did 4-inch night firing, firing about 100 rounds, the number that was to be fired was 104 rounds but a couple of misfires occurred, therefore we did not fire all the rounds. [121] We did fairly good firing and after we finished we anchored with the fleet again. On 7th, got under weigh at 11am and went out into the Pentland Firth and did 12-inch firing, 6 rounds per gun and ----- . The *Indomitable* and *Tiger* were also out. Got back in harbour during the afternoon. At 7pm, first and 2nd B. C. S. and destroyers got under weigh. On 8th, at sea and there is a bit of a swell on. During the afternoon, pipe down and at 4.30pm control drill. On 9th, white watch was called at 3pm to clear away the cables for making fast to the buoy. Arrive in at 4am and a very strong wind blowing. Just as we got under the bridge

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we slipped the cutter, and the grass line that was made fast to her parted and there was a signal made for the rear ships to keep clear of her, and the cutter managed to get out of the way. Just as we got near the buoy, we dropped anchor, lowered the first cutter and then made fast [122] to the buoy.

It was after 8am when we started coaling and we took in 650 tons, also oil. During the afternoon, cleaning ship. On 10th, during the forenoon, got out cordite cases and we have been standing by to go alongside the wall over at the dock. On 11th, got under weigh at 12.30 and went alongside the wall in the Basin, and the *St Vincent* is also in here and the *Temeraire* is in dock. On 12th, there is a big swell on and a strong tide running. In the evening, we made grommets. On 13th, in the morning the *St Vincent* went out and we have shifted over to where she was. We have got a working party on the *Temeraire*. After we had tied up we went to General Quarters. On 14th, Saturdays R, and we are having a lot of rain. In the afternoon scrub hammocks. On 15th, Sundays R. On 16th, we are still getting the plates fixed up. In the evening, making grommets. On 17th, another lot of the care and maintenance party have gone on leave. On 16th and 17th, paint ship. The *Canadian* is in here again. [123] On 17th.10.16, provision ship. On 18th, still alongside the wall. During the evening, served out winter clothing. At 9.30pm we have gone under short notice. Both watches for exercise fall in and prepare for sea. At about 12pm rig night defence was sounded off and then got the ship out into the stream.

On 19th, we are anchored out in the stream and the *Iron Duke* is here. We are under one hour's notice. During the forenoon went to General Quarters. In the afternoon, hands make and mend clothes and [it was piped] that both watches may be required. On 20th, coal ship, taking in 210 tons. Then went alongside of the wall again in the Basin at 10.30am. We are still getting the plates fixed up, mostly around the side. We still make grommets of an evening.

On 21st, during the forenoon the *Queen Elizabeth* and the *Melbourne* came in here. We had Saturdays R and made and mend in the afternoon. On 22nd, Sundays R. On 23rd, we are still alongside the wall, getting the plates fixed up. During the afternoon some hands were sent to the *Melbourne*. During [124] the afternoon, landing parties and football parties. At 6.20pm we went under one hour's notice. We went to supper early and after supper both watches for exercise fell in to get ship out of the basin, one watch working inboard and the other in the dockyard. After we got the ship into the lock the hands got inboard and then we got under weigh again. Went to rig night defence and then we dropped anchor up the stream and we are under one hour's notice.

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On 24th, at noon went under 4 hours' notice. On 25th, they are still working about the plates. During the forenoon, the *Queen Elizabeth* went alongside the wall where we were lying. The *Canada* was using our buoy but at about 1pm we changed position. We made fast to the buoy and she went up the stream. During the afternoon, landing parties and football parties; in the evening making grommets. On 26th, about 7am the *Indomitable* got under weigh to do sub-calibre firing; also the *Engadine*, the aeroplane ship, went out. At 9.30am we went to General Quarters and then got under weigh and then when [125] we got down near May Island, we did sub-calibre firing out of turrets. The *Indom* has gone in again.

There are a couple of our submarines out here. We got back to our buoy a little after 12am [sic. - means 'noon'] and landing parties during the afternoon, make and mend and in the evening make grommets. Today there was some destroyers left here for the West Indies. In the evening first [writing disrupted?] are for coaling. On 27th, hands were called at 5.45am and went to breakfast. About 6.30, our picket boat was up the harbour and a tug run into her and cut about half way through the stern cabin and [it] started to sink aft very quickly. So they made her fast to the tug with wire hawsers alongside the tug [and] brought her back to the ship, and the Coxwain had to undress to hook on the after leg, and then they hoisted her in with the main derrick.

At about 7am coaled, taking in 180 tons. During the forenoon, the *Princess Royal* went out and when she came in the *Tiger* went out and later she came in again. During the afternoon, the *Lion* also went out and came in. [126] The *Princess Royal* has gone alongside the wall, the *Minataur*, an armoured cruiser, went into dock. In the evening, we got a bulldog aboard here that was given to the ship's company. This evening, the Commander made a raid at evening quarters and put all those that were away in his report, about 81 hands. Make grommets this evening.

On 28th, it has been raining all day and we have been trying to cover all the paintwork that has been scrapped [scraped?] and as fast as you put it on, it would get washed off. Saturdays R. During the afternoon, hands scrub hammocks. Fall in about 2.30pm to carry on cleaning ship and painting. During the afternoon, we got the damaged picket boat out into a lighter. A couple of light cruisers went out this afternoon.

On 29th, Sunday. At 9.30, while the hands were at divisions, Mr Fisher, the High Com. of Australia, Capt Booth, Mr Fisher's sect [secretary], a couple of others and some ladies came aboard and Mr Fisher inspected the ship and ship's company. He went the rounds with the Captain. After divisions, we went to church on the stokers mess deck and the ladies and gentlemen [127] went to church. In the afternoon, pipe down. In the evening, the *Canada*

and the *Temeraire* went out. On 30th, it has been raining off and on all day. During the forenoon, different turrets to drills. During the afternoon, Pet. Off. and football parties landed. We are under 2½ hours [notice]. No grommets this evening. At 8.30pm, watch for exercise, fell in to secure things for sea. We are having a bit of a concert on the cable deck. This afternoon, a light cruiser came in with an observation balloon up. On 31st, during the forenoon, gunnery drills. In the afternoon, getting up provisions and rigging night defence and securing everything for sea. At 4pm, the *Princess Royal* came out into the stream and dropped anchor. At 5pm, light cruisers, cruisers, destroyers and all B. C.s got under weigh.

[November 1916] On 1st, there is a big swell on. During the forenoon, we were a long way from the 1st B. C. S. and the 2nd B. C. S. was supposed to be engaging them. In the 1st B. C. S. there is the *Lion*, the *Princess Royal*, *Tiger* and *New Zealand*. In the 2nd, *Australia*, *Indomitable* and *Inflex* [128] and we were supposed to have beaten them. We were at General Quarters all the forenoon and submarine guns closed up during the afternoon, and two 12-inch guns closed up. During the afternoon, 1st B. C. S. came close to us. After evening quarters, went to control drill. On 2nd, during the forenoon, General Quarters, pack up at 11.30am. During the afternoon, we fired 6 pounds out of the high angle gun. Just fired them into the air.

On 3rd, arrived in harbour at 2am. Finished on forecastle at 4.45am. Called the hands at 5.15am, went to breakfast and started coaling at 8am, taking in 860 tons, then clean ship. On 4th, Saturdays R. *Queen Lizzy* [sic] went out. 5th, Sundays R. On 6th, a couple of the B. C. went out and did firing. On 7th, hands were called at 5.30am, fall in at 6am and got ready for going out. About 6.45am got under weigh and had an escort of 2 destroyers and went out near May Island and did sub-calibre firing out of 12-inch. About 11am went inside the net. Defence the opposite [129] side to which we generally lay, and dropped anchor. Just after we dropped anchor, divisions was sounded off and the hands fell in on the quarter deck, and the General Chaplain of the Australian troops came aboard and spoke to the ship's company about the Australian troops on duty and ashore. He said that the people of Australia were very proud of the Navy for what they have done and what they are doing. After he finished speaking, the Admiral spoke a few words and we gave 3 cheers for the General [Chaplain] and then the General asked if there was any West Australians, and he spoke a few words to them and shook hands with them.

During the afternoon we did .303 firing out of 4-inch guns. The General left again this afternoon. At 3.30pm got under weigh and made fast to the buoy again. At 4.30pm, went to evening quarters and grommets were served out. On 8th, during the day, got in iron cases for

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cordite for 4-inch guns. The cases would hold cases of 4 charges. On 9th, during the forenoon, went to General Quarters. In the afternoon, [130] make and mend.

On 10th, hands were called at 6.15am. Hands to breakfast and clean in a coaling rig, fall in at 7am first and then 7.15 for coal[ing] ship, taking in 200 tons of coal. Then clean ship. [Inserted: On 10th after coaling, Owens A. B. fell off a stage while cleaning paintwork. Fell from under the searchlights platform onto the afterdeck and was sent to hospital.] On 10th, the *Repulse* is in here and in the evening went into dock. On 11th, Saturdays R. During the afternoon, make and mend and football parties. We are getting pretty windy weather here noon [sic – perhaps meant ‘now’]. We are getting extra armour on top of the turrets. They are putting corkerscene on the deck where they put down the plates.

On 12.11.16, during the forenoon, Owens A. B. died. During the forenoon, church, Sundays R. In the evening, pictures of the Somme was shown. On 13th, during the afternoon, landing parties. In the evening, make grommets. On 14th, during the forenoon, got under weigh and went the other side of the bridge for range taking. Came in at noon and made fast to the buoy again. Just after we arrived in, the *Courageous* and light cruiser and 4 destroyers [131] came in. The *Courageous* is a leader for the Light Cruisers. Her length is ---- and [she] has four ----, 2 forward and 2 aft, and a lot of 4-inch guns in a kind of a casement in 3. The *New Zealand* has gone into dock and the hands have gone on 11 days leave. On 15th, we have sent a big party over to the *New Zealand* to stage her down to work about the cable. The *Courageous* is in dock and the *Repulse* alongside the wall. On 16th, the same working P[arty] of about 50 hands went to the *N. Z.* during the forenoon. The *Sydney* came in. We still make grommets.

On 17th, a small party has gone over to the *N. Z.*, about 14 hands. It has come up pretty rough. In the evening it is supposed the *Orpheus*, a destroyer, has lost her steam boat and 4 hands and a lieutenant. On 18th, Saturdays R. and it is still rough. The *Princess Royal* has come out into the stream. On 19th, Sundays R and the weather is still rougher and the picket boat was not allowed to be lowered until 10.45am, and that was to get the mail and every [132] one had to wear a life belt. The boat was hoisted again at 4.30pm. Weather still the same. On 20th, the weather is much better. On 21st, during the morning watch, about 7am, went out the other side of the bridge and anchored. During the forenoon, did .303 firing while the *Indomitable* and *Inflex* did their sub-calibre firing, and then we went out in the afternoon and did ours near May Island, and at 4pm, the three of us came in again. While we were out, we had about 8 Army Officers aboard.

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On 22nd, coal ship, taking in 322 tons, then clean ship. During the forenoon, we got another picket boat, a battle ship's old boat. In the evenings we still make grommets. On 23rd, during the forenoon, dockyard and canteen parties. Gunnery drills during the forenoon. During the afternoon, make and mend, in the evening make grommets. On 24th, during the forenoon, General Quarters. In the evening make grommets. On 25th, Saturdays R. On 26th Sundays R. We are all ready [133] for getting the cordite out of the ship to go into dock. At 6pm, the Irish party went on leave. There is supposed to be Zeppelins about and we have cleared the anti-aircraft guns away. On 28th, during the forenoon, we got out all the Cordite into lighters. At noon, West Country men were piped to clean and landed at 1.30pm. Then the ship went into dock. The remainder of the ship's company went [on leave] later in the evening. During the forenoon, there was a change about with Admirals. Sir D. Beatty has taken over the Grand Fleet. During the forenoon, Jellicoe passed in his badge and we manned ship and gave 3 cheers.

While [we were] on leave, the ship had extra armour put on top of the turrets and we are getting a place fixed up on the Aft Super Structure for a high angle gun. Arrived back off leave on Wednesday 6th December 1916. During the afternoon, came out of dock and went alongside the wall. In the evening getting in the ammunition; packed up at 12pm. Started again at 6am on 7th. During the afternoon, scrub decks. On 8th, still cleaning ship and painting. On 9th, painting down aloft. On 10th [134] Sundays R and it is raining.

When I went on leave, I went over the Bridge, and again coming back.

On 11th, painting, and we are still alongside the wall. On 12th, ditto. 13th, ditto. 14th, make and mend in the afternoon. On 15th, went to General Quarters during the forenoon. On 16th, Saturdays Routine and in the afternoon scrub hammocks and wash clothes. On 17th, Sundays R, and after divisions the Captain spoke to the ship's company and said that he was leaving the ship shortly and said he was very sorry after being with the ship's company so long. On 18th, during the forenoon, left the Basin and went out into the stream. All the fleet is still out. In the afternoon, coal[ed] taking in 350 tons, then got in some 12-inch practice. On 19th, we are having a fair amount of snow. In the afternoon, make and mend clothes.

On 21st, the B. C. and L. Cruisers came in during the forenoon and they have had a very rough time at sea. There was a destroyer and a destroyer leader lost. The destroyer was the *Negro* No 13. The *Melbourne* had 2 hands [133A]⁶² washed overboard⁶³ and the *Sydney*

⁶² Dixon's pagination is erroneous. He repeats pages 133 and 134. The second of each has been therefore given the letter A to denote the difference]

⁶³ See also: <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/hmas-melbourne-in-wwi-a-diarists-perspective/>

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had 1 killed and 2 injured by the sea. Our new Admiral was aboard here for prayers, Rear Admiral Levison, but he has still got his flag aboard the *New Zealand*.

During the forenoon, went to General Quarters. During the afternoon, painting. On 22nd, in the evening the Captain left. Captain Ratcliffe and the band play for old [sic] Lang Syne. We have now got the Captain of the *Melbourne* aboard here. On 23rd, during the forenoon, prepared for sea. During the afternoon, pipe down. At 5.30pm, got under weigh for Scapa Flow. Arrived at Scapa on Sunday 24th at about 9am and coaled, taking in 350 tons. Then clean ship. Finished at 4pm. We have our new captain aboard here now, Captain Backhouse. On 25th, Christmas Day. We had a very good dinner and while we were having dinner the Captain came round and wished us all a Merry Christmas, and we all gave him 3 cheers.

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[January, 1917] [133A cont] During the week, we were doing .303 and 1-inch ammo [134A] firing. While we were up at Scapa we did two lots of 12-inch firing. The first lot that we did was four rounds a gun, and the firing was not too good, so a couple of days later we did it again. We did both lots with the *Renown*. After the first firing, coaled ship, taking in about 400 tons. After we finished the firing, we went in harbour again and got our boats and then returned to Rosyth. Left about 4pm, arrived at Queensferry at 6.30 on the 6th. 1.17 and the 5th B. C. S. is here, the Queen Elizabeth class and one of the Royal Oak class. Started coaling at about 7.30, taking in 350 tons. During the afternoon, pipe down.

On 7th, Sunday, and the Admiral inspected other divisions and after church spoke a few words to the ship's company saying that he knew that we took the leading part in the capture of the German possessions in the Pacific.



'Church' aboard HMAS *Australia*. (Photo courtesy Museum of HMAS *Cerberus*.)

On 8th, we are making grommets of an evening again. On 9th, there is talk about striking the foretop mast and they have shifted the wireless from the foreyard to the spurs. We have had a fair amount [135] of snow lately. On 10th, we are under short notice. Went under two hours at noon and all parties going ashore was delayed. In the evening the *New Zealand* and the *Resolution* came out into the stream. On 11th, they went back again during

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the forenoon. During the afternoon, make and mend. On 12th, went to General Quarters during the forenoon. In the afternoon, preparing for getting in ammunition. We are also getting two wire hawsers ready for oiling destroyers at sea. We are putting iron rings on to it to reave [weave?] the hose through. On 13th, Saturdays R and getting out Trotyl [sic] and getting in P.A. Lyddite and common in lieu. During the afternoon pipe down and the part of the watch finished off the ammunitioning. All the B. C. and L. C. and destroyers and the 5th B. S. went to sea at about 5pm.

On 14th, at sea and the B. F. is with us. In the evening, preparing for going into harbour. On 15th, got into harbour about 4am and made fast to the [136] buoy and prepared for coaling about 8am, taking in 700 tons, then clean ship, finished at 4.15pm. The 5th B. S. did not come in with us. On 16th, during the forenoon, got under weigh and did sub-calibre firing and the Royal N. V. Reserve men did some 4-inch firing, also some .303. Came back under the bridge again at 5pm. We still make grommets of an evening. We have now got on our fore super structure Rabaul, Samoa and German New Guinea. On 17th, usual R, and made grommets in the evening. We have had a submarine alongside a lot lately. The latest ones.

On 23rd, coal ship, taking in 350 tons. We have taken down the top-mast yard. On 29th, went out and a submarine practised firing torpedoes at us then we came in and coaled. On 30th, hands were called at 5.45, carried out usual routine until 8am. B. W. at 8.55 then the Com had the hands fall in amidships and read out new P.V stations, then fell in again. Hands told off for usual routine. [137] Fleet under one hour's notice. All 12-inch G. L. and Trainers went to instruction about German ships of war in A.T.S.⁶⁴ It was very interesting.⁶⁵ The War watches were piped to dinner at 11.30. Dinner at 12.00. During the dinner hour, went under half hour's notice and both watches did not fall in until 2.30 and then got in all boats and prepared for sea, which during that time it snowed very heavy. Evening quarters at 4pm. The fleet is at Sea. War watches close up. Watch getting out P. V. We left harbour at 3.40pm. The Captain told the ship's company that we were going to a new base but did not know for how long.

On 31st, at 7.40am prepare for coaling. Arrived at Scapa at 7.50. B. watches fell in to bring the ship to anchor. Collier came alongside at 9.45, took in 320 tons, finished at noon. Dinner at 12.15. B. W. fell in at 1pm to clean ship.

⁶⁴ G. L. – probably gun layers.

⁶⁵ See Back of Diary for notes on enemy ships that Dixon may have taken during this session.

[February 1917] Feb 1st, called the hands 5.45. During the forenoon, General Control and then all turrets. During the afternoon, pipe down. Tea at 3.35. B. W. at 4.30. Clear up decks, evening quarters.⁶⁶ Feb 2nd [138] hands called 5.45; fall in at 6.15. Usual routine, divisions at 9.30. During the forenoon General Control Drill. Got under weigh and did range taking exercises. Returned to harbour at 1.30. Feb 3rd, usual R. Grommets [handed in?] to divisions. During the afternoon, pipe down. Feb 4th, Sundays R. It is snowing a little. Feb 5th, we are having very cold weather. At 10am, got under weigh and got out P.V. General Control and range taking, then returned to harbour in P.V. at 12.30, then went to dinner. During the afternoon, usual routine; in the evening, making grommets. Feb 6th, during the forenoon A turret control party to muster in P. Turret for .303 firing. 10am, pack up. Dinner at 12. During the forenoon, we were under weigh. Tea at 4.10. All four guns crews to night firing. Feb 7th, during the forenoon, control drill. Dinner at 11.45.; 12.20 range takers to muster at their stations. During the afternoon all 4-inch guns and control parties to drill. In the evening, 2nd part of Port [watch?] got in provisions. Supper at 6.30 owing to night firing at 7.20. Sub-calibre and 4-inch guns. We were under weigh and packed up at 9.40pm and then dropped anchor with the fleet.

[139] Feb 8th, 1917. Hands called at 5.30 and clean into a coaling rig. Breakfast at 6.10. B. watches at 7.20, 7.45 hands coal ship, 330 tons, finished at 10.30 then clean ship. During the afternoon, make and mend clothes. Tea at 3.40, evening quarters at 5pm. Fleet under short notice. Feb 9th, during the forenoon General Quarters. At 3.40 the fleet got under weigh. But P. V.s at 4.15. War watches close up. At 5pm anti-aircraft guns crew closed up and did firing at small air balloon. Feb 10th, in the morning got ready for coaling. Breakfast at 7.15, fall in at 8am, then in P.V. Starb. P. V. lost. 2nd B. C. S. drop[ped] anchor outside net defence - for why, not know. Under weigh at 10.15. Arrived in harbour 10.50am. Tied up to buoy. Collier alongside at 11.10am. Hands coal ship, taking in 350 tons. 11.15 finished coaling; 12.45 dinner. 1pm B.W; 1.30 duty watch, clean upper deck; remainder of hands muster on forecastle to unmoor and then dropped anchor. Action of *N. Z.* finished; mooring at 3.40, tea 4pm. Feb 11th, Sundays R. During the afternoon, duty hands and gunners party ammunition ship. Feb 12th, usual harbour routine. Feb 13th, hands called at 5.20am. Fell in at 5.50 [140] and just swept down the upper deck owing to the water freezing as soon as it was put on the deck. At 7am, unmoored ship and got under weigh and went the other side of the

⁶⁶ Some new acronyms: B.W. – Blue Watch? P.V. patrol vessel? GL. Gunner leader? [Dixon went on this, and he was a lead gunner]

bridge to do sub-calibre firing and divisional drill. The sub-calibre out of 12 could not be carried out owing to a thick fog. Returned at 7pm.

Feb 14, 1917, in the morning the watch mustered on the forecastle to get the ship under weigh and we made fast to the buoy. The *Iron Duke* is here. On 15th, called hands at 5.45am and clean in a coaling rig. Breakfast at 6.30 and 7.50 coal ship, finished at 8.30, taking in 230 tons, then clean ship. Then prepare to get Lyddite on deck for refuzing [re-fusing?]. Dinner at 12. During the afternoon, make and mend with the exception of A & P turrets crews, which carried on with shell. At 7pm, hands to night defence stations.⁶⁷ Feb 16th, during the forenoon, all turrets crews got up A.P. Lyddite for re-fusing and then return again.⁶⁸ Feb 17th, Saturdays routine. During the afternoon, pipe down. [141] Feb 18, Sundays Routine and at divisions the Captain asked many of the hands what they thought of the Navy.

Feb 19, got ready for provision ship. Finished at noon. Usual routine during the afternoon. Feb 20th, hands fell in at 6am. Part of the watch on the forecastle to unmoor. Got under weigh at 7.30. Breakfast at 7.40am. Star[board] watch [take?] out P.V.s at 8am. During the forenoon control drill, sub-calibre firing, finished at 10am and anchored again at 10.40; finished 5.30pm. Feb 21st, called hands at 5.30, fell in [at] 6. Part of the watch on the forecastle to up-anchor, and got under weigh at 6.10am and then went to the buoy. Then usual routine. Feb 22nd, in the morning sent a party ashore to work about the *Canada* in dock. Remainder of the hands paint ship side dark colour, packed up at 12 noon, then make and mend clothes and hands doing 1.0A finished ship's side. We still make grommets of an evening.

Feb 23rd, hands called at 5.45 and clean into a painting rig and painted aloft and super structure. [142] On Feb 24th, Saturdays R, make and mend during the afternoon. Feb 25th, Sunday R and in the evening prepared for coaling. Feb 26th, usual R. On 27th, fell in at 6am. FX muster on the forecastle to get ship under weigh and went the other side of the bridge. At 8.20am got P.V. ready for going out. At 12.15 got ship under weigh then went to control and did sub-calibre; packed up at 2.30. Then *Australia* and *New Zealand* did full power steam trial, two hours run in company with destroyers and at the same time we were running torpedoes. Returned to harbour at 5pm, finished mooring at 7pm. Feb 29th, [sic: in 1917, it must be 28th] doing same painting and at 11.30 hands were paid and with new notes. At 3.30 hands got in provisions, finished at 4.15, tea 4.20.

⁶⁷ On this day, 15 February 1917, Dixon 'passed for Ldg Sea' (War Service Record, Australian War Memorial)

⁶⁸ On this day, 16 February 1917, Dixon was promoted from AB to Leading Seaman. (War Service Record, AWM)

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[March 1917] March 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, usual harbour routine. On 6th, got ready for coaling. 7th, 8th, 9th, usual routine. 10th, Saturdays R. 11th, Sundays R. March 12th, usual routine until 9.30am then 12 G[un] Layers and Trainers to laying and training practice in P. Turret. Training classes carrying on. Night guns crew of A. Turret [143] to drill at 9.45am. Stand easy at 10.30, dinner at 11.45. At 1.10, hands fall in, got P. V. ready for going out. Pack up at 5.30. Evening quarters at 4pm, served out munitions, tea 4.15. Band played from 5.20 until 6 o'clock on cable deck. Starb[oard] watch of hands [haul?] up cutter at 6.30pm. Starb[oard] watch in boar[d?]. Supper at 7.15. March 13th, called hands at 5.30am; fall in at 6am. Got ready for going out. Got under weigh 7.15am. Breakfast at 7.40. During the forenoon, general control. At 8.45, sub-calibre firing in turrets; packed up at 10.20. Red and white watch did 4-inch firing. Then came in again and dropped anchor just outside the bridge. During the afternoon, all turrets to drill. In the evening, got ready for coaling. At 5.30, got up anchor and returned to harbour and made fast to the buoy at 6pm.

March 14th, usual routine. On 15th, during the forenoon, 12 gun layers and trainers to drill in P Turret. During the afternoon, make and mend clothes. During the forenoon, divers were sent down for lamps that were lost out of one of the boats, but [they] were not found. In the evening [144] at 7pm, went to night defence; pack up at 7.20. On 16th, at divisions it was piped everybody forward and the Captain gave a short speech about cutting the food down. At 5pm, part of the watch fell in to get in four rounds of 12. At about 9pm, zepps were reported near the coast so anti-aircraft guns crew was closed up and cleared away the guns. On 17th, Saturdays R. During the afternoon, make and mend clothes. March 18th, Sundays R. March 19-20, usual R. 21st., On 22nd, went outside to do sub-calibre firing and also struct fore-top most [mast?]. Finished that evening. We have prepared for coaling. On 23rd, coal ship, taking in 200 tons. On 24th, got ready for sea, at 7am fleet under weigh. 9.30 General Quarters. During the afternoon, fired out of high angle gun for practice.

On 25th, arrived in Scapa at 3am, middle watchmen bringing the ship to anchor. Hands were called at 6am and got ready for coaling, but owing to the weather being very bad, the collier did not come alongside until 10.20. We took in 750 tons; finished at 3.30. [145] Then clean ship. On 26th, usual routine. On 27th, in the evening did 1-inch aiming out of 4-inch guns. On 28th, weather in the bay is a little better. On 29th, got under weigh during the forenoon and ran two torpedoes and then returned to harbour. Make and mend clothes during the afternoon. In the evening prepare for coaling. On 30th, during the morning coal ship, taking in 260 tons. Then clean ship. On 31st, Saturdays R, and we are having a lot of snow - as much as 2 inches thick on the deck or more. During the afternoon, make and mend.

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[April 1917] On 1st.4.17, Sundays R, and it is still snowing. Cleared up at noon and turned out a nice afternoon, and the snow on the hills looks a pretty sight. On 2nd, during the day, turrets to drill and 4 guns crews to the loader, and we were going to do 4-inch firing in the evening, but it was delayed. On 3rd, during the day we carried out very much the same routine as yesterday. On 4th, got under weigh about 12pm (noon) to do 12-inch full-calibre firing, but a mist [146] came over and we started to return to harbour again, but it cleared up again, and we went out again and did it in company with the *N. Z.* She did hers first, astern of us, and then she came up ahead of us and we did ours, about 34 rounds at a range of [blank]. Then came in again and coaled ship, taking in 250 tons, then clean ship, finishing at 9.30pm, and it was snowing very heavily. After we finished, hands to clean and pipe down. On 5th, Thursday, we had Saturdays R during the forenoon and pipe down in the afternoon.

On 6th, Good Friday and we carried off Sundays R and at 2pm both watches prepared for sea. At 3pm, B. C. S. and light cruisers and destroyers got under weigh, also *Queen Elizabeth*. At 3.30pm, got out P. V. We are steaming at about 22 knots. On 7th, at 4.30, both watches for exercise prepare for coaling and get ready for making fast to the buoy. Arrived in harbour at 6am. Hands went to breakfast about 7am, then coal [147] ship, taking in 400 tons, then clean ship. Dinner at 12 noon, fall in again at 1pm and finished off cleaning ship. Hands to clean at 2.15pm. Evening Quarters, and serve out clean hammocks at 5pm. Pictures in the evening. On 8th, Sundays R. ~~On 9th We got out all the smoke shells~~ and in the evening we went under short notice on account of a raid on Zeebrugge. On 9th, we got out all the smoke shells on account of it being too dangerous. Paint funnels in the afternoon. On 10th, got under weigh first thing in morning and went outside and did sub-calibre firing and Blue Watch did 4-inch firing. During the afternoon the hands slung their hammocks in new war billets. Went back into harbour at 4pm. On 11th, paint superstructure. In the evening, serve out grommets. On 12th, during the forenoon, paint ship. During the afternoon, make and mend clothes. On 13th, first thing in the morning hands to clean in a painting rig, and paint down aloft. During the forenoon, General Quarters and then finish off painting down aloft. [148] On 14th, Saturdays R, and it snowed very hard all the forenoon, and cleaned up in the afternoon, hands pipe down. On 15th, Sundays R. On 16th, coal ship, taking in 250 tons and then clean ship.

On 17th, first thing got under weigh and went the other side of the bridge and did sub-calibre firing and 4-inch firing, and after we finished, dropped anchor the other side of the bridge. On 18th, during the morning, got under weigh and tied up to the buoy. While we were coming in the cutter's crew were getting their boat rope ready for hauling the boat ahead after it had been slipped. While they were getting the boat rope forward, the end was let go and it

got wound around the shaft so when we had finished making fast, divers were sent down to clear it. On 19th, divers still working about it and diving party working watch and watch. Divers off the *New Zealand* have been working about the shaft all night and ours during the day. In the afternoon a big landing party landed and [149] our football party played the *Lion* for premiers, but we lost. On 20th, usual R. Divers still working about the shaft. In the evening the *Indomitable*'s divers came aboard to work about it. Worked all night. On 21st, Saturdays R and our divers are working about the shaft and propeller and finished off at 11am, and then diving party stands off until 6.30 on 21st. During the afternoon, make and mend.

On 22nd, Sundays R. During the evening at 9.45pm, an A. B. had a detonator and as he thought he knocked some power out of it and he put a match to it and it went off and blew a lot of little pieces of the cylinder all over his face and hands, and he was taken to the bay [sick bay?]. On 23rd, we have started wearing duck suits. On 24th, during the morning got under weigh and did sub-calibre firing and we were going to do 4-inch but owing to low visibility most of the day, it was washed out. We returned to the buoy about 6pm and we have prepared for coaling. On 25th, first [150] thing coal ship, taking in 290 tons, then clean ship. At 9.45, hands that are entitled to vote to clean in No 3 and the[n] voted for the Federal Election.⁶⁹

During the afternoon, ordinary routine; football parties. On 26th, during the forenoon, ordinary R; make and mend in the afternoon. On 27th, General Quarters in the forenoon; landing parties in the afternoon. On 28th, at 12 noon all the B. C., L. C. and destroyers got under weigh. When we were outside the net defence, we got out P. V. At 9.30pm, got them in to see if they were all right. On 29th, at sea and it is pretty rough. We went to General Quarters at 4am, stand fast the middle watch men, and they went to their stations at 6.30am. We remained at Gens all day and so many hands went to meals at a time. Packed up Gen Quarters at 4.30pm and then just submarine guns were closed up. On 30th, arrived in harbour at about 9am; made fast to the buoy and then coaled ship, taking in 800 tons. Then clean ship. Hands to clean at 4.10pm.

[May 1917] On 1st.5.17, [151] we got ready for the usual Tuesday R, and also got ready to take a destroyer in tow while under weigh and oil her, but owing to the weather being foggy, we did not go out. On 2nd, we have got out all A.P. Lyddite and got in Common in its place on account of the Lyddite being of poor quality. On Thurs 3rd, usual R during the

⁶⁹ Dixon was aged 21.

forenoon, made and mend in the afternoon. On 4th, Friday, General Quarters during the forenoon. Usual R in the afternoon. On 5th, Saturdays R. On 6th, Sundays R, and after divisions, everybody fell in on the quarter deck and the Admiral presented a copper medal to one of the midshipmen which is given by the King to the midshipman that is picked by the Captain and officers. While he was a cadet, it was presented to _____ and it is supposed to be a gold one, but he will get the gold one after the war. On 7th, usual R. On 8th, Tues. Got under weigh and did sub-calibre firing and 4-inch, came in again in the evening.

[152] On 9th, coal ship taking in 220 tons. On 10th, Thursdays R and General Quarters in the forenoon, and we are rigging up a stage for the fleet boxing. In the afternoon, make and mend clothes. In evening, the boxing came off but it was not a very nice evening. Downes and Cosham fought and won. On 11th, hands were painting different parts of the ship. On 12th, Saturdays R. Make and mend in the afternoon. We had a couple of our chaps boxing aboard the *Lion* today and Downes A.B. and Ward, Boy, won and Larter Steward was to have boxed but did not, and Hall, Admiral's steward, lost.

On 13th, Sundays R. On 14th, usual R and we are still making grommets of an evening. On 15th, went outside at 11.30am under the bridge and did sub-calibre firing. Came in in the evening. On 16th, arrangements have been made for sports ashore and marquees have been rigged and everything fixed up very nice. At 12.30 (noon), two lighters came alongside and got the [153] liberty men and before we got into the lighters we were told that we were going under short notice in the evening and that when the _____ was sounded that we were all to fall in smartly. We got halfway over to the pier when the picket boat came for us to tell us to return, and the White Ensign has been hoisted up at the main top, meaning all hands to return to their ships. We piped down until 3pm when we went to tea and shifted into night clothing, and at 4pm fell in and prepared for sea. We are under ½ hour notice and we have rigged night defence. At about 5.30pm we unshackled one bridle; at 10.30 pipe down.

On 17th, first thing prepared for coaling then coal ship, taking in 270 tons, then clean ship. We are still under ½ hour notice but during the afternoon, went under four hours. Went to dinner at 12 noon, and two hours to dinner and clean then usual routine. On 18th, during last night the 1st B. C. S. and L. C and destroyers went out. We were going to have the sports today [154] but the weather was not good enough – it was raining. During the afternoon, we got in eight rounds-a-turret of practice. On 19th, Saturdays R and during the afternoon scrub hammocks. On 20th, Sundays R. On 21st, Monday. There was a dockyard party sent to the *Colossus* to ammunition her. We had y.2 [or y.z] 4-inch gun shifted up onto the top of the after superstructure for an anti-aircraft gun.

Strong Tide Running

On 22nd, paint ship and at 10.30am some American journalists came aboard. On 23rd, painting aloft and it is raining. On 24th, Thursday, painting in the forenoon, make and mend in the afternoon. Also during the forenoon went to General Quarters. On 25th, during the forenoon there was a stokers and boys landing party and during the forenoon we finished off painting aloft. On 26th, Saturdays R. On 27th, Sundays R. On 28th, usual R. On 29th, got under weigh at 10.30am to go outside and do our usual firing. We got outside the net defence [155] and a thick fog came over so we turned round and anchored just outside the bridge, and at 2pm we got up anchor and got under weigh to return to the buoy, and a thick fog was still on, and we nearly had an accident coming under the bridge. We went too much [to] one side but everything came off all right.

On 30th, during the forenoon, the two cutters and whaler went sailing with an officer and three L[eading?] Seamen and crew in each. Returned at 11.30am. During the afternoon a lot of us went sailing in the cutter and had a very good time. On 31st, at 6.30am the first B. C. S. came in with the exception of the *Princess Royal*. During the forenoon we went to General Quarters. In the afternoon, make and mend clothes.

[June 1917] On 1st, the *Princess Royal* came in. During the forenoon a vol[unteer?] crew went away in the cutter sailing, and we had a good time. On 2nd, Saturdays R. On 3rd, Sundays R. and about 12 of us chaps went away [157] sailing in the cutter and some went in the whaler and we took our dinners with us and had a good time. Arrived back at the ship at 5pm. On 4th, usual R. On 5th, at 6.30am we got under weigh and went outside near May Island and did sub-calibre firing, also five rounds a gun of 4-inch. Also fired 10 rounds of 4-inch high angle gun and two in the afternoon. We also got out P.V. during the day.

On 6th, coal ship, taking in 250 tons then clean ship. During the afternoon, the sports came off and they were very good. (On 3rd, the finals of the boxing competition came off and Cosham and Ward won their fights.) On 7th, we have left the buoy and gone up the stream and moored ship. On 8th, the *Queen Lizzy [Elizabeth]* and _____ have come in, the *Queen Liz* making fast to our buoy. On [8th or 9th], during the forenoon, we shifted billets and it was raining again at 11.15. [158] On 9th, Saturdays R. Light Cruisers keep going out and coming in. On 10th, usual R. for Sunday. On 11th, Monday. There was a Court Martial on the *Crescent* over an able seaman and a midshipman and the able seaman was acquitted.

On 12th, we were going out to do our usual firing when a thick fog came on and it was delayed. On 13th, during the forenoon, White Watch of 4-inch guns crews mustered at the Loader. Usual Routine. During the afternoon we prepared for sea and got P. V. ready. At 5pm, we unmoored and got aft booms and the 2nd B. C. S. and destroyers and *Sydney* got

under weigh. After we got outside the net defence, we got out P. V. and the Port one did not leave the ship's side, so we had to get them in again, and then put them out again.

On 14th, during the morning we prepared for coaling. Arrived in at Scapa Flow at about 10am and coaled [159] taking in 500 tons. Finished at about 12.20pm then clean ship. There was a lot of whalers and cutters and pinnaces out sailing this afternoon and they looked very pretty. During our stay in Scapa Flow we did 12-inch firing. We were to fire 48 rounds, but only got off about 44 rounds. On last Sunday a few of us went out sailing in the cutter and landed and had dinner and made a fire to boil the fanny,⁷⁰ and we had an enjoyable time. When we got under weigh again to sail back to the ship the wind dropped and we had to get our masts and sails down and pull [row] back to the ship, about five miles.⁷¹

On 18th and 19th we ran torpedoes and on 19th coal ship, taking in 250 tons. On 20th, during the forenoon we got under weigh and ran a torpedo and did sub-calibre firing. At 4.20pm we got under weigh for Queensferry and got out P. V.s. On 21st, arrived at Queensferry at 5pm and got ready for coaling. It is raining very heavy. We coaled, taking in 350 tons, and then clean ship and everyone got pretty well [160] wet through. During the afternoon, make and mend clothes. On 22nd, usual R. We provisioned ship taking in 300 bags of flour, also sugar, peas, beans, milk and different provisions. On 23rd, Saturdays R and we are sending a working party to the *New Zealand* for staging her down. During the afternoon, make and mend clothes. On 24th, Sundays R and a working party has gone to the *New Zealand* again. In the evening we got ready for painting ship. On 25th, paint ship, painting ship's side, aloft and superstructures, painting up till 5pm in the evening, then tea and the Port Watch carried on again to finish the painting as the King is coming aboard tomorrow.

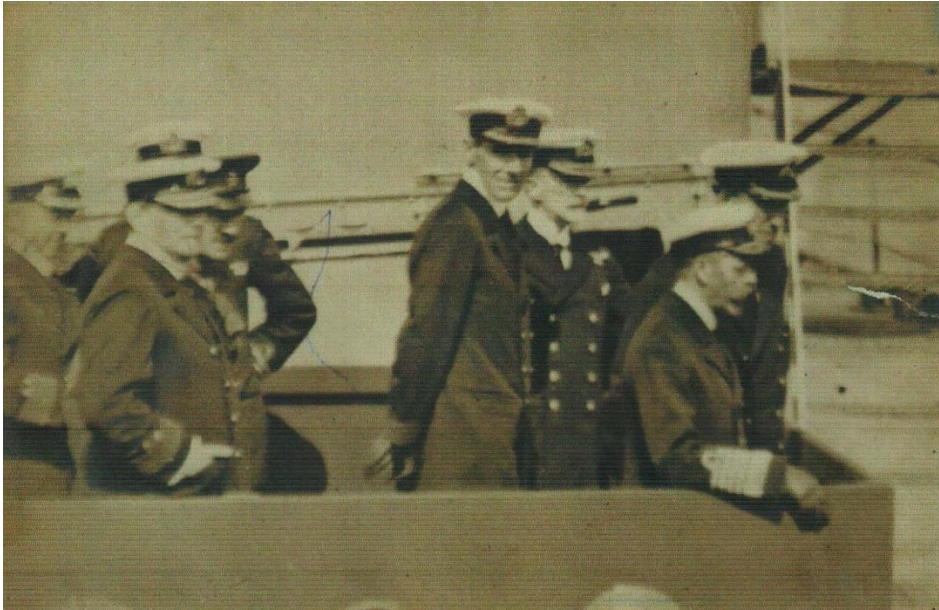
On 26th, during the morning, usual R and at 8.15am breakfast and clean in No. 2. The *Inflex* has come aboard here. At 9am, we fell in again and finished off cleaning ship. At 9.30, divisions the same as Sunday while the King went to the *Princess Royal*, then we fell in again. At about 10.15 we fell in for [161] marching around and the King came aboard and Admiral Pakenham and the King's staff stood on a small platform which was decorated with the shields of the muzzles of guns of different ships. After we all marched past, the King went with Rear Admiral Levison to his cabin and in about this time all hands fell in on the quarter deck, then the King came up again and stood on the platform and said, *I am pleased to have been able to see you all today and I wish you all good luck.* And then he left the ship

⁷⁰ A mess kettle

⁷¹ On 15 June 1917, Dixon was 'passed educationally for P.O'. (War Service Record, AWM). He was never promoted to Petty Officer.

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and we manned ship and stood to attention, and as he was leaving we gave three cheers for his Majesty the King, and then fell out and went to dinner at 11.30am.



A royal visit to the Australia by King Edward VII. (King is front right)
(Photo courtesy of Museum of HMAS *Cerberus*.)

Fell in again at 12.30pm and manned ship while he passed the [ship] again at 1.30, then 3.15, then again at 4.15 and this time we gave him three cheers again. While he was going round the harbour in the barge, he had two picket boats as a patrol. In the evening, pictures on cable deck for seamen and stokers.

[162] On 27th, got under weigh first thing in the morning and did sub-calibre firing. At 10.15am the White Watch did 4-inch firing out of Port guns in after battery [sic], each guns crews firing five rounds. Then returned to harbour. During the afternoon we had a make and mend. On 28th, Thursday, we are sending dockyard parties to work about the *N. Z.* We are surveying our cable on the forecastle. On 29th, the same, and still sending dockyard parties. On 30th, Saturdays R. Make and mend during the afternoon. We have been making 6-inch grommets for some time now. Admiral Booth came aboard here.

[July 1917] On 1st.7.17. Sundays R and we had church on the upper deck this forenoon. The *Inflex* has been getting ready for dock all day, getting out ammunition. On 2nd, the *Inflex* has gone. During the forenoon we tilted ship giving a big list to port and we went to General Quarters to stand by all gear, and a tompin [sic] was [163] placed on the deck and it rolled overboard, and it was marked with a buoy and after General Quarters a diving party went down for it, but it was not found. On 3rd, during the forenoon got under weigh and did

Strong Tide Running

sub-calibre firing and 4-inch firing, also fired the 4-inch and 3-inch high angle gun, about five rounds a gun. Returned to harbour at 5.30pm and prepared for coaling. On 4th, hands called at 5am and coal ship, taking in 270 tons, then clean ship. On 5th, usual routine during the forenoon, make and mend in the afternoon. We are still making 6-inch grommets of an evening. We had a concert on the upper deck which was very good. On 6th, first thing a staging down party went to the *Revenge*, taking their dinners with them. During the forenoon, went to General Quarters; usual routine during the afternoon. On 7th, Saturdays R. On 8th, Sundays R and five of us went for a [164] sail in the whaler, left at 10am and did not arrive back to ship until 8.15pm and we should have been back at 5pm, so we got a caution.



Dixon, left, with two ship-mates from HMAS *Australia*. (Dixon's ditty box.)

On 9th, usual R. On 10th, got under weigh during the forenoon and we did sub-calibre [firing] and during the afternoon Red, White and Blue watches fired out of high angle gun, firing four rounds each guns crew at each gun. Returned to harbour in evening. On 11th, during the forenoon, Commander Walsh spoke to the ship's company and telling us he was leaving today and was going to the *Commonwealth*, the first Lieu Mr McDonald taking his place for the time being.

On 12th, usual R during the forenoon and make and mend in the afternoon. On 13th, General Quarters in the forenoon. Cricket parties, football parties and swimming parties go ashore nearly every day. During the afternoon, Edgar Harris came off to see me. On 14th,

Saturdays R. I had a half day's leave today and met Edgar and [we] had the afternoon [165] together.

On 15th, Sundays R. Usual divisions and [in the] afternoon everybody fell in forward and the Captain spoke to the ship's company about the *Vanguard* being blown up, and that no one knew how it happened, and he to[ld] us to be very careful with everything.⁷² He also spoke about [an] R.N.A.S. officer that is aboard here [who] was taken prisoner in Germany and had six tries to escape and at last succeeded.⁷³ The Captain said ~~that he did not think~~ he thought that this war would end by a revolution.

On 16th, at 5am the hands were called and we prepared for sea. At about 6am all the destroyers and L. Cruisers and B. C. got under weigh and our air ships also went with us. In the evening one of our air ships came down and was hauled in on board one of the Light Cruisers. I could not say whether something had happened to it or not. At about 9pm, one of the observation balloons seemed to be at a very great height and seemed to have broken away. On 17th, arrived in Queensferry at about [166] 6am and prepared for coaling and then we thought that we were not going [to] coal and the decks were scrubbed. We have moored outside the bridge, all the B. C. S. and L. Cruisers and some B. S. and most of the Grand Fleet is inside the bridge. We are going to coal now and take in 200 tons; finished coaling, all hands got inboard and then they piped hands coal ship again, taking in another 500 tons. Clean ship during the afternoon.

On 18th, during the forenoon usual routine and in the afternoon the doctor gave a lecture, then we made grommets on account of it raining. On 19th, General Quarters during the forenoon and make and mend in the afternoon. We still make grommets of an evening. On 24th, went outside to do our usual firing. While we were out, a destroyer came alongside and the Admiral went away in her. We did sub-calibre firing and 4-inch; returned to harbour in the evening.

On 27th and 28th, we had a concert on the upper deck and invited a lot from other ships. The first night it rained very hard and spoiled it; the next night it was very good. It was about the best concert we have had. Lately they have been working a new leave routine, three men going from each mess every other day. On 29th, Sundays Routine. During the evening we went under 2 ½ hours' notice. On 30th, ['August' inserted later, but should be July] usual

⁷² An explosion occurred on board on 9 July and the ship sank with more than 800 lives lost. [https://military-history.fandom.com/wiki/HMS_Vanguard_\(1909\)](https://military-history.fandom.com/wiki/HMS_Vanguard_(1909))

⁷³ Royal Navy Air Services

routine. On 31st, the ship got under weigh at 11am and did sub-calibre firing. I was dockyard party myself and remained behind. The ship arrived back to her anchorage at about 4pm.

[August 1917] On 1st, we are getting in six rounds of 12-inch practice per gun. On 2nd, usual routine, make and mend in the afternoon and we still make grommets of an evening. On 3rd, went to General Quarters during the forenoon. On 4th, Saturdays routine, during the afternoon scrub hammocks and wash clothes. On 5th, Sundays routine and it is very foggy. There is a [168] notice on the board asking for volunteers to serve in Imperial submarines. On 6th, usual R. On 7th, during the forenoon, prepared for our usual run to do our firing. 8th [and] 9th, usual R. On 9th, make and mend clothes in the afternoon. At 3pm the Starb watch was called to get in plates to go in the bunkers 'one-inch plating'. On 10th, prepared to go to sea to do our usual firing and we were going to get under weigh at 11am but was delayed on account of the foggy weather. We got under weigh at 3pm, also the *New Zealand* and *Indomitable*, and did Concentration firing; that is, the three ships firing at the target together. I was recording party in [the] drifter. The three ships also did 4-inch firing. Returned to harbour about 8pm.

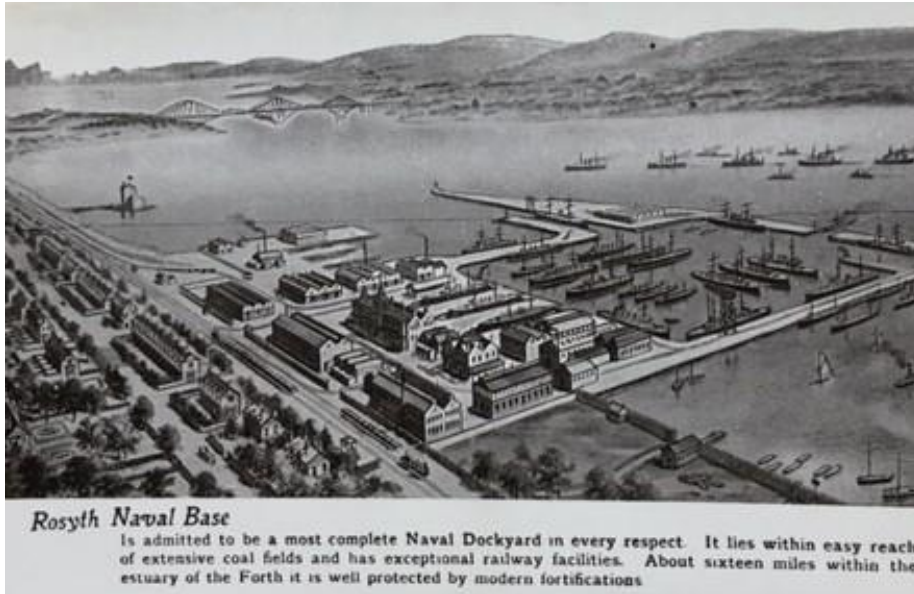
On 11th, Saturday routine. On 12th, Sundays R. On 13th, getting in plates all day and placing them in the bunkers. Finished at 6pm. On 14th, we are getting plenty of rain. We make 6-inch [169] grommets every evening. On 12th, Sunday, during the afternoon one of our air ships came across very much like a zeppelin. I believe it was one of Germany's that had been brought down and rebuilt. On 15th, usual R. On 16th, usual R during the forenoon; make and mend in the afternoon. On 16th, after make and mend, we prepared for coaling and at about 7pm collier came alongside and we took in 500 tons. On 17th, early in the morning we got under weigh, but dropped anchor again, again inside the nets, as it was believed that there was a German submarine outside. During the forenoon we returned to our anchorage and cleaned ship. On 18th, during the forenoon got under weigh and went alongside the wall. On 19th, Sunday, during the evening we got in plates. During the week the same. On 22nd we went under 2½ hours' notice. [170] On 23rd, General Quarters during the forenoon; make and mend in the afternoon. We still make grommets of an evening. On 24th [blank. Gap in diary. No entries written between 24 August and 12 November.]

[December 1917⁷⁴] On the evening of the 12/11/17 we were going to sea and at 5 minutes to eleven, we had a bit of a collision with the *Repulse*; went into dock on 13th or 14th; went on leave for 16 days while ship was being repaired in Rosyth dock. Ship's company

⁷⁴ Here, Dixon is writing in December of events that occurred in November.

Strong Tide Running

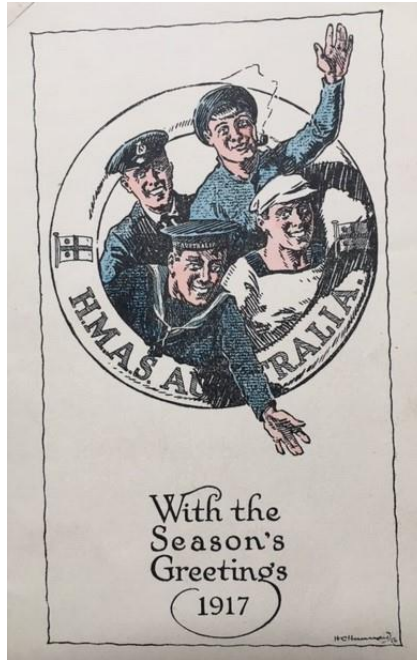
returned on 30th [of November 1917] and then night leave was given until ship left dock on 6/12/17. On 18th, at 9am four American ships came in and we manned ship and gave three cheers as they passed.



Postcard of Rosyth Naval Base (Dixon's ditty box)

On 17th, we got an aeroplane aboard. On the 18th, after the American fleet came in, we went out to do our usual firing and the aeroplane went up from the ship. We returned to harbour about 4pm. On 19th December, the 2 B. C. S., that is the *Aus*, *N. Z.*, *Indom* and *Inflex*, got under weigh at 10.30am, also dest and L. Cruisers. On 20th, about 9am we met our light cruisers and destroyers [171] and a convoy. There must have been about 30 ships and now we are patrolling up and down; convoys are coming from Scotland to Norway and Norway to Scotland. During the night of the 19th, enemy destroyers were reported 49 miles from us.

On 21st, arrived in Scapa Flow at about 6.30 and coaled, taking in 850 tons, then pipe down. It was about 12.30pm. On 22nd, Saturday, clean ship and the divers reaved to V. Chains. On 23rd, Sundays routine. On 24th, usual routine during the forenoon; make and mend. On 25th, Christmas routine. Prayers during the forenoon and then we decorated the messes with flags and paper decorations and we did not have too bad a Christmas Day. It snowed a little during the forenoon.



Christmas postcard from HMAS *Australia*.
(Dixon's ditty box)

On 26th, usual R. 27th, went to sea early in evening to escort convoy. 28th, at sea. 29th, at sea. On 30th, during the forenoon a submarine was reported and the Captain dashed to the after battery and gave the guns crew a bearing to train on, and a range, and fired [172] at the wake of the submarine, and two destroyers dropped astern and dropped two depth charges. We returned to Scapa Flow at 4.30pm, being all ready for coaling. The collier came alongside and we got ready for coaling and then packed up, and we are going to coal tomorrow morning.

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“The Kaiser is Seriously III”, a Christmas Day burlesque performed aboard HMAS *Australia* (year unknown). (Photo courtesy of Museum of HMAS *Cerberus*.)

1918

[172 cont] [February 1918] On Monday 18th, got under weigh at 5.30pm and to go out and do convoy duty, and escorted about 40 merchant ships. Returned to harbour on Saturday 23rd at 9am and took in 1400 tons, finished at 5pm. We had a very rough trip at sea.

[173] [March 1918] On 25 March, left Queensferry to escort convoy. Stopped out until Thurs 29th, when we arrived in Scapa Flow and had 1,500 tons of coal to take in and it was not very good weather, and the collier kept on breaking the hawsers she was made fast with. After a long struggle we got the coal in, finished at 11pm and pipe down.

[April 1918] On Good Friday, clean ship, and up until 6th April we did sub-calibre firing, 12-inch day firing, six rounds per gun, which took 15 mins to do. We also did 12-inch and 4-inch night firing. The target was being towed by a tug. We used searchlights on the target which was 4 to 5 thousand yards off, and also fired star shells from the 3-inch and 4-inch high angle gun. We were going to fire two rounds of 12-inch per gun and eight rounds of 4-inch per gun, but we did not have a very good run, and did not get them all off.

On 6th, the 2nd B. C. S. got under weigh at 1pm. On 7th, we are escorting another convoy and during the day, we have [174] been very close to the coast of Norway. Arrived back at Queensferry at 1am on the 8th. Started coaling about 7am, taking in 1,100 tons. Finished about 11.30am, then clean ship.

On 10th, Mr Fisher _____ and Mr Booth, R. A. and representative[s] of the Australian Navy in London came aboard about 9.30am. The ship's company were cleaned in the *N. Z.* and we marched past him three-abreast saluting as we passed and he afterwards spoke a few words concerning the war and the Australian Navy.⁷⁵ During the afternoon, pipe down.

On 11th, about 8pm in the evening there was a signal made to raise steam for full speed and prepare for sea and report when ready. Somewhere about 10pm all the ships here got under weigh. Battle S fleet.⁷⁶ 1st and 2nd B. C. S. and L. Cruisers. On 12th, arrived back in harbour at 6.30pm and coaled, taking in 380 tons. The Grand Fleet is down here, also the four American ships. [175] On 13.4.18, Saturdays R and during the forenoon 120 ratings came aboard from Australia and 96 R.A.N. ratings left for Australia, also five R.N.C.V.R. left, and as they were leaving the ship the band played different tunes and at the last played for Old

⁷⁵ It is not clear from Dixon's diary who spoke, Fisher or Booth. Fisher was Andrew Fisher, a former Prime Minister of Australia and now High Commissioner in London. Most likely Booth was Rear Admiral Francis Haworth-Booth, and it is most probable that he addressed the ship's company.

⁷⁶ Dixon has begun to write Battle fleet, but replaced the word 'fleet' with S, presumably for 'Squadron'

L.S.⁷⁷ and we gave them a real good chuckup. During the evening we went under ½ hours notice and the 1st B. C. S. went out.

On 19th.4.18, got under weigh at noon and went to General Quarter stations. While we were under weigh the aeroplane flew off the turret and moving pictures were taken of it. We returned to harbour in the evening and coaled, taking in 250 tons.

On 21st, Sunday, got under weigh at 10am and we are doing convoy duties. Arrived in harbour on 24th at 1.30am. We had very foggy weather while we were out. [176] On 24.4.18, went to dinner at 11.30am, arrived in harbour at about 1.30 and the collier came alongside and the hands were just about to coal when all hands were called inboard, and it is undecided whether we should coal or go to sea. About 10 min later hands were piped to coal. We were 1,270 tons short. We coaled until about 7pm and then packed up and secured for sea, being 250 tons short. There is a very thick fog on and men are told off to keep watch on the forecastle. At 12pm [seems to be midnight] we got under weigh.

On 24th, a telegram was received from Bush L Sea to say that the party that left the ship some time ago came out alright after the raid on Zeebrugge.⁷⁸ On 25th, we are at sea and escorting a big convoy [177] ... and having lovely weather and I believe all the Grand Fleet is out. Returned to harbour on 28th at 6am and coaled, taking in 1,650 tons; finished at 3pm then clean ship.⁷⁹

On 29th, Saturdays Routine and in the evening got in ammunition. We are under two hours' notice.

[May 1918] (May). On 3rd.5.18, got under weigh about 11pm, also the *N. Z.* and *Inflex*, and we did sub-calibre firing [and?] concentration firing then all the acting G. L. did 4-inch firing, then return to harbour.

On 6th, coal ship, taking in 200 tons, then clean ship. It has been raining all day. We are still under quarantine. On 17th, coal ship, taking in 280 tons. Clean ship. Got under weigh at 2.40, did sub-calibre firing and came in again. Dropped anchor at 6pm, got under weigh again at 10.15pm [178] and did 4-inch sub-calibre, also fired star shells from 4-inch high angle, then came back into harbour and dropped anchor about 12pm [midnight?].

On 25th, got under weigh during the afternoon and did 4-inch firing and sub-calibre firing, returning to harbour at 7.30pm. On 26.5.18, left off[f] jerseys. On 27th, coal ship, taking in 360 tons then clean ship. We are having very nice weather at present.

⁷⁷ Auld Lang Syne

⁷⁸ Leading Seaman Bush.

⁷⁹ In the diary, Dixon has put the entry for 24th in between two halves of the entry for 25th.

On 29th, got under weigh at 2pm to do sub-calibre firing and concentration firing with *N. Z.* and *Indom*. Returned to harbour and dropped anchor at 9pm, got under weigh again at 10.30 and the acting Gun Layers fired 8 rounds each from port guns and then returned to harbour and anchored. On 30th, during the forenoon we were under two hours' notice; usual notice in the afternoon, and afternoon leave during the forenoon. All the men that were at the Zeebrugge [179] turn-out went aboard the *Queen Elizabeth* and Admiral Beatty spoke to them and told them what a great success it was and that it would always be remembered through history.⁸⁰

[June 1918] On 6th.6.18, went out first thing in the morning and did sub-calibre firing and day action. Four-inch guns crews went to drill. Arrived back in harbour about 11am; coaled ship then cleaned ship. We got under [weigh] at 11pm; also the 5th B. S. and light cruisers and destroyers. 7th, during the forenoon, went to General Quarters. On 8th, still at sea. On 9th, arrived in harbour at 5am, started coaling at 6am, taking in 950 tons; finished at 10.45am; pipe down during the afternoon. On 10th, Saturdays Routine, make and mend in the afternoon.⁸¹

On Tuesday 11th, got under weigh and did torpedo runs and exercise subs firing at us and destroyers [180] attacking us, and did one-inch aiming out of 4-inch guns; returned to the buoy by 7pm. On Monday 17th, coal ship, taking in 340 tons and then clean ship. On 18th, got under weigh about 9am and the aeroplanes flew off the turrets. Did range-taking and Inclination run, then we fired at the *Indom* with sub-calibre out of turrets with director thrown out of six-inch. Then the *Indom* fired at us, and we let them know whether their shots were short or over by firing 4-inch blanks, firing one gun each side for a straddle, one gun nearest the *Indom* for short and the opposite for over.

On 24th, got under way [sic] about 8am and did firing. First of all the aeroplane flew off and then the *N. Z.* and ourselves were firing at the *Indom*, us firing ahead and the *N. Z.* astern, and then they used us as a [181] target doing the same firing. During the afternoon we were firing at a target Individual, firing one turret at a time. Anchored again about 7pm. On 25th, coal ship, taking in 280 tons, then clean ship.

On 26th, during the evening, provision ship then prepare for sea. About 7.30 going to sea was cancelled. About eight ratings left for Australia tonight. The ship is in Quarantine again. On 28th, got under weigh at about 1am, all the 2nd B. C. S. and 5th B. S. and destroyers.

⁸⁰ Reference to raid on German ships and U-boats at Zeebrugge in April 1918.

⁸¹ The dates in this para appear to be wrong. Saturday was 8th and so dates beforehand in this paragraph are wrong. Tuesday 11th is correct.

During the forenoon, clean ship and then went to General Quarter stations during the afternoon, watches standing off pipe down. On 29th, still at sea and during the forenoon watches standing off clean ship and pipe down.

[182] On 30th, arrived at Scapa Flow at 3.30 am. Started coaling at 7am, taking in 760 tons; finished about 11am, then clean ship. Hands to clean 3pm. Pay money at 5.30. The weather here at present is not too bad.

[July 1918] On 1st.7.18, all the 2nd B. C. S. got under weigh at 10am and did sub-calibre firing, the *Indom* and *Inflex* firing at us and *N. Z.* with director through of 6°. Dropped anchor at 12.30. At 1.30 we got under weigh and then the other two had a go. Dropped anchor again at 3.30pm. On 2nd, during the forenoon, went to General Quarters. At 12.45 got under weigh and did sub-calibre firing at *Inflex* and *Indom* and they did the same using us as a target. Anchored again about 5.30pm. On 3rd, got under weigh at 8.30am, also the *N. Z.*, the *Indomitable* and *Inflex*, getting under weigh about one hour before the four [other?] ships going to carry out 12-inch firing. The *N. Z.* and us going to fire at *Indom* and *Inflex* first with director thrown of 6° and then they were to do the same to us. At about 10.30am we sighted them, and when at a range of about 18,000 yards opened fire, us firing ahead of *Indom* and the *N. Z.* firing astern of *Inflex*, while firing we were doing a speed of 25 knots and before firing, our aeroplane went up to do spotting. About a half hour after we finished, the other two had their run, the *Indom* firing ahead of us and *Inflex* [firing] astern of *N. Z.* at a range of about 17,500 to 18,500, the *Indom* doing lovely firing, getting 13 straddles and the remainder was very close. No. of rounds a ship, 32 or eight salvos. Arrived back in harbour at 5pm.

On 4th, coal ship taking in 400 tons, then clean ship, make and mend clothes during the afternoon. The weather is not too bad at present. [184] On 6th, all the grand fleet got under weigh at about 7pm. On 7th, during the forenoon went to general quarters. All the fleet is at man[oeuvres]. On 8th, arrived in harbour about 8.30am and coal ship, taking in 630 tons, then clean ship. All the Fleet [is] at Queensferry. On 9th, paint ship. During the afternoon we had a thunderstorm and lightning and the lightning set fire to the *New York's* and *Barham's* Observation b[alloon?].

On 10th, paint ship and got in some ammunition. On Sunday 14th, instead of going to divisions, we marched past the Admiral. On 17th, got under weigh about 8am and did torpedo running and an Inclination run. Returned to harbour about 2.30. Coal ship, taking in 250 tons, then clean ship. [185] On 22nd.7.18, during the forenoon the King came to the fleet, going to the *Queen Elizabeth*, and presented medals to some of the men that took part in the Zeebrugge turn-out. Bush L[eading] Sea[man], Staples, L[eading] Sea[man] [sic – Staples

was Able Seaman] from here receiving the D. S. M.⁸² As the King passed the ships going to the *Queen Elizabeth* in destroyer 92, the ship's company from each ship gave three cheers. On 23rd, the King is still with the fleet. Left in the evening.

On 25th, Thursday, hands were called about 4.30, fell in at 5am. Coal ship, taking in 300 tons. At 9am, the two aerial guns crews landed and we went to Kinghorn to do firing out of a 3-inch aerial gun, returning to ship 9pm. On 29th, 2nd B. C. S. proceeded to sea, the mine layers going out about 8pm on 28th, and we got under weigh 4am on 29th, having pretty decent weather. [August 1918] Arrived in harbour on 1st [186] at 10.30am and coaled ship (1.8.18) taking in 920 tons, then clean ship.

On 2nd, got under weigh at 1.30 in the afternoon to carry out exercises. The aeroplanes were flown off and then we dropped anchor again at 9.30pm, got under weigh again and did 4-inch and sub-calibre firing from turrets. We fired about 72 rounds of 4-inch altogether, then returned to harbour and dropped anchor at 12pm. On 3rd, we are having pretty good weather.

On Saturday 11th, got under weigh at 6am and did sub-calibre firing and 4-inch from high angle gun, then returned to harbour. On 14th, during the forenoon, a Brazilian Admiral came aboard. We got under weigh at 11.20am and did sub-calibre and 4-inch firing. On 15th, coal ship, taking in 350 tons; clean ship, make and mend in the afternoon.

[187] On 17th, Mr Cook the Minister for the Aus Navy came aboard, also Admiral Booth and Admiral Pakenham, and the ship's company marched past and saluted as they passed. Mr Cook also gave a speech. On 18th, Mr Cook and Admiral Booth came aboard again for church. He also inspected the ship's galleys.

On 22nd, at 11am all ships got under weigh at about 5pm. Went to General Quarters, pack up again after everything was cleared away and tested. At 6pm, two boat loads of men were sighted and picked up by the destroyer (*Valkyrie* 745). On 23rd, we are having very rough weather. On 24th, arrived in harbour at 9am. Started coaling at 9.30, taking in 800 tons;

⁸²“Despite the heavy casualties suffered at Zeebrugge the Australians escaped unscathed. In fact HMAS *Australia* was the only ship, from which volunteers came, to post no casualty list.” Also: Distinguished Service Medals (DSM) were also awarded to Leading Seaman Dalmorton Joseph Owendale Rudd, **Able Seaman George Edward Staples**, and **Leading Seaman George John Bush**. Their citations read ‘For service as a member of “A” Company Seaman Storming Party, HMS *Vindictive* during the operations against Zeebrugge and Ostend on the night of the 22nd and 23rd April 1918.’ (Ed’s bold highlight) See: <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/the-australians-at-zeebrugge/2/>

Strong Tide Running

finished at 12 o'clock, then clean ship. Hands to clean at 4.45pm. On 25th, Sundays routine. On 26th, 2nd B. C. S. boat regatta came off. Hands make and mend from 9.30am.

[188] On 27th, Tuesday, we had Saturdays routine and at 12 noon our seamen's boats crew pulled the *Lion's* a two mile race for £400 and we won by about three boats' lengths. On 28th, at 2am we went under one hour's notice; at about 2.30, ½ hour notice. At 3.10am hands were called and prepare for sea. Got under weigh about 5.30am: 5th B. C. S., 1st B. S., 1st and 2nd B. C. S., [and] L. C. and destroyers. Came in again at 2pm. Coal ship, taking in 370 tons then clean ship. There was supposed to have been some German ships out.

On 29th, paint ship. On 30th, finished off painting, provision ship and oiled ship. During the day we have been going under short notice; in the evening prepare for sea. Sea routine was carried out for 9pm. On 31st, got under weigh at 4.30am; the 2nd B. C. S.; 2nd and 6th L. C. S. to proceed to Scapa Flow. Arrived [189] at 11pm and raining pretty heavy.

[September 1918] Started coaling at 12.45 to take in 450 tons, a lovely collier but bad winches. The *Tynemouth* finished at 4am on 1st and pipe down. The hands were called at 7.30, went to breakfast then clean ship; pipe down in afternoon.

On 2nd, ~~Sunday~~ Clean ship ~~and pipe down in the~~ On 3rd, Tuesday, clean ship in the forenoon, pipe down in the afternoon; went to evening quarters at 4.30 and the Captain and Admiral spoke a few words to the ship's company telling us that they were leaving the ship that night, Captain Backhouse telling us [that] during the time he was aboard here, it was the happiest time of his life, and that he was very proud of the Australians in France, and he said he was very sorry to be leaving us. Then Rear Admiral Leveson spoke a few words and said that he was very sorry that he was not taking this ship back to Australia. Then the Commander [190] was short and sweet and said: *I am also leaving ship's company. Quick march.* The three left during the evening and Rear Admiral Halsey, Captain James and Commander North took their places.

On 4th, usual routine. On 5th, make and mend in the afternoon. On 6th, been under short notice most of the day. On 7th, got under weigh about 6am and had pretty foggy weather while out. Sunday, on 8th, arrived back in Scapa Flow about 10.30am. Coaled and then clean ship. Took in 650 tons.

On 9th, Saturdays routine in the forenoon; pipe down in the afternoon. On 10th and 11th, still in harbour. On 12th, Thursday, and we were going to sea but it was delayed. During the afternoon, one of the latest destroyers, the *Wakeful*, came alongside and in the evening we gave a concert, them taking parts as well, [191] and it was very good. On 13th, sub-calibre firing. Coal ship in evening, taking in 255 tons. On 14th, Saturdays routine. On 15th, Sundays

Strong Tide Running

R. On 16th, did sub-calibre firing. On 19th, got under weigh about 10am and went to General Quarters. Four-inch guns crews closed up while firing 12-inch, opened fire at target at 12,000 yards, firing six rounds a gun. Then returned to harbour and coal, taking in 280 tons.

On 20th, usual routine during the forenoon; make and mend in the afternoon. Got under weigh at 8.30pm to do night firing. On sighting target opened fire with star shell and using searchlights, then opened fire with sub-calibre from turrets and then five rounds per gun of 4-inch.

On 21st, Saturdays routine. On 22nd, Sundays routine. [192] On 23rd, got under weigh at 8.45 to do sub-calibre firing; *Australia* and *New Zealand* firing at *Indom* and *Inflex* with Director thrown off and then they did the same. Anchored at 1pm off north shore and did 1-inch aiming during the afternoon. Returned to usual anchorage at 4pm. At 5pm, all ships up here proceed to sea. We had lovely weather today.

On 24th, still at sea and all the Grand Fleet is out. We are doing m[anoevres?] and during the afternoon we were doing a speed of 25 to 26 knots. On 25th, arrive in harbour at 7.30[am] and coaled ship, taking in 850 tons. Finished at 11.30am and then clean ship. Hands to clean at 3.15pm. On 26th, at 2.20pm, 2nd B. C. S. got under weigh, also our escort of destroyers. About 4pm, we met six American mine layers and they had an escort of about 12 destroyers. On 27th, still at sea and during the forenoon a mine was sighted and a destroyer stopped behind to fire at it. The mine layers are laying [193] their mines and there are also a lot going up, and you can hear the rumbling noise on the mess deck as though something was hitting up against the ship's side. We had pretty fine weather.⁸³

On 28th, arrived in harbour at 11am, went to dinner and then coal ship taking in 780 tons, finished at 3.15pm and then clean ship. On 29th, Sundays Routine but the Captain did not go the rounds. On 28th, the draft of about 27 boys, 1 P. O. and 1 M. A. A. arrived aboard. On 30th, at 6.30am, we went under ½ hour's notice and got in all boats and secure for sea. After breakfast the picket boat was got out again and got in again at 11.30am. About 12.30pm we got under weigh and [also] the 5th B. S. and escort of destroyers and subs. At 5pm all the Grand Fleet can be seen coming up. At 10pm it was piped around the ship that Bulgaria had surrendered unconditionally. 30.9/1918.⁸⁴

⁸³ For more details about mines, see Back of Diary p 15.

⁸⁴ Dixon seems to be noting the date of the Bulgarian surrender.

[October 1918] [194] 1st. 10.1918. Arrived at Queensferry, all the Grand Fleet, and coaled taking in 427 tons, average 312.24 tons per hour. Started coaling 2.30pm. After coaling, clean ship.

On 2nd, Saturdays routine during the forenoon to clean up the ship; pipe down in the afternoon. 2nd B. C. S. proceed to sea at 8.30pm. On 3rd, met the mine layers coming out from Scapa during the afternoon and proceeding north. On 4th, laying the minefield and there are some of them keep going up [ie: exploding] making an awful rumbling noise along the ship's side. On 5th, arrived in harbour at 10.30; started coaling at 11.15, taking in 930 tons, averag(ing) 275 tons per hour.

On 6th, Sunday ordinary routine, and after divisions the Captain spoke a few words about being very proud to be aboard an Australian ship and how proud he was of the Australians.⁸⁵ Then we went to church on the stokers' mess deck, then pipe down.

[195] On 7th and 8th, ordinary routine, lying at buoy. On 9th, shifted from buoy first thing in morning and the 5th B. Squad came in, *Barham* going to the buoy, being the S.N.A. afloat.[sic] During the forenoon we got under weigh and the aeroplanes flew off. One of them, after it had been up a short time, something happened to its engine and [it] fell into the water, the pilot being hurt had a gash across the forehead. One of the N. Launches picked them up. Returned to anchorage at 1pm.

On 13th, still at Scapa Flow. During the forenoon, the 6th B. S. came in, the Americans. It has been a lovely day. At about 8.45pm, the full watch of stokers was sent down below. We are getting in all boats and securing everything for sea. Got under weigh at 2am on 14th. The 2nd B. C. S., the 6th B. S. – that is, the Americans – and the 3rd L. C. S. At daybreak we went to General Quarters. Packed [196] up again at 7.30, duty guns crews remaining at their guns. During the forenoon it was put on the notice board that our objective was three heavy enemy ships that were supposed to be steaming westward, and that the 3rd L. C. S. was spread six miles ahead of the 2 B. C. S. and that the 6 B. S. was eight miles astern and there was also destroyers with us. It was piped that should the rattlers go everybody is to go to their action stations smartly. At 10 mins past twelve, while at dinner, the rattlers was sounded and everybody went to their action stations, and we could see in the distance a big two-funnel steamer, the *Inflex* going after her to find out what she was, and found that she was the *Prince Arthur*, one of our own ships, so she carried on. So we packed up again from

⁸⁵ There were not many Australians aboard the *Australia*. Crew had become mostly from the U.K.

General Quarters and return[ed] to harbour. Arrived in Scapa about 6pm and coaled, taking in 625 tons; finished at 10.30pm then pipe down.

[197] On 15.10.18, clean ship in the forenoon; pipe down in the afternoon. We are under short notice. On 16th, usual routine. 17th, make and mend in the afternoon. On 18th, we had a sailing regatta. All the 2nd B. C. S. and our Pinnace came in first, then our whaler 2nd, and the *New Zealand* dehawsey-rigged cutter 3rd, then our cutters. We have had a French cruiser up here for a few days.

On 19th, Saturdays routine. On 20th, Sunday and the Admiral walked around the ship and inspected the ship's company. Then after divisions he spoke to the ship's company about leave and sport. On 21st, ordinary routine. On 22nd, got under weigh about 9am. The aeroplanes flew off and did all sorts of tactics in the air. We also fired one torpedo. Returned to anchorage at 12.30pm. During the forenoon we went to General Quarters. On 23rd, usual routine.

[198] On 24th, 2nd B. C. S., L. C. S. and destroyers got under weigh at 9.30am. Soon after we got under weigh, we went to General Quarters. Pack up at 11am, arrived back in Scapa Flow at 9.30 and it was blowing very hard and [we] could not make fast to the buoy, so we dropped Starb anchor and while they were getting the port anchor ready, the starb cable parted and we lost anchor and shackles and a bit, so we dropped the port anchor and got the sheet anchor ready and then fell out at 12pm [midnight].

On 25th, first thing in the morning, went to the buoy and coaled ship, taking in 600 tons. On 26th, Saturdays routine; make and mend in the afternoon. On 27th, Sunday at dinner time it was piped that we would leave Scapa for Rosyth during the evening. During the afternoon, the Admiral's staff went to the *N. Z.*, also the Admiral transferred his flag to the *N. Z.* At 5pm on the [199] 27.10.18 leave. Got under weigh for Rosyth. 28.10.18, arrived at 7.45am and started to get out ammunition. Went alongside the wall about 12 noon. Liberty men to clean, got paid and got the[ir] leave tickets and left about 2pm. Care and maintenance party got out the rest of the ammunition and there was no leave for the care and maintenance party in the night. On 29th, went into dock at 9am.

[November 1918] I spent my leave at Lancaster, Cardiff and Birmingham, being in Birmingham the day that the Armistice was signed on 11th of November 1918, and the people nearly went mad with excitement.

Peace: 1918-19

At 10.55[pm?], left to return to ship, arrived at Rosyth at 12 noon on the 12th. The ship went out of dock in the evening and started to get in ammunition. Packed up at 10pm. Started again on 13th; finished at 1pm and then coaled, taking in 500 tons. Then clean up a bit. [200] On 14th, Thursday, had Saturdays routine in the forenoon. Make and mend in the afternoon. On 15th, clean ship and pipe down [in] the afternoon. The *Koenigsberg* arrived here during the afternoon to ensure the execution of the naval clauses of the Armistice. On 16th, Saturday, make and mend in the afternoon. On 17th, Sunday, and special Thanksgiving service. We have had it very foggy the last couple of days. On 18th and 19th, in harbour and painting ship and cleaning ship. On 20th, the King passed down the Fleet in the *Oak*, the Commander in Chief's destroyer, and as he passed each ship, the ship's company gave three cheers. During the afternoon, make and mend clothes. In the evening, secured everything for sea.

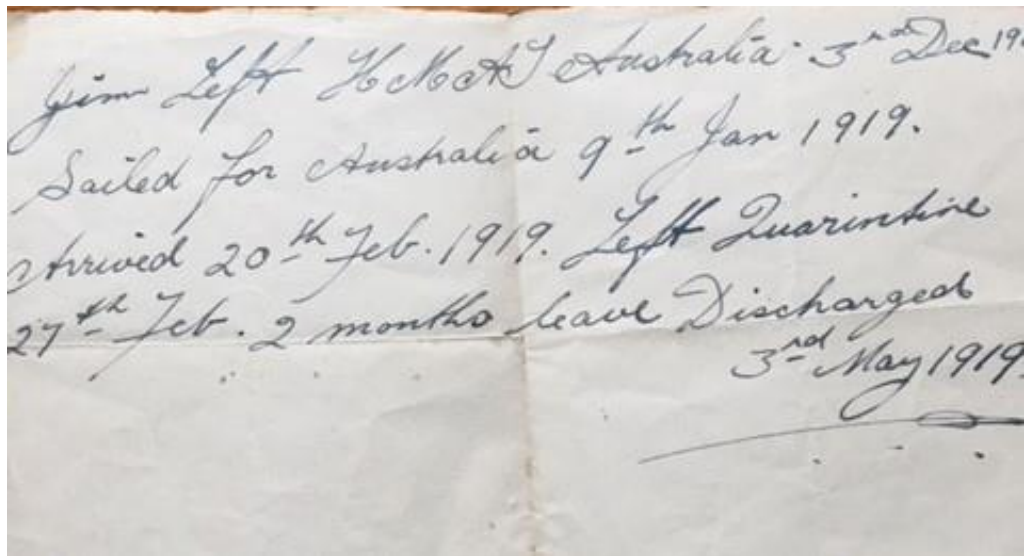
On 21st 11.18, got under weigh about 3am, all the Grand Fleet, and met the German Fleet about 11am. [201] On 23rd, coal ship, taking in 335 tons. Took 1 hour 3 mins. Then clean ship. On 24th, during the forenoon one squadron of the German fleet was escorted to Scapa by the 1st B. C. S. and they passed quite close to us. During the time they have been here, search parties were went across to them and found them all correct and no ammunition aboard them.

Left the *Australia* [on] Dec 3rd 1918 for Devonport barracks; had one month's leave. [January 1919] Went aboard the *Orsova* on 8th, left the pier at 5.25pm, the band playing as we left.⁸⁶ We have 1,500 troops, 150 passengers and 100 sailors aboard.⁸⁷ Left Liverpool on 9th at 11.30am, first two days pretty rough; on 12th pretty good weather and [we are] off the coast of Portugal.⁸⁸ [202] On 13th, passed Gibraltar about midday. On 14th, along the coast of Africa in, on 15th, the Mediterranean. On 16th, passed south of Malta at 11.30am. On 17th, in the Mediterranean. On 18th, ditto. On 19th, arrived at Port Said about midday and anchored at the mouth of the Canal and took in water. While laying here, some of the lads managed to get ashore. Got under weigh at 11pm and we have lost our Starboard anchor.

⁸⁶ The *Orsova* was a troopship. Dixon's war service record states that he was aboard the *Cerberus* for the entirety of his journey on the *Orsova*. (War Service Record, Australian War Memorial)

⁸⁷ Dixon is probably counted as one of the 100 sailors being taken home. As the *Orsova* had its own crew, it is unlikely that he would have been required to work as ship's crew.

⁸⁸ Dixon's page numbering finishes here; text from here includes numbering from where he finished



Jim Left Hobart Australia 3rd Dec 1918.
Sailed for Australia 9th Jan 1919.
Arrived 20th Feb. 1919. Left Quarantine
27th Feb. 2 months leave Discharged
3rd May 1919.

(Note from Dixon's ditty box)

On 20th, arrived at Port Suez at 2.40pm and took in coal and about 100 light horsemen joined us. On 21st, finished off the coaling. The Egyptians coaled us and we took in about 400 tons altogether. The chaps that broke ship have joined us here again. They came through the canal on the hospital ship *Hanowa*. She is on her way to Australia with Australians that have lost limbs and very bad cases. Got under weigh at 2.10pm. On 22nd, in the Red Sea, and it is pretty hot. On 23rd and 24th, ditto. On 24th, in the evening the passengers [203] gave a concert and it was very good. About 9pm, passed through Hell's Gates and it is a bit cooler and a good breeze blowing.

On 25th, they had a fancy dress parade. 26th, 27th, 28th, usual singing of an evening. On 30th, passengers gave a concert. On 31st, sports during the afternoon. [February 1919] On 1st.2.19 arrived in Colombo at 7am and there was no leave to be granted. The C. O. had wireless messages sent asking for leave to be granted before we arrived but it was not granted. We coaled and watered, taking in 1,500 tons of coal and as the [natives] emptied the lighters, so the soldiers and sailors jumped through the port into them and went ashore.⁸⁹ There was a couple of officers sent over to try and stop some but it was no good. During the time the lads were ashore, a few had a bust up with the [natives] and a few got a bit marked [204] and a few were adrift when the ship left. Left in the evening at 11pm.

⁸⁹ Ebony and ivory elephants were purchased in Colombo. Dixon must have been among the sailors who went ashore.

Strong Tide Running

On 2nd, Sunday morning service and it is still very good weather. During the time we were at Colombo an Idol was lost from the museum and when we got under weigh, there was wireless messages sent to us about it and the troops were asked whoever had it to give it up, and it was returned.

On 3rd, 4th, and 5th, very good weather. On 6th, passed Cocos Islands at 1.30pm and still very good weather. In the evening, the Naval ratings, Captain, and a few of the seamen belonging to the ship gave a very good concert. On 7th, still having very good weather. On 8th and 9th, blowing a bit, [and a] bit cooler. On 10th, blowing a bit. In the evening, boxing. Daveron, Navy, and Murphy, Army; Reid, Navy and Ryan, Army. Daveron went four rounds and was knocked out. Reid went the 6th but lost on points. [205]

On 11th, arrived at Fremantle at 8am and after doctor's inspection put in seven days quarantine. On 12th, the West Australians landed during the forenoon; got under weigh at 12pm (noon). On 13th, arrived at Albany at 12.30 and collier came alongside but no shore labour on account of the ship being in quarantine, and that the workmen would have to go into quarantine after coaling her, so the C.O. called for volunteers and after a lot of trouble, got them. Took in about 450 tons, finished about noon on the 14th. During our stay in Albany we had fruit and soap sent to us from the Red Cross funds, and tooth powder. On 14th, got under weigh at 11pm and there is a swell on. On 15th, still a decent swell on. On 16th and 17th, ditto. On 18th, arrived at Port Adelaide at 7am. After doctor's inspection, the troops for Adelaide were sent ashore [206] in a tug. Ship got under weigh about 3pm. While we were here there was fruit sent off to us. The weather is fairly cool and rough.

[207] Arrived in Melbourne 20th Feb 1919. Had to go into quarantine at Portsea until 27th Feb; had two months leave and discharged 3rd May 1919.

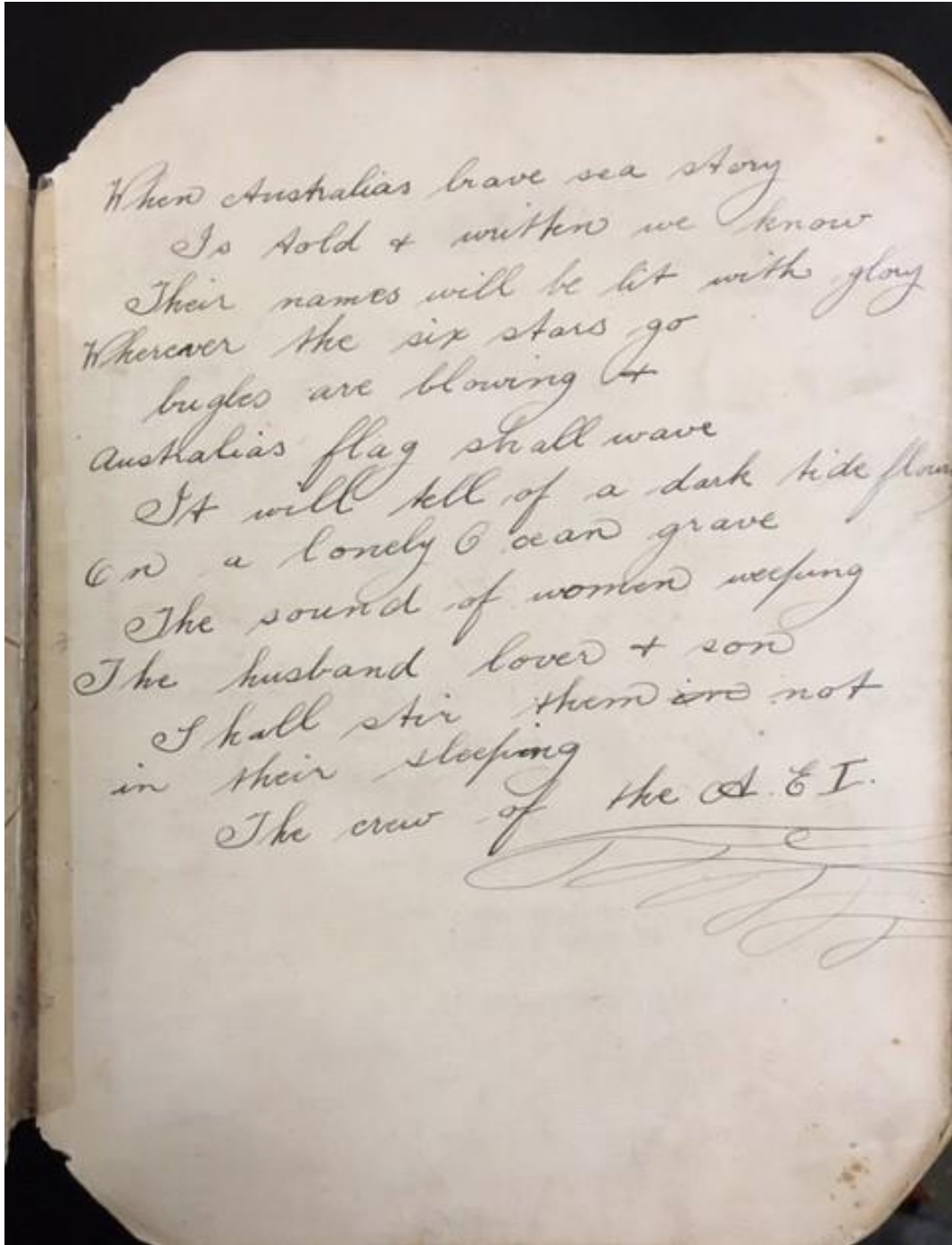
[Inserted later on p.206]:Arrived in Melb and were put into quarantine for one week.⁹⁰ Slept in tents and had a wonderful time. Good meals, beautiful weather and it was glorious. Did a good lot of swimming. Lollies, fruit and cigarettes were given to us each day and pictures at night. The only thing we had to do was to go into a spray room each morning, I suppose to kill any germs. I would be pleased to spend another week like it at any time.

After the week, we were taken up to Port Melb and taken by motor cars up to town, where we were dismissed. I went to Williamstown and got my discharge papers and goodbye to life in the R.A.N.

⁹⁰ Quarantine station, Portsea.

Back of Diary

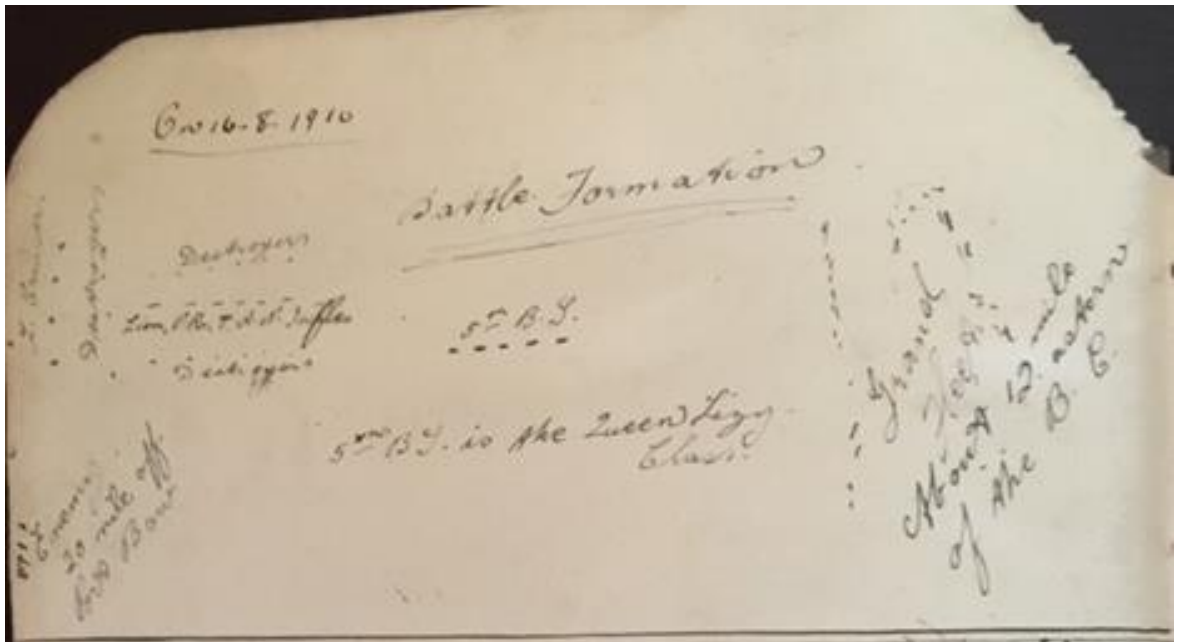
[back of diary 1]⁹¹



A tribute to the lost submarine, AE1

⁹¹ The RNA submarine *AE1* sank off Papua New Guinea on 14 September 1914 and was missing for more than a century. It was found in 2017 in 300m of water, off Rabaul. It is not known when Dixon wrote this poem, or even if he is its author. In the diary, it is on the first page of the back of the diary. See also Dixon's diary note for 19 September 1914.

[back of diary 2]



Battle Formation. Diary entry made 16 August 1916.⁹²

On 30/12/17

While the 2nd B. C. S. was out, we sighted a sub and fired one round at it, and destroyers dropped two depth chargers. A torpedo was supposed to have just missed the *Melbourne* and one was fired at us and just missed.

⁹² On this date, according to Dixon's diary, the *Australia* spent most of the day fogbound at Scapa Flow and went out for a training exercise at 11.30pm.

Strong Tide Running

[Back of diary 3]

Ships in Pacific

German:

<i>Scharnhorst</i>	8-8.2	6 – 5.9	4T	21 knots
<i>Gneisenau</i>	“	“	“	“
<i>Leipzig</i>	10-	4.1	2T	22-24 knots
<i>Emden</i>	“	“	“	“
<i>Nurnberg</i>	“	“	“	“
<i>Geier</i>	8 –	4.1	2T	16 k
<i>Cormoran</i>	“	“	“	“
<i>Komet</i>				25 to 30 knots

Two old destroyers and some small gun-boats in China.

Austria

Kuiserin Elizabeth 8 - 5.9 3T 19 knots

France

Montcalm 2 - 7.6 8 – 5.6 2T 21 knots

Dupleix 8 – 4.7 2T 21 knots

Three T.B.D.S. 30 knots and some small sloops and gun-boats.

Russia

Aukold 12-6 in. 2T 23k

Zhenehug 8 – 4.7 2T 24k sunk by *Emden*

20 T.B.D.S 26-29k 8 subs 5 mine layers

Strong Tide Running

[back of diary 4]

England

<i>Minotaur</i>	4 – 9.2	10-7.5	5T	23 knots
<i>Triumph</i>	4 – 10	14-7.5	4T	19K
<i>Hampshire</i>	4 – 7.5	6 – 6in	2T	22K
<i>Yarmouth</i>	8 – 6		2T	25K
<i>Newcastle</i>	2 – 6	10 – 4in	2T	25K

8 T.B.D.S, 3 subs and some gun-boats and sloops.

Psychic, Pyramus 8 – 4 2T

Philomene 8 – 4.7 18 knots and Australian Fleet.

6th Aug 1914, *Emden* sunk by HMAS *Sydney*.

###

At Rabaul

We had 42 German prisoners and some blacks. We had 7 killed and 11 wounded.

Intercepted German message.

On 11 Sept the English occupied Rabaul and Herbershoke with 11 war ships, 6 transports with 11,000 men. 3000 were landed in Rabaul, and Pitapaka and Toma were bombarded from the seas. Enemy lost 2 officers and seventy men. We lost Captain Meyer.

[back of diary 5]

Capture of *Comet*

Nusa, commanded by Lieut. Com. Jackson proceeded.

Messages apparently being sent by *Comet*. Colonel Paton and a detachment of Infantry were embarked in *Nusa*, also expedition was entirely successful and captured *Komet* with complete W/T station, Captain and 4 Officers and 52 natives taken prisoners. No casualties. *Yarra* is on her way to re-join the fleet with ratings and mails due Suva about 22 Oct.

Strong Tide Running

Action off the coast of Chile

It was fought in a heavy sea and lasted one hour. *Glasgow* fought *Leipzig* and *Dresden* but had to withdraw after *Good Hope* sank. *Glasgow* is not seriously damaged and has but casualties. *Monmouth* believed to be either sunk or on shore on Chilean coast.

[back of diary 6]

Emden landed party at Cocos Island Nov 9. Later in day, *Sydney* attacked *Emden*. No details yet.

Later. The following reports from Cocos Island. *Emden* landed 43 men Cocos Is 9 Nov 1914. Cocos Island sent wireless for help. *Sydney* appeared on horizon. *Emden* put to sea. *Emden* started firing, at first excellent but afterwards falling off. Losing two funnels taken fire stern and running ashore [on] reef of Cocos Island. *Sydney* scarcely touched. Three killed, 15 wounded. Party landed from *Emden* escaped in schooner. *Sydney* has been to the north of Cocos Island to keep wounded there. Cocos Island instruments and wireless installations smashed.

Later: Details of *Sydney*'s action. *Emden*'s Captain unwounded prisoner. Kaiser's nephew also unwounded, [back of diary 7] about 200 killed, about 30 wounded taken off *Emden*; some remaining keeling will be picked up by ship Cocos. Nothing of Schooner *Ayessa*. Island will be visited frequently while uncaptured. *Sydney* sank *Emden*'s collier.



The sinking of the *Emden*. (Postcard, Dixon's ditty box.)

Strong Tide Running

Hizen battle ship built U.S.A. 1895.

Guns 4- 12inch 12 – 6inch 20 -12 prs 2 subs tubes
Speed 18 knots 2 Deck tubes

Indzumo Cruiser built Elswick 1901

Guns 4 – 8inch 16 – 6inch 12 – 12prs 4 subs tubes
Speed 20 knots

Asama Cruiser built Elswick

Guns 4 – 8inch 14 – 6inch 12 -12prs 5 subs tubes
Speed 18

[back of diary 8]

Komet recommissions on 17 Nov 1914 and is renamed *Una*.

Australia and *Mallina* are proceeding to Magdalena Bay to rendezvous [with] *Asama*, *Indzumo*, *Hizen* and *Newcastle* and act against the German fleet wherever they might be.

Australian and New Zealand expedition has arrived at Colombo.⁹³ The following has been received from Naval board, begins: *On behalf of Government and the people of the Commonwealth, Minister for Defence desires to Congratulate Vice Admiral Commanding on the success of Sydney. The Minister for Defence also desires on your leaving Australian waters for distant seas to wish you and all under command the best of good fortune and success in your operations. The Naval Board and all Royal Australian Navy desire to be especially associated with this message. In New Zealand [back of diary 9] House of Representatives, Prime Minister recently said that New Zealand people had not yet had opportunity of appreciating value of work done by the Royal Australian Navy. If the new [If they knew] the [94] recent months, they would thank God that there has been a Royal Australian Navy. Recent crisis. He⁹⁵ knew if it had not been for the Royal Australian Navy, New Zealand's fortified towns might have been smashed and destroyed. Parliament resolutions will be passed, thanking people for protection afforded by their navy . (ends)*

⁹³ Reference to fleet travelling westwards to Europe.

⁹⁴ The words 'inner history of' have been inserted, possibly by Joyce Dixon. Possibly the words 'events of' might be more appropriate.

⁹⁵ N. Z. Prime Minister

Following message received from Prime Minister of New Zealand (begins): *desire to extend hearty congratulations, brilliant feat performed by Sydney, destroying Emden, which since outbreak of war has done so much harm to shipping. While not only appreciating to the full protection afforded to communities [of the] Pacific Ocean [back of diary 10] by Australian section of Royal Navy we are all proud of splendid service rendered to the Empire by your fine ships and the gallant seamen. 'ends' Other messages received from Governor of New Zealand and Minister for Defence for New Zealand and many others. Naval Board message ends.*

Following reply has been sent to Naval Board message above. Begins: *with reference to your telegram and kind message contained are much appreciated by myself and all under my command. We also notice with great satisfaction the appreciation by New Zealand of the service of the Royal Australian Navy. The success of the Sydney is most satisfactory. Australians have every reason to congratulate themselves on the foresight in having provided themselves with a navy strong enough to have dealt with the situation. Message ends.*

[Back of diary 11] Ten German ships were seen off Valparaiso early in the morning of 13 Nov [1914], eight were supposed to have gone north-west. *Leipzig* and *Dresden* communicated with Valparaiso.

German-armed merchant vessel *Prince Eithel Friedrick* was sighted 4th December west of Valparaiso.

Admiralty announce that at 7pm on 8th Dec 1914, *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*, *Leipzig*, *Nurnberg* [and] *Dresden* were sighted near Falkland Islands by British Squadron under Vice Admiral Sturdee. An action followed in course of which *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau* and *Leipzig* were sunk. *Dresden* and *Nurberg* made off during action and are being pursued. Two colliers were captured. British casualties very few in number. Some survivors have been rescued from *Gneisenau* and *Leipzig*.

The squadron under the command [back of dairy 12] of Vice Admiral Sturdee is believed to consist of *Invincible* Flag ship, *Inflexible*, *Defence*, *Kent*, *Carnarvon* and *Glasgow*.

Press Bureau states the *Nurnberg* has been sunk.

Dresden was coaling in straits of Magellan on 13 Dec and is now supposed to be in the Pacific.

Our Minister in Peru informs me that the Peruvian Government has been most correct with regard to all questions of Neutrality. The sympathy of the Peruvians is with the Allies. There are four German steamers at Callou: *Luxor*, *Rhakotis*, *Marie* and *Anubis*. *Luxor*, which

recently coaled the Germans, is interned. *Rhakotis* is under consideration. The Peruvians have refused coal to all of them and their wireless installations are forbidden to be used. The vessel passed this morning was the Peruvian Cruiser *Coronel* [back of diary 13] *Bolognisi*. [sic] One of the steamers near here was the *P.S.N. Co Snao*. The Peruvian Cruiser is engaged in seeing that no interference takes place. No news of *Dresden* or *Eithel Friedrick*, the later [latter] ships is [sic] described as having two masts and two funnels, and painted black.

Dec 31st, the following information about the recent action is promulgated. Fought at a very long range 15,000 yds. *Invincible* and *Cornwall* hit several times, had no casualties; *Inflexible* hit twice, one killed; *Glasgow* hit several times. Wireless shot away, closed.

Nurnberg to 2,800 yds and most of the casualties occurred on board her. Germans fought well and went down with colours flying.

[back of diary 14] K Class. Submarine were armed with one 4-inch gun and 3-inch anti-aircraft gun 338 ft long, 26½ ft at extreme beam with a mean draught of 16 ft. These submarines were of a destroyers size, that is to say displacing 1880 tons on the surface but 2650 tons when submerged.

Three of them one fatal night were run over and sunk by the Grand Fleet.

The H.M.S. *Kent* sank the *Nurnberg* at Falklands Battle, being as close as 4,000 yds during action, both ships using independent firing. *Kent* had four men killed and 12 wounded and picked up seven survivors from *Nurnberg*. *Kent* was hit 38 times, holes above the waterline. Was nearly out of coal after action and took in 1611 tons and her bunker capacity was only 1600 tons. Sank at 7.26.⁹⁶

[back of diary 15]

Mines

Mines were laid from the Orkneys to the neighbourhood of Bergen. 240 miles and to cover that distance it meant 77,000 mines. They were 3 ft in diameter and contained 300lbs of TNT. They were in rows, the first being 45 ft deep; the second 160 ft, and the third 240 ft deep, and not closer than 300 ft apart.

Of the 77,000 required when the Armistice was signed ~~the British had laid~~ 16,300 British and 56,600 American mines had been planted.

⁹⁶ Refers to sinking of *Nurnberg*

Strong Tide Running

If a submarine came within a hundred feet the electric current would cause a violent explosion and the enemy's destruction. These accounted for six submarines German.

[Upside down at bottom of page, back of diary 14]

Leave:⁹⁷

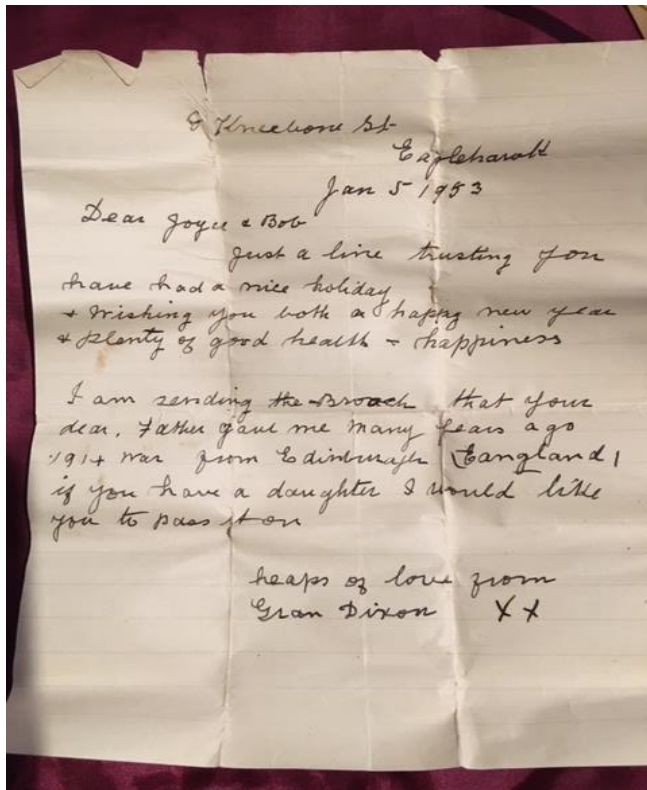
28.1.15	4 days	Plymouth and London
13.7.15	4 days	Invergordon, London
1.2.16	7 days	Newcastle, Manchester and Liverpool

[END OF DIARY]

⁹⁷ This leave list omits leave taken in May 1916 while Australia was being repaired at Devonport, and also omits leave Dixon was on in November 1918 when the Armistice was signed. He had been to Cardiff, Manchester and Birmingham. We also know that he took leave in Huddersfield in Yorkshire.

After the War

Following his discharge, Jim went to his mother's home in Eaglehawk and presented her with a garnet 'sweetheart' brooch he had purchased in Edinburgh. Catherine passed the brooch to my mother, Jim's daughter, with a request that it be passed on. It remains in my possession.



How Catherine, the daughter of two German immigrants, felt about the war is not known, but Jim may have felt a bittersweet sense of relief that both of his maternal grandparents had died long before it began. At some point during 1919, at a social event in Bendigo to welcome home returned servicemen, 24 year-old Jim met 16 year-old Edna. This young lady was a pianist with medals from the Royal Institute of Music in London, and her grandfather was a successful retired mining inspector. She had grown up at the tail-end of his large family following the death of her mother in 1905, and was cherished and spoiled. It seems somewhat odd that she was allowed to attend a social for returned servicemen; some of her young aunts may have taken her.

Despite some concern in her family that Jim Dixon was not a suitable match, the pair married four years later, in September 1923, by which time Edna's grandfather had died.



Jim and Edna on their wedding day.

Meanwhile, Jim had been making a life for himself. He got his driver's licence and qualified as a fitter and turner. He and Edna moved to Broadford, north of Melbourne, where Jim took a position at the Australian Paper Pulp Mill. It may have been in Broadford that Jim received a letter from Yorkshire, most probably forwarded by his mother from Eaglehawk, which is still in his ditty box. This letter is worth including here because Jim's friend, Frank, uses a series of 'do you remembers' to reflect on their service aboard the *Australia* in a way that Jim's reportage does not.

[street address]

Paddock

Huddersfield

England

Sept 20th 1924

My Dear Jimmie

I really do not know how to begin this letter. Please let me explain things first of all. It is five years ago since I received your most welcome [letter], and I immediately wrote in reply, but I had no envelope at hand and left it until the following day, and when I came to address the envelope, I could not find your letter and I sought high and low but it never turned up.

But tonight on turning up some of my old war relics I found it. Do you know old man I have been worrying over this loss of your letter for five years. I have looked for it times without number and I was indeed joyful to find it tonight. I have never forgotten you old friend, and when our local YMCA Secretary (Mr Scholefield) went out to Australia, he said he would try and trace you at the Admiralty in Sydney, however he had not the time to go to it, so I was disappointed.

I only hope Jim, that you are still at the address given, if you are not and the people who get this would try and get to you through the Admiralty, who will know that you served in the old Australia during the war, and I suppose will have your address as a reservist, I shall be grateful.⁹⁸ I was sorry to see they had sunk the old ship, it brings a lot back when you realize all the times we had in her.⁹⁹ It makes one think vividly of those uncertain days spent in the North Sea, it brings back the sensation of great seas coming over the bow, of long dreary watches of waiting, whilst tearing through the night near German bases and minefields. Do you remember after Jutland at Scapa, Do you remember playing Australian Rules at Rosyth? Do you remember working parties in the dockyard? Do you remember the

⁹⁸ The letter would have been sent to Jim's mother's house in Eaglehawk.

⁹⁹ HMAS *Australia* was 'buried' off the coast of Sydney on 12 April 1924, with great pomp and ceremony. (National Film and Sound Archive: [The Burial of Australia's First Flagship HMAS Australia - YouTube](#))

Strong Tide Running

crash with N. Z.? Well, it is all over, but what a mess we are in now so long after. I often think about the times we had together, you and I, Jimmie, and my people and I often talk about you and wonder where you are and how you are. I do hope this reaches you. Well, after I left you in Australia, I wandered around the North and South Atlantic in Destroyers, and put some time in on the Belgian Coast, where it proved very warmer times.

When I came home I went back into the Ironmongery trade where I am still, but I have been a member of the YMCA these years, and all my spare time is put in as boys secretary and I am also the Physical Director for the association in Huddersfield. I am not yet married, but we are only waiting till I get settled down, as I am going into the I. M. work as full time shortly. Well, Jimmie, if ever you come over to the old Country, which is not such a bad place after all, do come along and see us, we should be mighty glad to have you with us again. So now I must be closing, and hoping once again that this will reach you, find you in the best of health and happiness.

Hoping to get a reply to this. Remember me to any of the boys if you see them.

I remain

Your old Shipmate and chum

Frank -----

Late 19 Mess. H.M.A.S. Australia

P.S. Mother and Dad send their kind regards

Frank

To: Ex-Leading Seaman, Seaman Gunner James Dixon, late HMAS Australia during the war in the North Sea, Europe.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Editor's note: this letter has been de-identified. A reference to some young women they had been out with while on leave, while in no way derogatory, has also been omitted.



“I was sorry to see they had sunk the old ship...” some words from an old shipmate to Dixon in September 1924. (Photo of the ‘burial’ of HMAS *Australia*, courtesy Museum of HMAS *Cerberus*)

Jim and Edna’s daughter, Joyce, was born in Melbourne in 1927, by which time Jim had gained employment in the Tramway Workshop, which lasted through the Great Depression and beyond. Joyce claimed to have formed two great passions as a child. One, from her mother, was music: Edna and Jim were renowned in their neighbourhood for holding musical soirees at which Edna would play. The other of Joyce’s passions was the sea, which came, of course, from her father.

‘When I was little,’ she wrote later in her life, ‘I learned to tie knots, the points of the compass and various sea ditties.’

Each morning she would be woken with:

’eave, ’eave out, ’eave out,

lash up and stow;

5 & 9 the Brighton line,

’eave out, ’eave out, ’eave out!

Her notebook continues: ‘My father neither smoked nor drank. The *Australia* was a dry ship and he probably traded tobacco with the cook on duty when he came off duty in the North Sea, sleeping in the cold and wet and sometimes snow, by his gun.’ Indeed, the horrors, uncertainties and stress of the war left their mark on him: ‘Dad had a couple of nervous breakdowns when I was a child... I was too little to know then that Dad was ill but I remember his coming home before I left for school and [he] was crying “I’m no good, Ed[na], I’m no good.” I couldn’t understand but I do remember the doctor telling him to take up a sport, perhaps golf. There was no way he could afford golf clubs, so he started making roller skates for himself, and he skated from probably the mid-1930s until he died in ’58, aged 64, and even then was in the throes of making new skates for himself.’

Jim had discovered roller skating while on Navy leave in Blackpool. It was to become a pastime father and daughter would share, and together they competed in the Victorian State Championships. According to Joyce, Jim had loved the Pacific Islands and had always wanted to return to Fiji, ‘as he thought the sunrises and sunsets were magnificent.’ It would never happen. During the 1950s, Jim suffered a heart attack and then, despite having never smoked, developed cancer of the throat, which his doctors put down to relentless coaling aboard ship.

He died on 31 January 1958 in the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, Melbourne.

Reflection & acknowledgments

Leading Seaman James W. R. Dixon did not come home from war with a Distinguished Service Medal or with great notions of having done anything heroic. He had only joined the navy to escape the drudgery of his life and to see the world, and he probably got much more than he ever bargained for. But he did his duty, aspired to be promoted, formed good friendships and found simple pleasures as the months and years of terrible uncertainty rolled on and on. It seems likely that when the war ended, he could not get off the *Australia* fast enough. He was ready to live, and I am convinced he was among the troops who ‘jumped ship’ in Colombo on the way home – the elephants, which we know were purchased there – are probably testament to his involvement in this little exploit.

Transcribing his war diary has been an unexpectedly emotional experience. If one simply sits down to read it, as I had tried to do twice before, there is the constant temptation to put it down; and so one does. After all, how many tons of coal do we need to read about? How many harbour routines, half-hour notices, hands to General Quarters or ‘make and mends’? How many movements of ships in a harbour must be made just to keep a squadron of battle cruisers ready for action?

But once I had undertaken to transcribe all of it, it was easy to keep going. As the sentences rolled by, I found myself ‘living’ Jim’s war. I even dreamt about it: four years of relentless tedium, most of it spent in the freezing North Sea, punctuated only by bits and pieces of the sort of fun a young man yearns for, and every little thing underscored by uncertainty and fear. After a while, I found I didn’t want to put it aside. Gradually, the whole became so much more than a string of daily bits of reportage. By the time I had finished, I felt I knew my grandfather. For example, beneath one wry comment about cuts to the food ration lay the unmistakable tone of resentment. I sensed the *Australia* was an ‘unhappy’ ship. I also finally understood what my mother said when she wrote that there were times when he had to sleep with his gun. I had always imagined him in his hammock with a pistol under his pillow. Now I know that this meant sleeping ‘closed up’ in a freezing gun turret; this is what a half-hour’s notice meant. This was Jim Dixon’s war in the North Sea. It was, by and large, a pitiless experience. All I can say is thank God for the summer of 1917 and the pleasure it afforded him, out there with his shipmates on Scapa Flow, sailing in the ship’s cutter. I am thankful that they were lucky enough to be allowed this simple freedom.

War diaries, I have come to believe, really must be read in their entirety. This one tells a story that is as vivid today as it was when Dixon started writing it. Arguably, with the

passing of time and the mortality of humankind, it is even more important today than it was when he wrote his last entries in 1919.

Already, I have acknowledged three generations of the women in my family – my grandmother, my mother and my sister – for their respective parts in protecting Jim’s ditty box, the contents of which include this diary. It remains now to thank the Museum of HMAS *Cerberus*, in particular Commander Helen Ward, John Douglas OAM and staff; Petar Djokovic, Senior Naval Historical Officer, Department of Defence; Professor Philip Payton for his always well-considered advice; my late brother and my sister-in-law for taking good care of the cutter and the elephants; and my partner, Paul Stevenson, for providing the opportunity to visit HMAS *Cerberus*. And thanks to Sara and Sophie for occasionally dragging me away from my computer.



Dixon’s dog tag (Dixon’s ditty box)