



The A.I.F. Convoy

Assembling at Albany.

HMAS Sydney arrived at Albany Harbour, King George Sound, on 31st October, after an uneventful voyage from Sydney. Albany was to be the rendezvous for the transports of the 1st A.I.F. Expedition, whose ships had been gradually collecting for some weeks past.

The Transport Fleet consisted of 28 Australian and 10 New Zealand transports, carrying 31,000 troops, together with stores.

The spectacle of the expansive waters of the Sound, comfortably filled with many large ships was ~~one~~^{one} to be remembered. And the scene was enlivened by the many steamboats and motor boats which darkened in

and out among the great liners.

Besides the merchant ships were 4 warships, viz. HMAS. Melbourne, Sydney, HMAS. Minstrel, flagship carrying the Senior Officer; the Japanese battleship Ibuki, and the HMAS Pioneer, gunboat.

So far an air of mystery had invested the projected movements of the Convoy. No one appeared to have heard the day of departure nor the route decided upon, nor the destination. This was extraordinary, as usually the Cooks of the U.S.S., if not the Chief Cook in the Flagship's galley, can almost invariably inform the Captain of his secret orders and decide for him all ways and means.

Finally, however, we put to sea about 11 am Sunday, 1st November, and

took a course to the north, which obviously
decided ~~our~~ ^{our route.} ~~our~~ ^{our} ~~port~~.

From day today, this immense assembly
of ships steamed on, ~~though~~ ^{though} our speed
~~was~~ ^{being} reduced to the comparative snail's
pace of 10 knots through the sluggishness
of one or two of the merchant ships.

In the first few days, somewhat
rough weather was experienced, the
sea being considerable in the vicinity
of the Lewis. Rather severe rolling
and labouring of the ships resulted,
the Sydney's boat deck frame being
uninjured some times half their length.

See Japan.

What a splendid spectacle - Often
have I stood on deck watching the
scene - 38 columns of smoke in 3 lines,
ascending and dissipating in the atmosphere,
besides the 4 thick woolly black

masses of vapour belched forth from the
warships at the head of the column,
and the rear, and on each ~~side~~ ^{flank}.
What a variety of ships - from the swift
palatial mail steamer to the primitive
cargo carrier, but all efficient
specimens of modern naval architecture.

Thus, for over a week, without
any incident to disturb the calm
of this imperishable symbol of marine
power and dignity, we steamed on to
the north, the temperature becoming
perceptibly warmer as we approached
the tropical region.

Yet there was one incident worthy of
notice. When details were received
of the melancholy end of an Squadron
off the Chilean coast, when two warships
a battleship and a cruiser, were sunk
with all hands, the flagship, the

H.M.S. Minstrel was ordered to South American waters via the Cape. Her place the command of the Expedition in HMAS Melbourne, Captain Selvon being senior officer, who then took station at the head of the column.

Of course, an obvious fear was that the Japanese may attempt an attack upon the Convoy, especially at night. The only two Japanese warships known to be in those waters were the ^{Cruisers} *Senden* and *Kouyabey*, the whereabouts of neither being exactly known. This fear of attack being always in mind, a warship was sent some distance ahead, to ascertain the nature of the ship from which a column of smoke was seen arising far on the horizon. They precautionary day and night was taken to safeguard the Convoy.

Thus passed the first week.

The Day of the Action
9th Nov. 1914

The usual routine each morning is for Prayer to be sounded by bugle call about 9.5 and afterwards the hands sent to their various duties.

During the war, it had been a practice every Monday morning, immediately after Prayer, to sound "General Quarters", followed by the bugle "Action Stations". The former order sends every man to his proper place on the ship, when all hands are engaged. The latter, sets every man at his war task in addition.

Thus for some two or three months past, 9.30 am Monday found Hulse Sydney at Action Stations, when all the duties involved in

actually, fighting a battle at sea, were carefully carried out as a drill.

And it was a strange coincidence, that ~~at~~ ^{on} this very day, and at an hour only 10 minutes later than usual, the first gun was fired, this time for the first time, in actual earnest.

But let us return an hour or two. When I awoke, about 7 am, I noticed the ship was heaving at an unusual ~~fast~~ speed. There was much more vibration than usual from the propellers, and the splash of water by the port-hole was very noticeable. It was immediately apparent to me that something out of the common order was expected to happen. Hurriedly dressing, I went on deck to try to glean what information I could. The first Officer on duty was Lieut Seoffner, Hauptman

(by the way a descendant of the famous John Hampton of Ship money fame), who was busy directing the work of a gun's crew. In a peculiar way, Hampton greeted me with the comforting language "Go on Pedro and have your last breakfast". In the Ward Room or Officers Mess, I found breakfast ready, and proceeded to replenish the minor war. But all anyone knew was not much. It was just this simply, that Sydney was ordered to investigate a report of a strange warship in the Cocos Islands, about 40 miles South.

It appears that at about 6 am, the officials of the ~~Cable~~ Eastern Extension Cable Company, at Cocos Islands Station, situated on Direction Island, had observed a warship entering the

harbour. Since this ship made no signals, nor attempted to answer signals made, suspicions were aroused at once. Again, the ship at first appeared to carry four funnels. But as she came nearer, it was apparent that ~~the~~ one of the funnels was a dummy, as it waved about in the wind. This fact caused the Cable Officials to issue a warning by wireless viz - "To all British Ships; Stand by warship entering the harbour". This message was picked up by a British merchantman and relayed. The relayed message was received by ships of our Convoy. The "Melbourne", being Senior Officer, signalled to "Sydney", "To proceed to Duction Island and investigate". That explains the high speed at which

The ship was travelling at 7 am, being then about 20 knots, gradually working up to 25 and later 27 knots.

In the meantime, all preparations were being made for action.

At 9 am, the bell sounded for prayer. It is interesting to note that on this occasion, after ~~consultation~~ ^{enquiry of} with the Captain, the time-honoured "Prayer before Action" of the British Navy was specially read for the first and only time in Australian History. I asked Capt. Horsey.

"Shall I read the Prayer before Action?" He replied, "Yes, I suppose so."

At about 9.15 the "Luden" was in sight, a smoky bloom on the southern horizon, just outside the harbour of Direction Island.

General Quarters were then sounded

as a messenger from the Bridge reported to the Captain "Enemy in sight, Sir".

Then followed ~~immediately~~ ^{some after} the hyle call "Clear Ship for action".

In a few minutes, all preparations had been made, and every man stood ready for duty at his battle station.

It was an animated scene, though outwardly ~~not~~ ^{hardly} different from the many previous occasions when a similar exercise had been carried into effect.

The busy clatter of the Carpenter's Party sounded as they knocked out the pins, so as to allow the guard rails along the sides to fall; the thud of the shells as they were deposited close to each gun upon the deck by the Ammunition parties; and

the bellroom when some water-tight
hatch was quickly closed, sounded immediately.
Just about 9.30am all preparations were
completed. The ship was in silence. A
voice might be heard here or there as though
~~ordering~~ ^{ordering} some finishing touches to details.
~~The~~ The outstanding sounds ~~was~~ divided
the general attention - the whirr of the
propellers and the rush of the sea as the
ship slipped along at 25 knots. Above
our heads streamed a mass of black
smoke ~~to~~ belched freely from the
four funnels, blurring the azure
blue of the cloudless heavens. A
light breeze was blowing, and the
sea was smooth except for the
long sea roll. Soon as the ship
altered course, the hull burst
over the bows as each succeeding
roll was met, but, through the

high speed, very little pitching or rolling,
was perceptible.

By this time, I with other members
of the Medical Parties was at my
station in ~~the~~ one of the Stokes bathrooms
situated just below the upper deck
along the centre passageway. The
Medical Parties were in charge of
the two surgeons, mine being with
Dr Darby, our senior surgeon, which
occupied the forward place along
the passageway, and the other
with Dr A. Todd, in the after
position.

The lull in silence continued for
some ten minutes, when precisely
at 9.40, the "Lunder" being seen
to open fire, the range being 10500 yds,
we replied with a ranging shot from
the 6 in fo'castle gun.

The Sydney had fired a broadside or salvo of 5-4:1 in shells, she carrying 5-4:1 in guns on each side. It had not been supposed the enemy would fire at salvo range. However this salvo fell short, striking the sea some distance ahead of the Sydney.

The enemy continued to fire with rapidity, exemplifying the German theory that volume of fire was equal to a superior to, weight of ^{shell} projectile.

Having found the range, the Sydney ~~then~~ swung slightly out of course to avoid the ~~short~~ ^{part} broadside.

This and the second salvo both fell short.

The very interesting photo. taken by the Cocos. Id. Cable Office must represent one of these early salvos, as it shows the five splashes of the

A range finder resembles a telescope,
this one being about 9 ft in length,
mounted on a pedestal.

X

Sydney shells near the Sueden.

The ~~Sueden~~ 2nd and 3rd salvo "shredded"
the Sydney and did some damage.
One shell cut through the forward
range finder, killing the operator, Hoyle.
This range finder was situated above
the bridge, some 40 ft above the ^{lower} ~~upper~~
deck. The

Another shell, from this or the next salvo
struck the "after-control", a superstructure
of light steel standing on the upper deck
nearly 'midships. Here was situated
the second range-finder. The shell
entered the after control at the left-hand
(port-) top corner, ripped down the
sheet steel diagonally, cutting through
two or three stanchions, and bursting
just below the steel ~~deck~~ platform ~~within~~
within the structure. The shell
wrought havoc - riddling the left

shell work, blowing up ~~fragments~~ speaking
tubes, range finders and all shell work,
wounding Lieut. Hampden badly,
in the legs, also several of his party,
though not seriously. Fragments of
the shell were scattered widely. For
a considerable area around, the deck
planking was cut and frayed, the
walls remaining for years after.
One fragment of shell penetrated a
grating covering the mouth of a deck
ventilator, and fell into the engine
room. And it is related that when
the fumes of the shell explosion were
drawn down the ventilator into
the engine room, one of the staff below,
noticing a peculiar odour, ~~sniffed~~
sniffed the air below the ventilator,
and remarked, "Thank God, it's only
powder" - that is, not fumes of a

fire in the ship.

Near the damaged after funnel, another shell neatly pierced two steam escape pipes attached to the after funnel - very neatly, for the shell was 4' in and the steam pipes 6 in in diameter. A portion of metal remained ~~in~~ ^{all around} the punctured hole.

Near this funnel, a shell grazed the deck on the starboard side, forming a plank, and carrying ^{away} the deck covering, and striking some rivets in the shell plating, from which water was admitted to the cabin below.

All this happened probably within the first ten minutes or less. And we were by this time, well into the fray.

So far, our medical parties had not been called upon for their services.

But from about the first ~~quarter~~ 15 min, we were to be very busy, for the next hour or two.

In just at this time, ~~the~~^a shell burst, perhaps shrapnel, about midships, and just at the rear of No. II Starboard gun, the crew of which were standing by, awaiting orders to fire.

The burst took place over the midship gangway, ~~the shell~~ evidently by time-fuse. So far the starboard ~~side~~^{guns} had not been engaged, and this gun's crew was very interestedly watching the progress of the battle, when the catastrophe happened. The gunlayer P.O. Lynch, ~~the~~ Sight setter Sharp were both badly wounded, and other members of the gun's crew not so severely. A.B. Bell,

standing ^{50 feet?} some distance away, was also struck by a fragment of shell and badly wounded. Some slight damage was done to the gun's lighter fittings.

But the effects of this destructive shell were also ~~fatal~~ ^{the} cause, another day.

Near the 'midship gangway, many cordite charges for the guns, had been packed together in preparation for the order ~~to fire~~ for the Star-side guns to fire. The flash from the shell burst caused these charges to ignite. A great blaze shot up 25 to 30 ft in the air, and the heat was intense. Several of the gun's crews were ordered to ^{fall in} ~~throw~~ (throw) the blazing cordite, ~~the~~ and in ~~falling~~ ~~the~~ ~~blazing~~ ~~cordite~~ ~~scattered~~ down, so, received severe burns to arms, face and chest. And the wounded gunlayer P.O. (which was buried about

The body as he lay on the deck in his helpless
slight.

One of the most interesting hits made by
a shell was where a shell pierced the
upper row skylight, penetrated the
thin iron partition walls of the
staircase passage, thence through
similar plating into the Commander's
Cabin. There the shell smashed the
workbench basin stand, gouged out a
deep furrow in the cabin deck, then,
turning sideways, it passed through the
knee-hole space of his ~~top~~ writing desk,
and finally smashed through the $\frac{3}{4}$ in
steel of the stujit side, making an
opening about 15 in long, and at last,
fell into the sea without bursting.

The hole plates were cut out when the
ship was repaired in Gibraltar, and
were kept in the Captain's Cabin ~~for~~ as

interesting exhibits to visiting friends.

The port side armor plate was struck early in the fight by a shell which burst outside the ship, leaving a dent in the steel plate at its point of impact. That spot happened to be filled by a rivet. This rivet was driven through ~~the~~^{its} place in the steel plate by the impact, and ^{was} forced out with sufficient impetus to cross the ~~deck~~ coal bunker and mark the steel on the other side of the bunker.

The mainmast was grazed slightly about 30 ft above the deck.

Another interesting hit was where the thin armor plate beneath the boat deck was pierced on the port side. This shell merely put its nose through, as though to look in, and then retired into the sea.

It so happened that a stoker was standing at the door of his mess, when the shell hit the side with a resounding crash. Taking in the situation at a glance, he did not hesitate to make himself scarce. But by the time he had heard the crash, the danger was over. In shells which hit one are those that are neither seen nor heard by the one hit. The piece of shell plate penetrated was cut out and mounted in a frame by the Carpenter and is among those now on view for the interest of visitors.

Each gun is protected around its breach by a heavy steel shield. One of these was pierced by a shell and slightly dented.

Another shell, late in the action, fell upon the fore-castle deck, port side.

A burst in contact, and blew a hole
large enough for a man to stand in
and have plenty of room around him.
A photo of a carpenter in such a
position was taken. Just beneath
is the Boys Mess Deck. The
steel deck beneath the planking
was neatly rolled back by the
force of the explosion for two or
three feet. And in the Boys Mess
was a mess of another kind.
Tables were riddled by fragments
of shell, even the steel deck
below was penetrated by several
fragments. And as the steel
fragments were projected in all
directions by the force of the explosion
many of them penetrated the Boys'
clothes bags, so that when they took
out their jerseys, tunics and trousers

Capt. Muller of Emden
and several officers and
about 140 of his men were
taken on to Calcutta
and handed over to the
Defence Authorities. The
^{wounded} ~~rest~~, our own at German,
were landed in hospital,
where I visited them.
Other Germans were taken on
board the A.I.F. transports
to prisoners.
"Sydney" was ordered on
ahead, to Gibraltar for
repairs.

They resembled wire netting for the
multitude of holes. Kettles, saucepans,
kayaks etc were also riddled in
abundance. And moreover, as the
sea was constantly breaking over
the bows, many tons of water poured
down this hole, flooding the Boys
kitchens and the Stokers mess adjoining.

