TRANSCRIPT OF ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

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Title	(19007) Glansford, George James (Petty Officer)
Interviewer	Connell, Daniel
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Description	George James Glansford, as a petty officer, HMAS *Hobart*, interviewed by Daniel Connell, for the Keith Murdoch Sound Archive of Australia in the War of 1939–45. Discusses training; commissioning of HMAS *Hobart*; convoy duty; naval operations; submarines; maintenance; duties; rations; sports; crew relations; Battle of Coral Sea; sinking of HMAS Canberra; United States Navy (USN); Australian American relations; repairs; looting; resignation from navy; family problems while men at sea. Mentions Flinders Naval Depot, VIC; Ceylon; Tobruk, Middle East; Mediterranean; Pearl Harbour, USA; Singapore; Espiritu Santos; Manila, Phillipines; Tokyo, Japan.

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IDENTIFICATION: This is an interview with Mr George Glansford. It's in his flat, and the interview is taking place on 7 January 1989. End of identification.

Mr Glansford, perhaps if we could just start off by talking about your background before you joined the navy. Just how old were you when you joined the navy?

Eighteen.

...could you tell me what you had been doing before that?

Well, I had been a junior salesman; and I had been a messenger. The depression had just started in 1928 and it was getting difficult to find jobs so my mate and I decided we would join up – join the navy – and that's what we did.

So you joined in 1928.

Yes. We went down and saw the district naval officer down at Birkenhead in South Australia and passed the tests there and we ... then ... went by train to Flinders Naval Depot in Victoria.

Perhaps if you could tell me a bit about your family background. Your parents, where did they live?

They lived in Semaphore Road, Semaphore, South Australia and we ...

Your father, what sort of work did he do?

He was working down at the yacht squadron down at Outer Harbor.

In what sort of job?

Oh, he was looking after yachts and that sort of thing. He was a crew of a yacht called the *Stormy Petrel* which was later wrecked near Port Lincoln and belonged to ... one of the owners Mr Thomas Hardy who I think is either the father or the grandfather of the present Jim Hardy – Sir Jim. (laughs)

So, and you went to school, where?

I went to school at Glenelg [SA] and at Glanville [SA] at Le Fevre Public School.

And when did you start work?

Oh, when I was sixteen.

Why did you choose the navy? What caused you to think of the navy?

I don't know but living in a seaside place and a port it seemed to be the thing to do. You know, we all had a longing for the sea, my father was always at sea, so it sort of ran in the family.

What was your expectation of the navy as a place to work? What did you think of it at that time; a glamorous place?

No, I never thought of that. I suppose we did in a way, yes. You know, it had a certain drawcard about it I suppose. Yes. These sea fellows coming home on leave and all of that sort of thing. You thought, `Gee, that's good, you know' – with a girl on his arm. (laughs)

... Could you describe the business of actually joining up. What did you do? ... How did you know where to go?

We had to go down to the district naval office which was in Birkenhead in South Australia but prior to that we were at one stage, at that time of the government, we had to do compulsory training once you turned sixteen or seventeen, I forget now, but you had to go down there and register and you had to go and do drills once a week.

You had already done this?

Yes, something like that. Actually we went down there to the district naval office and saw the district naval officer and he provided us with papers and forms to fill out and signatures from your parents to say that they agreed for you to go and all that sort of thing. So we took them home and then we had to take them back.

How did your parents react?

My father wasn't too happy. He thought that I wouldn't make it. ... `He won't last twelve months', he said.

(5.00) Why did he say that? That is not a very positive thing to say.

No, that's right. I don't think he had much faith in me. (laughs) Anyway my mother signed the papers in his name. That's how I got in. So then we had to go back and do a medical and dental checks and all of that. I had to get ... a couple of teeth filled before I was accepted and that was that. Then we were given a date to report down at the naval office; get our travel warrants and that. We were escorted up to Adelaide to the train and put on the train for Melbourne. That's how it happened.

And what was waiting for you at Melbourne?

More personnel from the navy there picked us up and took us to Port Melbourne our naval depot at that time and given a meal and then we were put on the train to Western Port, Victoria, to Flinders Naval Depot and we were inducted in down there.

Could you describe Flinders Naval Depot at that time?

Oh well, it was just a huge area with accommodation blocks and schools for teaching seamanship and knots and all that sort of thing. And you had to do drills out on the parade ground – learn a rifle drill, boat sailing and boat rowing and all, you know, the fundamental things as far as seamanship was concerned. And we had to do gun drill: learn all the different projectiles, and do a smattering of torpedo drill and a bit of signals and education tests and all that sort of thing. There was other buildings there: there were officers' ward rooms and we had a wet canteen, there was galleys for cooks and with

much sport going on – being in Victoria there was always Aussie Rules being played – and gymnastics – you had to go to gymnasium training every now and then, at least once a week anyway.

... Did you feel you were getting a practical training or ...

Yes. It was all new to one so you sort of joined in and did the best you can, ... try to improve yourself.

How was the new cadet treated?

Very well. Of course, like any new recruits you would be put through the mincer a bit. They would make you heel to commands and that sort of thing. And no jocularity or anything on the parade ground, you just had to keep your nose to the grindstone, but when it was all finished you were all free to do what you liked more or less.

What sort of things would happen as part of this conditioning yourself to discipline or conditioning you to discipline?

Nothing drastic; you just had to obey orders. ... If you didn't you might be given some small extra thing to do. Sometimes it got a bit harsh if the offence warranted it. I remember our dormitory was right above the billiards room, in the block I was in, and our class was all in that one dormitory. Someone had been over to the wet canteen that night and they came back – we all slept in hammocks slung up between two rails – someone that night wet his hammock and it all soaked through the floor onto the middle of the billiard table and, of course, nobody owned up to it. Everyone had a pretty good idea who it was and we were frogmarched around the rectangle at the back of the block for about three quarters of an hour which was pretty drastic in those days. So it was different sorts of discipline.

What is frogmarched?

You had to hold your rifle behind your back, like this, across your shoulders and squat down and walk around like that – squatting down.

Yes, that is a harsh ...

Of course, I don't know if they ever found out who did it anyway. That is the sort of comradeship that happens in these services, you know.

(10.00) So over the next few years as part of the peacetime navy, what sort of experience did you get, just summing it up fairly rapidly?

... You got a sort of general experience. You had to get used to the sea if you had never been to sea before and you were taught more sophisticated stuff at sea and you were given more gun drills and boat drills and all that sort of thing – it all comes into it – and more or less taught how to paint and chip rust and keep the ship in general repair and looking spick and span. Scrubbing decks, wholly stoning decks once a week to keep them nice and white, all that sort of thing.

... Come the late 1930s when did you get promoted to leading seaman?

When I was on the *Waterhen*, the destroyer. I had passed prior to that. I think I was on the *Penguin* – I passed for leading seaman. You learn up your course and you are put through tests and you wait. If you have passed the tests then you get promoted at a certain time when they see fit and your conduct has been good enough. So it was on the *Waterhen* there, I think two of us got made the same day. The first lieutenant on the *Waterhen* then was later commander of the *Hobart*.

Who was that?

He became a captain later but he was Lieutenant Commander Cook – Frederick Norton Cook.

When did the *Hobart* first begin to have an impact on your life? When did you hear of the idea that you might have to go to Britain to pick up the *Hobart*?

... Not until the *Australia* paid off and then we were sent over to the *Albatross*, she had been out of commission so she had to be got ready. We knew then we were going over.

What was the feeling when you heard that you were going over to Britain?

It was always a bit of elation to get an overseas trip and she was fitted out – I don't know if you knew her at all – but she had big hangout decks because she carried seaplanes and had three big cranes up on deck. ... The planes used to land in the water and then they would be hoisted aboard and put down below.

How old was she?

I don't know when she was built. She wasn't that old but she was taken as part payment for the *Hobart*. All of the decks were fitted out to take, you know, about 500-odd men for commissioning the *Hobart*.

Right. And so you went across. When did you arrive in Britain?

I don't know if it was September or ... August, I think, in 1938.

How did you find Britain?

At that time there was ... Britain was very nice. ... There was always a bit of apprehension then because of what Hitler was doing and as it turned out there was a mobilisation while we were there, and the date of commissioning the *Hobart* was brought forward to 28 September from October. There was a rush to get stores and ammunition and stuff aboard in case she was needed and ... on a general mobilisation went out to all of the fleet reserves in Britain and all of that and they came flooding into the dockyards and a lot of them were put onto the *Albatross*. They were going to commission her and use her for something or other.

But going back to the *Hobart*, how long were you there waiting for her to be commissioned?

Not long at all.

Just in those few weeks that you were in Britain what were you doing while you were waiting for the *Hobart* to be commissioned?

Oh well we were getting the *Hobart* ready, you know. She was in a pretty grubby sort of condition so we had to get her working and make sure everything was working. The dockyard people were aboard fixing up anything that needed to be done. We used to get leave when your turn came.

(15.00) So it wasn't a period where you waited for other people to get it done. You were there to do the work.

Yes, yes. Except for the dockyard work that had to be done; they did that.

You were a leading seaman at this stage so what were your responsibilities in particular?

I think I was quartermaster at the time. In port you man the gangway and run the routine of the ship. You have to pipe whatever has got to be piped, you know, and make sure the bugler keeps up to what he has got to do and all that sort of thing, and receive people when they come aboard and report them to the officer of the day who is probably on deck along with you and things like that.

Can you describe ... Do you remember the commissioning ceremony?

No I don't really. ... As far as I can remember we were all lined up on deck in our best uniforms and Mrs Bruce, the wife of S M Bruce who was the High Commissioner in London at the time, and up to that time the ship was called HMS *Apollo* – that is what she was laid down for as – and Mrs Bruce rechristened her, the *Apollo*, HMAS *Hobart*. I don't think we got an extra drink or anything for that, we just had to be there. (laughs)

Did you spend time on leave in Britain?

Yes. My mother had a cousin lived over there. She wrote to them I think and they wrote to me when the ship got in and I went and spent a week with them. They showed me around London and all the different spots, it was very good – very entertaining.

When did you start coming back to Australia?

We left on the ... when did we leave ... I forget now.

Was it much later?

No, it was not long after we commissioned because ... it would have been in October, early October. We had a Royal Navy captain. He came and took charge and brought the ship out to here. We came out via Malta and Gibraltar and through the Mediterranean and the Red Sea back down to Fremantle, Melbourne and back to Sydney where we were given long leave.

How long?

Three weeks at that time.

And so ... he was a British captain. Did you find his methods at all different from Australian?

Oh no. No. There is not much difference between the RN and the RAN as far as all the rules and regulations are the same. He was a very fair man I think.

So you got back to Melbourne and it was sort of late-1938?

Mmm.

What were the duties of the *Hobart* then? Didn't you go down to Hobart itself?

Oh yes we did. At that time, in those days, we used to hold a regatta every year in Hobart – the Fleet Regatta – because all the ships then had rowing boats – cutters and whalers and gigs and things like that – whereas now the modern navy they've got nothing like that so they can't have a regatta.

They can have a speedboat race.

Yes, that's about it. (laughs) So we used to go to North West Bay and have the regatta there over two or three days and much cheering and yelling and carrying on. I took one party to one regatta when I was on the *Australia* and we won the seaman's cutters race. We got a medallion for that.

Did you get any special treatment from the people of Hobart?

Oh no. They were always very good to you; they are very homely people down there. And of course, it's a very pretty place Hobart. I used to do a bit of swimming and play water polo – we would play water polo for the *Hobart* and we played against the *Sydney* while we were down there. The *Sydney* was at one wharf and we were at the other. We played water polo between the two. I remember after the game, I think we beat the *Sydney*, but after the game I went down to the showers and I stood under them for about ten minutes before I could feel the hot water. We were green with cold.

(20.00) It is cold water down there.

Yes. A lot of our chaps used to go in the ... across the Derwent – swim from Hobart across to Bellerive too.

How far was that?

It would be the best part of two miles I suppose.

Wow. ... Where were you based then? You went back to Melbourne?

... Yes, we would probably come back to Melbourne on our way back to Sydney. We'd be going out and doing exercises with all the other ships down to Jervis Bay. You might spend several weeks down there doing gunnery practice and things like that. You might do a `show the flag' cruise right around Australia calling at all the different ports and then back to Sydney again – we were always based in Sydney.

... The sort of duties that you personally were doing, what were they? Were they similar to the duties you had done as an able seaman?

No. As a leading seaman you more or less take charge. ... As a quartermaster you take charge of the wheel at sea and the other able seamen and ordinary seamen came up to take a trick at the wheel and you've got to supervise them. Make sure they put the wheel the right way; and not go chasing the compass card around and around or you get a bellow from the bridge.

Is it difficult to steer a cruiser?

No, not really. No.

Not if you know how.

Once – if there is any manoeuvring to do you generally take over the wheel from the helmsman who might be an able seaman or an ordinary seaman or you just supervise them doing it and, like, for entering or leaving a harbour they generally had the coxswain on the wheel, ... the chief coxswain. He would be responsible then. You still have to run the ship. The ship's boatswain's mate would pipe all the orders over the loudspeaker and everything, whatever was needed. You had to check on all that sort of thing.

Did you have an office?

No. No, we just lived on the mess deck with all the sailors. You were in charge of one of the messes; the leading seaman was always in charge of one of the messes.

You didn't need to have files or a desk or anything like that for your duties?

Oh no.

Come the crisis of September where were you at that time – September 1939?

In Sydney. We'd just started up ... or we went up to Brisbane and there was a German ship in port up there and they must have got word that war was imminent and they had to clear out. They cleared out and we left the same day. We were supposed to have shadowed them because we thought war was imminent too and she would have been a prize. But we didn't. We got back to Sydney before war was declared. I think the Captain knew that war was about to be declared because he ordered steam on the boilers overnight and he told the engineer, who was aboard at that time, not to write out his orders until late that night for the following day when the next watch went below to the engine-room and the stokes and we sailed next morning early. Everyone thought we was going north but we went south and did patrols down Bass Strait.

(25.00) I heard some sort of mention that people were surprised when the *Hobart* sailed and some people were expected home that night.

That's right. Everyone came aboard as normal in the morning off from night leave and they got a shock then because they couldn't tell their loved ones or their families where

they were going – we just sailed and that was it. We patrolled down there, it was sort of anti-submarine patrol and they suspected there may be armed merchant men or something like that – you know, raiders – but nothing like that happened.

So it wasn't very long before you headed to the Middle East was it?

Well, we did a lot of convoy work from here, from Sydney, right around to Fremantle. We took big ships like the *Queen Mary* and the *Aquitania* and all of those, with troops aboard, around as far as Fremantle and I think someone else took them on from there across the Suez.

How many trips did you do of that type?

I wouldn't know really offhand but quite a few.

But then you did go to the Middle East didn't you?

Yes, we came back and we went up via Darwin to Singapore and we got there and the ship was full of mumps. We weren't allowed to leave because the natives there are very susceptible to mumps – it's a very fatal disease for them. So we were given leave in a paddock. (laughs) I remember I was quartermaster. On that night I had to pipe the sad news over the speakers that leave up to Singapore wasn't allowed but the commander or the captain had arranged for some beer to be available over in the paddock next-door to the wharf where we were because we were away at a ... desolate wharf away from all possible contact with others. It was pitch black and they rigged up a few lights but ... There was apparently drains all over this place and by the time they had had a few they were falling down drains and everything – it was quite a night. (laughs)

Sounds like a shamozzle!

Yes. From there we went on to Colombo and we were doing convoy duty from there, up to Bombay and up to Aden, more troop ships and anything that was going that way. So ... we ended up in Bombay and we still had the mumps aboard so to clear 'em out they sent the troops ashore – they were going to in two or three watches – and give them four or five days ashore in a sort of a camp there to try and get the mumps out of the ship. Well by the time the second lot had gone the scheme was called off and we had to go back to convoy duty.

Mumps has got a latency period of two or three weeks so you wouldn't get them out with – like that.

Yes. So I was in the third watch to go so I didn't get the run ashore. From there on we were doing more convoy work.

Where to?

Only between Aden and Colombo mainly. We were more or less berthed in Colombo. We went up once to Trincomalee up in the northern part of Ceylon, there was a naval base there and we escorted the HMAS *Eagle* from there over to Singapore – she was an aircraft carrier – I think she was later sunk in the war. She was to go into dry dock in

Singapore. So we saw her over there safely and brought back a couple of gunboats that were coming from the Middle East, from China Station.

END TAPE 1 – SIDE A

START TAPE 1 – SIDE B

Identification: This is side 2 of the interview with Mr George Glansford. End of identification.

There came a time though, wasn't Aden evacuated at about this time or didn't you take British Somalia?

... That was after I left the ship in Colombo. The Italians had come into the war and they had advanced along there from Hirotrea into British Somaliland and there were British troops there. Our ship was to go to Berbera to give them support and evacuate them if necessary, which did become necessary. Three of our crew members volunteered to take a gun ashore and act as an anti-tank gun. It was actually a saluting gun from our ship and they put it on a 44-gallon drum and used it to hold the Ities back long enough to get the troops ashore –aboard –evacuated. The Black Watch was one of the regiments there and unluckily our three fellows were captured by the Italians and they were released later on in the war. So the evacuation took part. The Italians did come and try and bomb the ship at Berbera but I am a bit sketchy on all of that because I wasn't there but I have heard of it from the other members of the crew.

Where were you at this time?

I was put off in Colombo to go back to Flinders Naval Depot to get a right arm rate. I was to take passage on a ...

(5.00) This was to qualify you as a petty officer?

No. ... To get a gunnery rate – a right arm rate is a gunnery rate or a torpedo rate. Well – in a way it was to qualify for a petty officer because without that you couldn't be made a petty officer. So I was to take passage on HMS *Sirius* which is a light cruiser, single six-inch guns, and we got to Singapore and the *Sirius* was supposed to go down to Darwin – I don't know whether it was to join up with the RAN or what. But – just after we left Singapore to go down, Holland was invaded so the Dutch came into the war then. We were patrolling off Java to try and pick up any German ships that run the blockade from there to get out of Dutch-held territory. So we just used to be steaming up and down, up and down there day and night and eventually we got back to Singapore and that trip to Darwin was called off from the *Sirius* and we were sent down to the naval depot at Singapore. There was only one other chap and myself, a chap called Pop Pa. So eventually we were given orders to go on the *Merkur* which was a Burns Philp ship trading between Singapore and Australia, we had to take passage on there. She was to call in at Batavia on the way down and to hide our identity we were given a chit or some money or something to go ashore and pick up some civilian clothes so that we wouldn't be interned or anything.

Interned by ... where is this?

In Batavia or Java.

Why would you be interned there?

That's because at that time Holland wasn't in the war – she was neutral.

And you were travelling as a merchant man?

Yes. Also there was a prize crew from, I think it was HMS *Kanimbla* had picked up a ship and took her into port as a prize crew and all of those people came down on the *Merkur* at the same time. They had rifles and such and they were hidden up in the bridge ... the Captain had a locker up there and he put all the arms in there.
After leaving Java, the Dutch were in the war, so we were allowed to resume our own identities. (laughs) ... We went all the way down to Melbourne in that ship and ended up down in Flinders Naval Depot where I did two courses in one – a third class and a second class course – and left there and came back to the *Hobart* again in Ceylon in Colombo.

About when would you have got back? It must be near the end of 1941 ...?

No, 1940.

This is 1940? Okay.

At the end of 1941 we were in the Med [Mediterranean].

Right. So what happened then – you are back in Colombo?

I was made petty officer down in Melbourne after I picked up my right arm rate so we came back on three troop transports that left Port Melbourne – the *Christiaan Huygens*, the *Indrapoera* ... and ... what was the other one, another well-known passenger ship that used to trade here, I can't think of it at the moment. We took passage on them and there was quite a draft from depot there going over to the *Hobart* so there was quite a few of us on board. The commodore in charge, I was about the senior rating I think, anyway he asked me to set lookouts – anti-submarine lookouts – day and night. So I had to work out a roster for them to keep watch going over and that's what we did.

Is there any particular way in which people watched out for submarines? I mean, were there techniques of watching?

No, you've just got to be keen eyed. If you've got binoculars, of course, it is a great help which you always do have on a warship. You have lookouts that are looking for aircraft all the time. They might only be a speck up in the sky so you've got to be pretty on the ball, you know.

(10.00) Indeed ... Okay, so you are heading back ...

When I got to Colombo the *Hobart* wasn't there. She was out on some job or other – patrol or convoy or something. We were sent up to the mountains to a camp called Deatalawa and we were up there ten days I think before the *Hobart* came in and we came down again by rail and came aboard. The fellows that came with us, they were there to replace some of the *Hobart* crew who were going to be sent to England to pick up a new

class of destroyer, the N-boats, which they did. The *Hobart* went into dock for much needed repairs and maintenance and while they were in there the ship's company that was on there were sent up to the same camp for a rest and that. We had already been up there. We had to set to and clean her up and do any maintenance that really needed doing – that sort of thing.
When they had all had their rest and leave and the ship was set to sail again, I think we did the same old things, I am not sure. More convoy work and we used to go right up to Suez then. There was one amusing incident there when we were going up the Red Sea. There was an armed trawler from the British Navy that had come across an Italian submarine on the surface. The Ities thought that probably it being a trawler they could probably sink it by gunfire. But anyway, the trawler only had the one gun on the stern, a three pounder or something like that, and apparently the ammunition lock was locked and they couldn't find the fellow with the key. So they were running around and in the meantime the Italians were racing to get to their gun on deck to fire a few shots and the signalman on the bridge had this presence of mind they had a Lewis gun or a machine gun up there and he sprayed the deck of the submarine and kept the Italians away from their gun until the *Moonstone* got her gun going and they put a hole through her conning-tower so she couldn't dive. The Italians all dived overboard and started swimming to the *Moonstone* which only had a crew of about five. ... I don't know how many were on the Italian submarine but she had to keep steaming away from them because they could have overpowered the crew of the *Moonstone*. So she radioed for help and they sent a destroyer over to pick them up. They towed that submarine into Aden and they ... boarded up the hole in the conning-tower because she couldn't dive of course, but she went up in one of the convoys we took up but she only had two speeds. Our engineers couldn't fathom it out apparently. She would go about full ahead and then stop and wait for the convoy to catch up and go ahead again. (laughs) She couldn't slow down to the speed of the convoy.

So you were heading up there and what did you do when you arrived?

We would just – whatever convoy we had, we would leave them there, and we would come back to Colombo. And then I think later we came back to Sydney and had some leave and probably the ship was docked and that's when we went to the Med [Mediterranean], sometime in 1941.

You weren't involved in the operations in Crete and Greece at all?

Where? ... No, we went over to Cyprus and brought back troops and we took troops to Cyprus. The troops came right around the Cape of Good Hope down there and came up and we picked them up at Port Said and took them to Cyprus. But I think they were for reinforcements to Crete. I think Crete was in such a bad way at that time that they never got there. We brought them back and I think they may have gone to Tobruk.

(15.00) You didn't have anything to do with Tobruk?

Yes. We used to go up there periodically and bombard the place. We used to ... leave just after sunset, speed like hell all night and get there, and there was a big gun there we used to call Bardier Bill. We had to try and put that out of action. We weren't on our own; we had other RN ships with us. But that was our contribution to Tobruk.

Did you get Bardier Bill; did you get him?

I think they did, yes. We had aircraft spotting the fallen shot and that sort of thing and ...

At night? How do you see where the shot is falling at night?

Well you can see if it is a hit or not.

Because it makes sparks or explosions?

No, they can drop flares on parachutes.

Right, and there are explosive shells.

Yes. We could fire a star shell which is a shell which is a similar thing. It comes down on a parachute and lights up all the area.

So you were involved in that right through 1941?

No. When Pearl Harbor was invaded in December 1941 ...

Just before you get onto that, there are a number of things I would like to ask about in terms of shipboard life. First of all – could you describe the conditions that you lived under: your living conditions?

During the war they wouldn't be the best of conditions because you are on the *qui view* [*qui vive*] all of the time and ...

On the what?

(laughs) On edge.

What is the *qui view*? How do you spell it?

I don't know. Anyway conditions were all right. There was nothing drastically wrong with it.

What did you sleep on?

If you had your three meals a day, well ... Half the crew would probably sling their hammocks but not everyone. Most of them would sleep on the stools or on the mess table or something like that because the weather wasn't cold, when you are in the tropics like that. You are all ready to jump up if you have got to go to action stations of a sudden. You know, you get call to action stations in the middle of the night or anytime at all. If you got a submarine scare or aircraft or anything at all; so you would have to be ready.

Through that 1941 period was it a dangerous period from your memory of it?

Not really, although a lot of our ships were sunk by German aircraft. You know, Stuka dive-bombers and that sort of thing. But the Italian fleet was bottled up. They never made any attempt to come out and attack the Mediterranean fleet. They sent out ships a couple of times but then we had to try and trap them and send a decoy one way while they

trapped the others and that is how the *Sydney* got the *Bartolomeo Colleoni* and sunk her which was an Italian cruiser. They think our destroyers sunk quite a few of the Italian destroyers.

But you don't remember ever being under much pressure on the *Hobart*?

No, not really – not then.

Right, we will come to the Pacific in a minute. Well coming back to ... did you have a watch; everyone had a watch or not?

Oh yes, everybody had a watch. Even when you weren't closed up at action stations you all had a watch which was called a cruising watch. The guns were all sort of half manned and the other half would be sleeping or the other two-thirds of the crew would be sleeping. But there would always be a certain number at the guns to get them instantly into use. Then if action stations sounded they just all went to their stations and carried on the good work.

(25.00) Were you dealing with aircraft very much in the Med?

No. Mostly we were attacked while we were in harbour in Alexandria, mainly in night raids. There was one raid at Suez where the *Georgic* was bombed and hit and we sent boats over there to take off any passengers and crew what was there and the captain of the *Georgic* ran her aground. She was on fire. I think they gave her a pretty hectic time the next day – the German bombers – but they didn't come over too much during the daytime. That *Georgic* was later used as the royal yacht that came out here after the war – brought the Queen out. They did a lot of mine laying along the Suez Canal, the planes. They used to have what they call acoustic mines and they used to explode with any noise or vibration as you went over them. But the British rigged up nets that were sunk below the water and they used to come up onto big poles all the way along the Suez on both sides and every morning they used to lift those nets and if there were any mines in them, they'd detonate them all and make them safe. I remember we were going ... there were mines in the Suez Canal when we went through there going into the Med and they had spotters all along the Canal and if they could see where a mine was dropped into the Canal they'd put a marker on the bank – like a red flag or some such thing. So when you was approaching that you'd sort of stopped all engines, stopped all noise – fans, everything in the ship – and just glided over that position until you got safely clear and then you could go ahead with your engines again. And that was pretty scary. I remember in our mess, the messman was doing the washing up and he was drying the knives and forks and he would dry them and throw them into the drawer and somebody yelled out, `Hey, cut that out. Do you want to blow us up?' (laughs) So we got through there all right.

Just coming back to the accommodation: you had hammocks that people could use if they wanted to and otherwise people slept around. And how much room would each person have?

Oh adequate. Do you mean for sleeping?

Yes. ... You would be sleeping in rooms with lots of men ... in each room?

They were on the mess decks which were a big open space like this – bigger than this of course – and there would be bars across where you would hang your hammocks onto. The hammocks would be fairly close together. You couldn't put your head between them probably, that is how close they were. But they were very comfortable to sleep in because they moved with the ship you know, whereas if you were laying on a table or a bunk or anything you would be just as likely to be tipped out with the roll – movement of the ship. So they were really comfortable to sleep in. There were so many messes to each part of ship like the forecastle, foretop, maintop and quarterdeck. They were the four parts of the ship and each part of ship had its own mess deck with about maybe six messes in and about fifteen men or more or less to each mess. There would be a leading seaman in charge of each mess and they used to have two men detailed as to what they called cook of the mess, they used to have to go to the galley and get the food in big dishes and bring it down and dish it out on to plates and that and have it ready for when dinner was piped or when the meals were piped.

What sort of food would you be getting?

We had very good food all through the war really. Maybe a few spuds at times but mainly, on the whole, it was very good.

And dessert?

Dessert, yes.

What sort of things for dessert?

We might have fruit in jelly ... with a custard on top and things like that; puddings – it was quite good.

Just getting back to the main course. What – you'd have meat – how often a day – once a day, twice a day, three times a day?

Maybe twice a day. We might have stews or something – meat in stews and for breakfast they might have herrings in tomato sauce. We would only get eggs probably once or twice a week because you couldn't always get them.

What about fresh fruit?

Yes, if you were in a place where you could get it, yes, you'd get fresh fruit. Bread was cooked on board. You always got fresh bread- rolls, things like that.

Were there canteens where you could buy sweets, chocolates, things like that?

Yes, you wouldn't get much fruit in the canteen but if you were in a place where they could get it they would get fruit. Yes, you would get all that sort of thing – cigarettes, chocolates and shaving gear, anything like that. In the canteens they used to sell cold drinks, you know.

(25.00) When you were at sea you were dry, weren't you?

We were always dry until the war when we got a beer ration. But the RN used to have a rum ration. That was tradition with them all the time. They used to get their rum ration at midday.

The beer ration, when did you get that?

Generally at around four o'clock, between four and six or something like that.

Would you have that at sea?

Yes. Until it ran out of course.

... Did it normally run out after a while?

Well, we didn't get it in the Mediterranean. We only got it out here in the Pacific when we could meet up with one of our store ships and they'd bring the beer up when we were out in the Pacific. We might come into the Great Barrier Reef somewhere there and pick it up. The store ships would meet us there and give us our stores. We would work all flat out getting all of the stores aboard, from morning till dusk, and then the store ship would shove off and go back and then we would get our ration.

So you would have enough for, what, a fortnight?

Oh yes, about that.

Now what about sports and exercise-type activities?

We used to play a game called deck hockey. We used to have a puck made out of rope – it was sort of round about four or five-inch circle – and you had to belt this through into the goals, you know. It was a pretty rough game I can tell you. There were sore shins everywhere. The officers had a team and the men, usually each part of ship, had a team. The torpedo men would have a team; the stokers would have a team, and they used to play one another. It was all much rivalry because the officers would get a pretty big doing over but they were good at it too and they gave as much as they got.

What was the feeling like between officers and men?

During the war, I should say, it was very good, yes. It was a bit more relaxed than in peacetime. Peacetime it was all pomp and spit and polish, you know. But I think the officers realised that their lives were just as much at risk as the men on the ship as well so they had to keep their position of course and whatever they were in charge of had to be done properly. But I think they were more relaxed towards the men.

There must have been times when arguments got serious or got intense given the tight living conditions?

Not really. Now and then you might get a blow-up. You might get a fight down on the mess deck but it didn't amount to much, you know. Others would separate it and then they'd cool down and that was it. They wouldn't ever be carried on.

How would it normally be solved? By the men themselves or by a petty officer or a leading seaman?

Yes, it might be the leading seaman or it might be the men in the mess deck, their mates. They'd just separate them and tell them to cut it out and not be silly and stupid that nothing would be gained by it and it was generally worked out all right. I don't think there was anything ever that I know of was ever really serious.

Do you ever remember any discipline problems of any sort?

Only coming aboard drunk or coming aboard late or something like that. But, no, not really.

Why do you think this is? I mean that is quite an unusual thing. You have got nearly 1,000 men.

Yes. I don't know. They seemed to realise that it was for the good of the ship, you know, and I can't recall anything really serious for discipline. The men are mustered in the morning at – what – six o'clock or something, maybe scrub the decks or something like that. Some of them used to sleep in and they wouldn't get there in time. That was the sort of disciplinary action that had to be taken, if it wasn't they would just play on it and do it again. But those sorts of things didn't bring much punishment. Might be extra work or things like that. Nobody really refused to fire a gun or strike a superior officer or anything really serious.

A happy ship.

It was a happy ship.

END TAPE 1 – SIDE B

START TAPE 2 – SIDE A

This is side 3 of the interview with George Glansford. End of identification.

The situation of people wanting to go for a walk round and about, I mean, how much did people move around the ship?

If they were off duty, ... it was quite a thing for exercise to walk up and down, up and down on the decks and gain exercise that way. Especially after your evening meal if it was – had been a hot day and a cool night and a nice sea breeze blowing that the ship was making and the weather wasn't too bad. You could take a walk up and down, up and down on the ship. The officers used to do it on their end of the ship which was the quarterdeck and the sailors used to do it up their end.

How much would you mix with people from other messes?

Oh quite a lot, yes. Everybody sort of got to know one another and you just were sort of one big happy family. You knew what their weaknesses were and what their strong points were and things like that. There was always rivalry amongst them – ... slinging off at one another and things like that.

> The interview that I was doing this morning, the suggestion was that that particular person didn't really make contact with people outside of his own mess. He was very young. That is part of it I suppose, but he said you would often not know most of the other people on the ship.

Oh well, that might have been in his day but ...

> Well he was very young and very junior. ... But you felt that you got around?

Oh yes, I sure did. Yes. I used to know people in other parts of the ship quite well. You know, you knew those who were, we used to call them chooks.

> What are chooks?

They are sort of people that don't conform.

> ... What sort of things would a nonconformist do?

They were sent to do something – wash the paintwork or something like that – and he would wander off and you would have to go looking for him and things like that, you know. Just didn't really take to discipline that well.

> When you were a petty officer ... how much were you mixing with other petty officers? Were you staying with them or were you staying with ...

Well, at one stage all the petty officers were in one mess. But then after we did a refit they put an extra mess in for petty officers who were captains of the tops and second captains of the tops so that they all had their own thing to talk about and, you know, the best way to do things and things like that, amongst one another. The other mess was then used ... for petty officer cooks and supply assistants and writers and people like that. So they were separated from, more or less, the seamen.

> The seamen would have living with them they would have leading seamen, that would be the most senior person actually in their mess deck?

Yes, that's right.

> So ... your mess would be, presumably, a bit better equipped than their mess?

Well, we used to get a messman who used to set out the meals and draw the meals and do the washing up and all that sort of thing. We didn't have to do that – petty officers, chief petty officers. But whereas the seamen in their own messes, all of the stokers and so forth, they used to have what they call a cook of the mess who used to draw the meals, put it out then wash up afterwards, and that cook of the mess used to rotate through all of the numbers in the mess.

> How would the petty officers get on with the officers? Was that a source of tension sometimes? Sometimes you hear about it, don't you?

Sometimes there might be, yes. They made a lot of officers during the war who just came in from outside jobs, they were made sub-lieutenants and eventually became lieutenants but they wouldn't have known a wave from a RAN or something. (laughs)

(5.00) I can see the situation. Yes, some smart young bloke – contacts, maybe he has got a university degree but not much else – and he is in the position of dealing with petty officers who have got there, say, after ten years of service – school of hard knocks. I can see a bit of conflict in that.

Well, if they were shrewd they used to probably get to know the petty officer well and sound him out and ask questions and learn. But if they put on a pompous act, well they would get nothing. That sort of thing – it would put them up on their high horse sort of thing. Most of them were very decent blokes though that I came across.

What about the captains? How important is a captain on a ship?

He is `the' man.

It seems an obvious question but I would like to hear about it.

We believe that Captain Howden saved us time and time again when we were ... getting bombed up in Bangka Strait going to and from Singapore. He used to lay down and watch the bombs leaving the bomber and take evasive action and he was always right.

How do you mean he used to lay down?

... He had a chair that he could lay back in and have his binoculars up on the aircraft and the bomb-doors would be open and he would just watch and as soon as they let go, he would probably wait a certain time and then order the ship to port or starboard ... with full rudder on and increase speed and all that sort of thing and dodge the bombs. We never got hit once. So they put it all down to him, you know.

You said at one stage off tape before that the *Hobart* was a lucky ship. Was that the feeling at the time?

Yes. We were up in Java just before Java fell, that is why we didn't go in the battle of the Java Sea when the *Exeter* and the *Perth* and those others took on the Japs and most of them were sunk, and we went alongside an oiler in Java and the Japs put on a raid and we were taking the oil from the oiler and a bomb went right through this – she was an old rusty ship – the bomb went right through her without exploding and all the seawater got into the oil. We couldn't take it then, it was no use to us. So we had to let go the tanker, I think they cut the wires with axes to get away quick, and when the raid was over I think the Captain went ashore and tried to drum up some oil. By this time most of all the merchant ships in port had gone, he'd got rid of those, and I think we were told to go around to a place at the bottom end of Sumatra to try and get oil there. When we got there we found out it was aviation spirit – not oil. So we had to get away from there, we had to try to get to Colombo. It was the only place we could get oil.
On the way we picked up survivors in Sumatra – Lang, I think, or some name like that, some coastal place. ... Destroyers went in and brought them out and we took them on to Colombo.

Before we get onto that, just dealing with the late-1941 period when you were still in the Mediterranean, when did you get the news of the Japanese bombing Pearl Harbor and coming into the war?

Straight away practically.

And when did it begin to have an impact on you?

... I think Curtin was the Prime Minister at the time and he asked for us to come back and we were despatched back here because they knew then that the Japs were coming into the war and we needed our fleet out here.

(10.00) So you got sent back pretty well immediately?

Yeah, pretty well immediately.

The first major thing that you got involved with was, what, the evacuation at Singapore?

We used to take convoys up to Singapore and ... I don't know if we took troops – no, convoys, I think. We were up there the day before it fell or pretty near to the time Singapore fell and had to try and get out all those that were up there. There was a few merchant ships got away with people aboard.
There was a funny incident: we were alongside the wharf there and ... one of the wharf sheds was full of sewing machines and somebody on board got wind of this and all the fellows were going off the ship to collect a sewing machine – I think the ship went down about three feet in the water with all these sewing machines. (laughs) The Captain ordered them all to be taken back, well I suppose a certain percentage went back. Next they discovered one of the sheds was full of beer. So there was disciplinary action taken over that lot who went and got beer and got a bit tipsy but weren't in a full state when the next air raid came over sort of thing. So they were dealt with.

How often were the air raids coming over?

When we were there you might get a couple in an hour and then you might get an hour respite and have a couple more. They were bombing all of the wharves and places they could, you know. ... Captain Howden went ashore and picked a jeep for himself and brought it back and put it on board because they were smashing all the engine blocks and all the cars that were there and trucks and everything like that. And we had to send a number of fellows down to the naval base at Jahore and they smashed all of the rum there so the Japs wouldn't get it and go berserk and brought back anything they thought was worthy of bringing back.

... It fell on February 15th, how close to the end were you there?

Oh I don't know actually. A couple of days I suppose. There is an island off Sumatra called Bangka Island and between that is Bangka Strait. You haven't got much room for manoeuvring there and we always used to get bombed there. One day we were bombed there the whole day long – almost from dawn till dusk – and never got a hit. There were remnants of the Dutch fleet at the time. One of the destroyers ran aground on a reef there

near one of the islands and the Japs bombed hell out of that but we never got a scratch luckily. We had a lot of near misses; some shrapnel came aboard and punctured the funnels and different parts of the superstructure but we never got any direct hits at all.

> ... Back in Singapore did you see a lot of panic? What was the atmosphere?

We weren't allowed ashore there. We were only on board ship. We had to man the guns all the time because you would never know when the raid was coming, you see. No, we never sighted anything of much of the troops at all, only those who were going around smashing anything that might be of use to the Japs or things like that. As to the civilian population, I don't think we saw much of them at all. They were probably all in Raffles having a drink. If they couldn't believe it, they thought Singapore was impregnable and that was it. There was apparently a lot of blunders of what I have read over the years.

> So you left Singapore and obviously headed south, not north, and came back where? To Darwin, Perth?

I think we came back to Sydney. Yes, I think we came back to Sydney.

> What happened back in Sydney? It is a rather dismal time in Australian history, the ... things are really desperate.

Well, we formed up, I think, with the Americans and became part of a task force with them. Things were starting to move in the Pacific at that time. ... We went up patrolling off northern Australia off the southern end of New Guinea and around those places keeping out of range of land-based aircraft.

(15.00) You were involved in the battle of the Coral Sea, of course?

We were there, yes. ... The Coral Sea was fought and nobody saw much of each other. It was more or less a carrier war and the two carriers were more or less trying to sink each other while we were sort of steaming between the American fleet and the Jap fleet. So you can imagine the carriers behind us and the Japs over the horizon down that way and we were sort of in between. But we did get a few air raids, torpedo bombers and such.

> Including the Americans.

We were with the Americans, yes.

> No but the Americans accidentally ... didn't they sort of strafe or bomb?

Oh I believe they did drop some bombs from some of their bombers because they were using land-based aircraft from Townsville or somewhere there at that time and they dropped a few bombs around us but didn't do any damage. I think we did more damage to the Yanks. A couple of the planes flew between us and the USS *Chicago* and when we were firing at the planes some of our shells hit the *Chicago*. Pompom shells; didn't kill anybody but put a few dents in her I think, that was all.

> So it was rather a strange war the battle of the Coral Sea?

Yes, apart from aircraft we never fired a shot and I don't think any of the Yankie ships did either. It was only mainly aircraft from carrier to carrier. Both sides had losses.

As I understand it you did service along the Queensland coast for a while?

Yes. Every time we used to go out on patrol we would come back ...

... Called Curtin's koalas – not allowed to be shot at.

Yes, that's right. I heard that, yes. But we didn't know that at the time; somebody else must have raked that up. (laughs)

So, you were based in Cairns or where?

No, we would just be behind the reef – anchored.

Anchored, that is a bit boring.

We played deck hockey there to keep the troops amused and that sort of thing and we were playing when we came through the reef one night and one bloke got excited and got knocked over the side when one of the hockey players bumped into him and the destroyer behind picked him up, so he had a good time on there. They had ice-cream and everything that we didn't have.

Was it an American destroyer?

Yes.

So how long were you based along the Queensland coast there?

I think quite a while because they were waiting to see which way the Japs were going to jump, more or less. We did patrols up around Milne Bay and places like that. Then the next big event I think was Guadalcanal. We had to go over to New Zealand and pick up all the troops there and we convoyed them in their transports to one of the Fijian islands there and we had a dummy run at landing and yet the Japs never got an inkling of all of that – their intelligence couldn't have been all that good. It took all day to do this dummy run; the landing and landing-craft and landing on the beaches, bombardments and all that sort of thing and then when we did get to Guadalcanal we took them all by surprise. They just didn't expect it.

But it was still a heavy fight.

Oh it was, yes. They were well entrenched there; they had an airfield. I don't know what time we got there but we opened up with everything. I think it might have been dusk ... no, it couldn't have been. It must have been dawn – early in the morning. They did a terrific bombardment and then plane bombings and things like that to get them back away from the beaches for the troops to land. But when they did land they met stiff opposition. The Yankee planes put the airfield out of action. They still had other airfields on the other islands, Rabaul and places like that. We used to get air raids there while the landings were still going on.

(20.00) They also used to come – what was it called, the Tokyo express every night – didn't a contingent, a convoy of Japanese naval ships ... head down around that area and then go back?

Well they say they did but we never saw them. They used to send destroyers down with reinforcements to try and reinforce Guadalcanal. Then when the landings were well underway, the next day or the next night again, the Japs somehow got there without being detected by any American planes that were out scouting or anything like that. They sailed through down near Savo Island and they sank the *Canberra* and three American cruisers that night. They call it the battle of Savo Island, although the *Canberra* didn't sink straight away, the Yanks had to sink her the next day, she was that badly disabled.

Were you nearby? How far away was the *Hobart*?

We were about eleven miles away, up the other end. Where we landed was sort of in a cove and Savo was down that way and we were up the other end with the *Australia* and another Yank, I think it was the *San Won*, a Yankee-like cruiser and down that end was the *Canberra* and about four or five American cruisers guarding that end. The Japs came in and just put them away.

... You could see the action going on?

We could hear and see flashes and hear gunfire but we thought it was a bombardment by our own ships probably onto the Guadalcanal itself backing up some landing or other. So it took a long time ...

Were you shocked?

Oh yes, we were shocked to hear about the *Canberra* the next morning. It was put over our speakers, you know.

What were the casualties on the *Canberra*?

Very big, very big indeed. I don't know how many got away but I think a Yankee destroyer went alongside and took off those that could but she was badly hit and damaged with gunfire and torpedoes but she wouldn't sink. The Yankee destroyer had fired something like 200 shells at her next morning and couldn't sink her. But one of the others thought – got the wrong idea – and thought that the destroyer was in a scrap with a Jap and fired five torpedoes at her and that put her down.

... All these operations you are talking about are combined operations with American fleets, aren't they.

Yes.

What did you think of the Americans as a naval force?

Oh well, pretty good, yes.

Did you find their methods of discipline different?

Yes, they were different but we had liaison officers aboard from them and they had them from us to interpret signals and different orders and things like that. We got along pretty good.

There was never any serious misunderstandings?

No, I don't think so, no.

What about friction; ... Yankee ways could irritate Australians in other situations in Second World War?

... No, we all seemed to get along all right – the navy. I think the army had a lot of friction. After Guadalcanal was consolidated ...

That was a naval operation wasn't it – marines going ashore rather than army?

... They gave all their original survivors for that leave down in Brisbane and our fellows were going north on the train and they were coming south and they said a few things and they had a big battle for Brisbane there. It was very, very serious. Two trains got stuck into one another.

(25.00) Yes, I heard of that. So after the Guadalcanal what was the next major operation that you were involved in?

I don't know that we were in any other ones.

What about the torpedoing? Were you on board then? That is mid-1943 isn't it?

We were doing a sweep out from Espiritu Santos which was a Yankee base over in the Pacific there, a small island, and we were doing this sweep up north. They had heard about some Japs coming south or something and we were supposed to go out and see if we could meet up with them or anything. I don't know whether we got a recall back to base or whether they gave it up as a bad job but anyway we were zig-zagging back – you go five minutes this way, five minutes that way and five minutes back – and we were with the *Australia* and I think three Yankee destroyers. About a quarter to seven that night we were all sitting down at our meal – supper we used to call it – when we got hit. They reckon the Jap fired from about ten mile away. They had very, very long torpedoes; the Japs had long-range torpedoes. It must have been an acoustic one and apparently he fired at the *Australia* but being on the zig-zag we altered course and we copped it. It made straight for the noise of our propellers and nearly blew the stern off the *Hobart*. I had my life jacket down alongside of me, `Mae West' we used to call them, and she just went up in the air and came down ... as if some giant hand had just lifted her up and put her down again. All the lights went out, couldn't see a thing and I couldn't find this damn life jacket alongside of me on the seat.

Where were you at the time?

We were in the mess having our meal – quarter to seven – and of course by the time we got our wits about us I went over to my locker to get something and I had a jar of

molasses in there that I had been taking because I had a bit of an upset stomach and somebody recommended it, so I had bought it some weeks before in Brisbane I think, and my locker was just one mass of molasses. (laughs) You have never seen anything like it. ...

Were the lights back on?

No, I had to put my hand in and copped it all. But we all had to go to our action stations and, you know, wait for news. It was just our fortune that we never stopped another one because I think another one would have put us away.

What were the casualties?

Eighteen dead.

They didn't all die then did they? Did they die then?

Yes. And quite a few injured of course.

Moving around the ship with the lights off, were people trained to do this?

No, the engineer people got secondary lighting on; they got that on pretty quickly. So we had that on and could make our way around with that.

And you limped back where to? What happened?

The *Australia* ordered two of the destroyers to stay with us and she took off with the other one and hightailed it back to port ... to the base and we were dead in the water. Two of our screws were lost, I think the other one was bent – the propeller shaft – and we had one that we could use. We couldn't steer; we had to steer by that one engine from the bridge. That's how we got back to Espiritu Santos. The destroyers ... couldn't find any trace of the sub which apparently survived the war and he related the ...

END TAPE 2 – SIDE A

START TAPE 2 – SIDE B

Identification. This is side 4 of the interview with George Glansford. End of identification.

So you were limping in the water and you were operating on one engine and somehow or other managing to steer and you got back, where?

To Espiritu Santos which was an American naval base where they had repair ships and all that sort of thing. But prior to this our stern seemed to be just hanging on a thread and the Captain ordered steel hawses to be put right around the stern and hauled tight to give it some bit of stability which he did which was done and I think it probably helped and we got back in and the Yanks took over with their welding and cutting machines and welded more plates onto the side where the torpedo hit and stiffened it all up and made it seaworthy enough to put to sea again and we limped back to Sydney on that one engine and one screw. I think the *Warramunga* and the *Arunta*, two Australian destroyers, came back with us. It took us a long time because we could only make about seven or eight

knots. So we got back and went into dry dock in Sydney. And I suppose seventy-five per cent of the crew then was drafted to other ships.

But not you?

Not me, luckily. I stayed there all the time she was in dock. There was one bad incident: one of the dockyard people was burning away down there with his acetylene torch and struck a charge of cordite – it exploded and killed him. Then all of the dockyard people went on strike for danger money which I think they got.

Why was the cordite there? Why was there a charge of cordite? ...

It was jammed in with all of the crunched metal and everything. Where the torpedo hit was just above the after-turret or just about abreast of it really, near the officers' ward room, the warrant officers' mess and underneath them was the magazine you see. So this one must have got discharged in a bag, it must have got caught up in all of the twisted metal and everything and when they were cutting it away – it was just bad luck he came across it – and it exploded.

What were you doing during this period because it was about four or five months wasn't it? ...

Just keeping the ship shipshape more or less.

(5.00) But were people still living on the ship?

Oh yes. Everything; the galley for food and water and all of that, it all comes from electricity and everything all comes from the dockyard you see.

You were in dry dock were you?

Yes. The only things that weren't working of course would be the toilets and you would have to go ashore for those which there were plenty of ashore there. No, it was just like being on board any other time, you just do what you had to do. You could do a lot of maintenance that needed doing like boat davits and things like that that had to be made sure ... that ... got a bit rusty or something and weren't working as well as they should be and things like that.

So you spent quite a bit of time there and then you headed north again, I think to Manus Island?

Yes, and New Guinea – Hollandia.

You had a long period there where, as I understand it, there was very little shore leave at all for about nine months apart from a half a day in Hollandia and half a day in Manila, that was about all ...

Yeah that is true. We were doing a lot of bombardments up there at the time and there was nowhere to go ashore anyway – nothing to see. We did a couple of runs with one of the RN cruisers, I think, off Wewak. Did a bombardment there.

Of the bombardments that you were doing were there any that were particularly – Balikpapan, was that a difficult operation?

Before Balikpapan there was Cebu City which was in the Philippines. That was, I think, our first one and we bombarded there and they landed troops there. Then we went to Tarakan and did the same thing. We bombarded there. These things took you know a few days each, to make sure the troops were consolidated and they could call upon our support if necessary for more bombardments. We used to have aircraft for faller shot and used to get pretty well on target straight away. Those landings all came off pretty well. We went to Brunei.

What about Manila? Did you go ashore at Manila?

... Yes, yes I did. We pulled into Manila and the whole bay was littered with sunken ships; all you would see is a funnel and mast sticking out of the water you know – all sorts of merchant ships mainly. We got in there and there were bodies floating around in the water everywhere ... from aerial, probably, bombings and things like that. Manila was just a shambles. The Japs had put the torch through a lot of it but the big hotels and that they just blew the bottom floors out and let the rest collapse down. There was a bridge across from one side of Manila to the other, up a bit of a river or a creek there – that was all wrecked. And things like that. The people were stunned. There were some terrible sights amongst the people, you know, the atrocities that the Japs and that sort of thing. There wasn't much to do or see except for war damage. We weren't allowed off all night, we just had several hours leave – come back. Then we went on these bombardments.

Were the bombardments dangerous; did you feel that they were dangerous?

Not to us, no.

Obviously people on the other end of the shells ...

Oh yes, that's true, that's what the idea was. Make them keep their heads down while everyone else is coming in.

What about Tarakan, that apparently went wrong to some extent?

No, I think our part of it was all right. ... I think one Yankee destroyer hit a mine there and blew the bottom out of her. She went down with some loss of life but otherwise, I think militarily, it went off all right. Mainly, nearly all of our own troops in these jobs in the 9th Division or something.

(10.00) Did you like working with Australian troops?

Oh yes.

Did you prefer working with Australian troops?

It didn't make any difference as long as they all went in and got the job done, you know. That part of it I don't think was in our thoughts at all. Although I suppose we probably thought it better to have our own troops there. At Balikpapan, I don't know if that was

before Brunei or after, but we went to Brunei and did bombardments there and landed troops and we did the same at Balikpapan. We were there for a few days and I think we used up just about every shell we had in the ship on that bombardment and we had to go all the way back to Manus to get more ammunition. After we got that we did another one at ... some pockets of resistance along the New Guinea coast and helped the troops there.

What about the Kamikaze pilots?

Well we were lucky there I suppose. We used to use our six-inch guns in a way to try and stop them if they were coming at us. By using a six- inch with shortened fuses on the shells and making them burst in front of the aircraft it would be sufficient to knock them out of the sky you know. But I don't know whether they thought we were too small to have a go at or what but the Australia copped a couple of Kamikazes and wiped out I think a couple of their four-inch guns. Of course, the American ships, they went for the carriers mainly. But, I don't know. I was down below; I couldn't see any of this action going on.

Were you normally down below?

Yes, I was in charge of the high angle table, which is HAGS transmitting station. The data used to be sent down from the director to the table and then it was passed on to the guns for fuse setting and elevation and bearings and all that sort of thing. It was all worked out by this table that I was in charge of.

Did that mean that you had a fairly good idea of what was happening in the battle?

No. You wouldn't know if you hit anything unless the people up in the director or someone up on deck told you, `We got one' or something like that. This was all anti-aircraft stuff we were in. The big guns had another table, the six-inch, which was a bigger thing again. It had its own separate table. Every time the guns fired I had to mark a plot by just pressing the plunger you know, so that when it was all analysed after they could work out how it went.

... You were involved in some quite hectic action in this late-1944, 1945 period?

Yes, but not really any surface action. We didn't have any ship to ship battles as it were. The Yanks did all that mainly. Although their ship to ship actions weren't that many either. It was all mainly aircraft carriers. Although they had backup fleets away from the carriers, sort of battleships and cruisers and destroyers, the Japs had the same thing, especially at Midway where the turning point came and the Yanks sunk three carriers in five minutes there. It was just a bit of luck because they made a mistake in sending off torpedo bombers without any fighter cover – the Yanks – and when they got to the target, the aircraft carriers, the aircraft carriers' fighters came down to mix it with the torpedo bombers to start shooting them out of the sky – I don't think many got back – but in the meantime the dive-bombers had come from another carrier. They had no resistance from any fighter cover whatever and they just picked off the carriers. It was three of them in five minutes; it was just uncanny. If the fighters had stayed up top there it might have

been a different thing, although they had to stop the torpedo bombers probably. The torpedo bombers are such a slow plane; they have got to get so low and they have got to be steady on a course to fire their torpedo in the direction they want it to go. You can't make it turn left or right and that's when they are vulnerable or when they have released the torpedo and they try to make height to get away. They can be vulnerable then to anti-aircraft fire.

(15.00) So the next big major event of course is presumably going to Tokyo, is that the case?

Yes, ... we were up in the Philippines at Lady Gulf I think when we got the order to go up there when the atom bomb was dropped and everything finally came to an end and surrender came about. All the fleet went up to Tokyo Bay and the signing was made on the *Missouri*. It was a cold bitter day too. We never got any leave there. Some of our fellows took away a sailing boat and managed to contact a few of the natives and get some souvenirs that way but on the whole we didn't.

The people who did that, was that quite an amicable contact?

They were sort of Japanese fishermen, I don't think they really knew much about it as far as the war was concerned. They probably ...

They must felt there was something on with all the ships in the harbour.

Yes, it was. It was a great sight; a tremendous sight and not only that but overhead aircraft flew over for at least two hours without stopping. You never seen such power and amount of ships and aircraft. One of the best things about it was on the way up we were given permission to open the ship up – open up all the dead lights and put the lights on on deck and everything. It was like sailing on a passenger liner in peacetime. Although we were warned that some of the Japs might not have heard about it, some of the subs or something, that hostilities had ceased.

So you came out of Tokyo and I understand you hit a big storm on the way back?

I don't think so; if we did I don't remember it. We brought a lot of Australian troops back with us. They took passage back.

These are POWs?

No. They were just personnel from, I don't know where they had come from, landing craft or something, they were up there for the signing maybe.

But I think there were some POWs on board when you came back?

It is possible but I don't remember them. We were still close up at our gun stations coming back. They didn't relax that sort of thing because they didn't trust the Japs to be fully aware that things were over because I believe even some of the islands, the Japs used to still come down and try and get food off the occupying forces and that. They were still there, they hadn't been all rounded up.

Well, the last one surrendered just a few years ago wasn't it?

Yes. That is so.

So you came back to Australia and you didn't feel tempted to stay in the navy?

No, not really. I had had nearly eighteen years of it so I thought that was enough. If I had have stayed on I would probably have got kicked out because it is all this new sophisticated stuff where you want a university degree or something like that.

One of the things I didn't ask you about was the radar system which I understand was very important on the *Hobart*?

Yes it was, it always was. It gives you warning of aircraft approach or you could use it for navigation, you could use it for surface ships. Yes, it was very good. Often it had us alerted, you were always ready for the Jap planes when they came.

What was the feeling about the radar when it first came in? I understand it didn't work very well at first?

No, it didn't at first. Everyone thought it was a flash in the pan ... (laughs) but there were some great inventions came out during the war like that and a degaussing gear which was put around ships to nullify acoustic mines and that sort of thing. Set up a field that nullified the mines.

(20.00) Did you feel that the Australian navy was properly used? I mean it wasn't ever used for, unlike the air force or the army, it was always integrated with other nations.

We would not have been strong enough on our own. We had to be integrated with the others and Britain couldn't give us any help. They had lost the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse* up in the Bay of Bengal through aircraft attack and I thing the *Eagle* was sunk later on in that area and some other cruisers. So we didn't get any help from the Royal Navy until right near the end when they could spare ships to come here because although the Italians didn't come out in the Med, the Mediterranean fleet had to be there just in case they did and they had bottled up the French fleet in Alexandria and up in Morocco somewhere, Tunis, Tunisia and so they had to keep somebody watching all those because most of them were Vichy-minded I think at the time. So we couldn't have done much on our own.

So you came back in 1945 and you decided that you were ready to go. Had you got married or anything like that at this stage?

I was married early in my career. I joined the navy in 1928 and I was married in 1933.

It must have been difficult for your family right through this period?

Oh yes, it always is I suppose. You never know when somebody is going to knock on the door in uniform and hand you a telegram or something like that. My father died while I was ... out in the Pacific – I couldn't do much about that. I got a telegram about that, or a

signal. Yes, I suppose the families have to put up with a lot, but still, they always do in war.

Do you have children?

I did have but my daughter died when she was about four so we never had any more. That was in peacetime actually.

Correspondence, was that fairly regular, not a problem?

Fairly regular, yes. Especially when we were in the Med. I think it could be flown over pretty safely and then again out in the Pacific we used to meet up with store ships and tankers and ammunition ships and things like that, they would probably bring mail – it was always a big event.

So you got demobilised. Had you worked out what you were going to do?

No I hadn't. I took a few months off to stabilise myself and have a bit of home life.

Did you feel a bit battered or how did you feel after all of this?

No, I didn't feel too bad at all. It was just something new because I didn't have much civilian life before I went in the navy, you know I was only young. Then they brought out this CRTS training course. We used to go full time and do your training which would normally take about three years and we used to do it in six months. It was all repatriation stuff; it was paid for by the Government and it was quite a good scheme. I could have gone to university, I could have done anything really but I settled to do a carpentry course and that was it. I ended up leading hand and foreman on a few jobs later on. I enjoyed it.

What did you feel that the whole experience did for you, anything in particular or nothing at all or just an interesting episode?

You do get a feeling of camaraderie, you relate to all of the fellows you knew and all of that sort of thing. Afterwards it is something you just don't feel you can let go of. That is why we have reunions and things like that Australia-wide. So I think that is one good aspect of it. You don't feel any remorse or anything like that. Most of them are getting old now and they are all passing away like nine-pins. It is just something that is natural; you can't do much about.

END TAPE 2 – SIDE B