



Australian War Memorial

Sound Collection

TRANSCRIPT OF ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

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Commodore Allen Nelson Dollard DSC RAN (Rtd) as Commanding Officer HMAS Murchison, Korea 1951-1952, interviewed by Lieutenant Commander Tony Hughes RANR

Recorded

at: Canberra, ACT
on: 22 November 2002
by: Bill Brassell, AWM Staff

Description

Dollard speaks of his entering the Royal Australian Naval College at Jervis Bay in 1932; following graduation, his training in various ships as a midshipman; his sea-going experience as a junior officer up to the outbreak of war in 1939; operational experiences in the Mediterranean Sea, later the Pacific Ocean, during the Second World War; instructional duties immediately post-war, then the pressures on the navy to produce ships and crews for the Korean War, while still demobilising from the Second World War; taking command of HMAS Murchison a frigate and his first command, for Korean service; frigate substitution for destroyers; limited refitting and training for the Korean deployment; reaction to the extreme cold of Korean waters and an initial problem with the fuel pumps on the first patrol; operations by HMAS Murchison on the Han River, western Korea; experiencing Typhoon Marge whilst anchored in Kure; replenishing HMAS Murchison with fuel, rations and ammunition; enemy shore batteries being the main threat to frigate operations close to the shore line and up rivers; working with ships of other navies, on United Nations duty, off Korea; the working of the honours and awards system; his ABC presentation in 1952 on the duties of UN naval forces and an overview of HMAS Murchison's service in Korean waters.

Transcribed by: C.L. Soames, October 2003

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Unless indicated, the names of places and people are as spoken, regardless of whether this is formally correct or not – e.g. ‘world war two’ (as spoken) would not be changed in transcription to ‘second world war’ (the official conflict term).

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Identification: This is an interview with Commodore Allen Dollard DSC RAN (Rtd); it is conducted by Lieutenant Commander Sam Hughes, Royal Australian Navy Reserve, on 22 November 2002 at the Australian War Memorial. The topics covered are the experiences of Commodore Dollard as the Commanding Officer of *HMAS Murchison* in Korean Waters between July '51 and January '52.

Commodore Dollard was born in Adelaide on 23 July 1917 and was educated at Unley High School before joining the Royal Australian Navy. His significant postings in World War II saw him serve on HMAS ships *Sydney*, *Australia* and *Warramunga*. He was the commanding officer of *HMAS Murchison* in Korean waters for which he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and the US Legion of Merit; he later served as the Chief of Malayan Naval Staff and as the Commanding Officer of Naval Air Station Nowra. He retired in 1973.

Commodore Dollard, welcome to the Australian War Memorial.

Thank you, Sam.

Can we begin our conversation by an introduction to your general service background, your desire for joining the Royal Australian Navy, and your experiences leading up through and in through World War II?

Yes, I'll go back over that.

I didn't have any preconceived notion of joining the Navy until a notice appeared in the local newspaper calling for volunteers in 1931-32. At that time, after the depression - or during the depression which had just preceded this - all recruitment to the services had been stopped by the government - on a money-saving exercise, of course - so the Naval College, which, from 1913, had been taking in annual recruitments of cadet midshipmen, twelve each year, for the last previous two years had none. Then, suddenly, with the indications of war on the horizon, in Europe, the government obviously thought that they'd better catch up as well as they could with the recruitments that had been lost.

So it happened that the recruitment that I was a part of was a double recruitment, twenty-four in number, and those of us who joined - the twelve oldest ones - we were all fifteen, but twelve more senior became my year, the Jervis year, and we went off to the college and the next twelve had to wait a year, which they weren't very pleased about. And this was always a bone of contention through the years, that some of them became admirals over others who didn't get on, however we all mixed over the next forty years. But there was always that little bone of contention about why the youngest member of the senior year, who was only a month older than the oldest member of the junior year, but they were twelve months apart. That's a little side-light on the recruitment situation at the time.

We read about - my mother did - and so I applied, and some time later I had some examinations with the local schoolmaster presiding. Shortly after that the local newspaper had my name at the head of the list of twenty-four, not because I was the best qualifier, but because, I think, 'D' was probably the top of the score in Adelaide. So off we went.

I went to the Naval College in September 1932, me and my eleven compatriots - and we have remained very close over the forty years, those of us who are still surviving are still close. We

did our training at the Naval College, three and a half years, then went off to sea in cruisers, the *Canberra* and the *Australia*, as cadet midshipmen for training. We were advanced to the high rank of midshipman who was the most lowly known member of the naval forces in those days - the 'snotties' - and we had our first taste of sea and going up to, I recall, New Guinea waters, and Rabaul, and marching through Rabaul with peaked helmets, and all of that, and putting on a great show for the locals. From that day on I know what the tropics really were, how marching in the tropics was a very rewarding experience, as well as one that one may remember. I have enjoyed the tropics ever since and when I retired from the Navy forty years later I went up to live on Magnetic Island just to renew that kind of lifestyle.

So we did our training, we were promoted to sub-lieutenants, then we went off to the Mediterranean for sub-lieutenant training, just the higher level. In those days, when we didn't travel by air, of course, we travelled by sea, and the six-weeks' voyage to the other side of the world was the most delightful experience, I can tell you. We saw all the delights of places like Port Said when we were very young, and we learnt the good and the bad side of life, I suppose, fairly early.

So then we joined different ships for midshipman training - we hadn't been promoted by this time, we were still midshipmen - and I did my training with others of my term in the *Repulse*, which, of course, later sank off Malaya, and in a destroyer called the *Garland*, which was eventually given to the Polish Navy for their good work during the war. The Poles manned it until she finally was destroyed.

So from there, in the *Royal Oak*, another ship which was later sunk - very soon after it was sunk. In 1937 we sailed off to UK for specialist courses in navigation and gunnery at Whale Island, signals, communications, and all these courses which were conducted in those days in Portsmouth. We spent the next year doing these courses in Portsmouth. With the war looming we went back again, in a luxury liner called the *Orion*, and joined our next ships in Australia having been promoted sub-lieutenant and completed our specialist courses.

From then on I joined the *Sydney*, along with John Crabb, who later became Admiral Crabb. We were in the process of doing a cruise of what was called the 'Summer Cruise' which took us around to all the more delightful northern parts. We were headed for Singapore when suddenly we were turned around in September 1939 and told to head at high speed to Fremantle, which was our war station. As we headed to Fremantle the news came that the war had been declared so from then on we were in a wartime mode.

In *Sydney* we had a very quiet first few months of the war, escorting troop ships such as the *Queen Mary* and the *Aquitania*, with troops to the other side. Then *Sydney* was detached and dispatched to the Mediterranean where, under Captain Collins, I achieved a certain distinction. As a lieutenant in *Sydney* my job was officer of quarters of X Turret, two 6-inch guns in the turret. The ship had four such turrets and she was a very efficient and well-armed ship, state of the art at the time.

We had many experiences throughout the next eight months in the Mediterranean. We were under Admiral Cunningham - A B Cunningham - of great fame, in the *Warspite*, the flagship of the Mediterranean Fleet. We were at sea, we worked from Alexandria, we were at sea many more days than we were ashore or in harbour. We'd return to harbour to refuel, and ammunition, and a little rest, and off we'd go again - there was very little rest I might say - escorting and bombarding, activities such as, we helped to escort the ship supplying Malta, the 'George Cross

Island', which was being controlled and brought through the war by a previous admiral who commanded the Australian Navy, Admiral Randal Ford of great fame, who is mentioned in all the stories of the 'George Cross Island', that is, Malta.

We got, of course, involved with the Italian Fleet. On one occasion we were steaming with five destroyers on a sweep of the Mediterranean when the destroyers reported two Italian cruisers. The Italian cruisers were the *Giovani De Bandoneiri* and the *Bartolomea Colioni*. They were both very fast ships, 6-inch guns, as we were, and more than forty knots - our speed was, at the best, about thirty-five.

So the destroyers were attacked by these two cruisers, they sent out a battle report, and Captain Collins decided to say nothing, not to break radio silence to frighten them off, and we steamed at high speed to join the battle, and the destroyers, knowing where we were, steamed at high speed towards us to bring the Italian cruisers to us. It worked like a charm and we quickly closed, to the surprise of the Italian cruisers, we concentrated on the leading ship, the flagship, the *Bandoneiri*, she was hit and on fire. We then shifted fire to the *Bartolomea Colioni* and she was hit repeatedly and stopped burning in the ocean, and finally was dispatched by torpedos from the destroyers. The *Giovani De Bandoneiri* disappeared off in the general direction of home, we in the *Sydney* gave chase, but she still had better speed than we had and the chase was abandoned. So that was the *Bartolomea Colioni*.

We picked up as many survivors as we could, and I remember them in the classic situation of oil fuel covering the water, calling for help - 'Savo! Savo!' - and we were getting as many as we could by ropes and ladders, and scramble nets up the side, and into the ship. They were very happy to be rescued, naturally, but they were very non-ferocious, there was no antagonism in them at all, no aggression, they just were happy to be, I think, out of the war and be rescued. One was a very talented opera singer -we had them locked up in the sailors' recreation room - and we had the pleasure of listening to Italian opera being sung by a real expert. We had guards, of course, all constantly on these - we had about thirty or forty from memory - and I think the sailors made many friends, and lifelong friends, took each other's home addresses and promised to meet up after the war.

That was a little sidelight, I think, on the attitude of the Italian sailors who, I think, lacked aggression. The Australian sailors, who had plenty of aggression, also had lots of compassion. That was the *Giovani De Bandoneiri* and *Bartolomea Colioni*.

You came home not long after that, didn't you, and were fated to march through the streets of Sydney?

We did that. There were various other activities in the Mediterranean and in January we were ordered back home and we did march through the city. But that was that and we went on with the business, and I, shortly after that, was posted from the *Sydney*, and as you are well aware, some few months later *Sydney* was lost. There were very fine officers in the *Sydney* that went down with her, with all hands, of course, who I knew very well and they were really highly skilled, highly experienced, in naval warfare. Apart from the loss of the ship and the men, it was a great loss of expertise to the Australian Navy.

That happened this time sixty-one years ago. It must have been a shock to you, in those days, to lose your friends, your ship, pride of the fleet.

Yes, that, of course, was so, but that was the war and those were the results in that case. So we lost the *Sydney*.

I then was posted to the *Australia* where I spent three years in the Pacific with, mostly, the American 7th Fleet. We were Task Force 77 from memory, we had a big, strong Australian representation in those days. We had *Canberra* and *Australia*, both 8-inch cruisers - *Sydney* just lost - we had *Perth* which was shortly after that lost up in the Sunda Sea, and *Hobart* who was also lost some time later. We were in company with *Hobart* some time later when she was hit by a Japanese 44-inch torpedo and ... I take that back, she was not lost, she was put out of action and never got back into the war.

I can remember as a child growing up in Newcastle, seeing *Hobart* alongside the state dockyard there for a very long time.

That's right. Many years later I was Service Attache in Japan and I had to supervise the destruction of the *Hobart* in the [Ikoseka] break-up yard. The Japanese had bought her to the break-up shipyard and she was beautifully refitted, at many millions of pounds, but the Australian Government didn't go on with that refit, decided she wasn't going to go back to sea, sold her off to the Japanese - this is *Hobart*. So I saw her hit with this 44-inch torpedo and then I supervised the destruction of her by the Japanese. I went down every month and certified. They put her alongside and pulled all the superstructure off, then peeled off the side plating and the decks, and the guns - which we had to make sure were spiked - and then eventually all that was left floating was the keel, and they hoisted that out of the water. That was how they destroy a ship in peacetime, Japanese style.

The *Australia*; the *Australia* covered Guadalcanal, of course, we went through Guadalcanal. I had been in a turret in *Sydney* so I got to know the workings of the turret alright, but in the *Australia* I was 8-inch control officer in the DCT - the Director Control Tower - so I controlled the four turrets, altogether a total of eight 8-inch guns. We, in fact, fired the first shots in the invasion of Guadalcanal at what later became Henderson Airport. The Japanese had occupied Guadalcanal and they were apparently comfortably enjoying a breakfast because it was determined later that they'd left meals half eaten and all of that when the surprise attack came, so it was an absolute surprise. We bombarded that airfield. The rest of the story about Guadalcanal was a great tragedy when four 8-inch cruisers were lost. They were the *Canberra*, our own; *Vincenzo*, an 8-inch American cruiser, *Astoria* and *Salt Lake City*, I think it was. Anyhow, three American 8-inch cruisers and the *Canberra* were sunk with very heavy loss of life, particularly in the American cruisers. *Canberra* was also sunk, she was damaged beyond repair, and the crew were taken off by American destroyers in a very gallant operation. She was then sunk by torpedo from the destroyer *Mugford*, I think it was - called the *Mugford*. The other ship involved which was damaged was the American cruiser, whose name escapes me for a minute - it shouldn't - and she got a torpedo through the forward part of the ship and she disappeared off the scene for some time. There is another story about that which I will leave for the moment.

It was a disaster, the Battle of Guadalcanal, the Battle of Savo Island or Iron Bottom Bay. Iron Bottom Bay, for good reasons it was named. The transports were unloading the troops - well, the troops had made their assault on the shore, the transports were unloading stores and ammunition in support of the troops - we were patrolling the east and west sides of Savo Island. *Australia*, *Canberra*, and 'Ship X' - whose name I shouldn't forget, but I have for the moment - and the American cruisers on the northern side. The *Australia* was recalled by the commanding admiral of the whole enterprise who was with the Transports. We were recalled to go in and

have a consultation between our commanding officers and the flag officers. That was unfortunate because *Australia*, who was the most experienced ship in the Australian Navy at the time, was withdrawn from her lead position in the eastern group and left the leadership in the hands of a less experienced ship which really did not ... we were caught napping. There is no doubt about the fact we were caught napping and the destruction occurred.

However, as years went by we recovered our position with the tremendous effect of the high-speed American carrier forces, supported by ourselves and British and other American forces, hence the tide was eventually turned. So I spent my three years in the *Australia* and then went to the *Warramunga*. From '44 to '47 we were fighting out the last remaining years of the war, and then the Occupation. It happened that *Warramunga* was quite close to *Australia* when she - and I'd just left - was heavily attacked by Kamikazes and severely damaged, and the captain - Captain Dechaineux and most of the officers and crew on the bridge were killed, very heavy casualties, and she was taken out of the battle.

I remember we had a pompom crew in the *Australia*. There was a leading seaman called Cazaly, and Cazaly was related to 'Up There' Cazaly, the famous footballer. I happened to be on the bridge - and the talk between ships - the TBS - we were reporting everything we could see, and I saw a dive-bomber, and Kamikaze coming down on the starboard quarter of *Australia*. You normally used, as you would know, Sam, better than most, the codenames of ships, but I screamed into this thing, '*Australia*! there's one coming down on your starboard quarter', and that was heard, and the cry went up, 'Up There Cazaly', and the pompom shot it down. Do you remember 'Up There' Cazaly?

Oh, yes, absolutely.

Warramunga went on to Lingayen - we were very heavily involved in Lingayen which was the northern island of the Philippines - and then we were involved in Corregidor, but this time I joined as a lieutenant in *Warramunga* - second lieutenant - by this time I was the first lieutenant - and my captain was Commander Alliston, Royal Navy. Corregidor was, I remember, this is the occasion which was consummating General MacArthur's determination to come back - his famous saying, 'I will come back' - well, his troops certainly did, they came back from the air and overhead went this enormous flight of DC-3s - 'Goonie Birds' or whatever they liked to call them - no doors on them, clearly the doors had been taken off, they weren't just open. Out of these - they only went a few thousand feet above us, or five hundred feet perhaps - and out of these fifty, or a hundred - I don't know the number, but between fifty and a hundred, I'm sure - poured these parachutists. Some fell in the water, some fell on the plateau where they were supposed to be, some fell in the caves on the steep side of the Corregidor Plateau itself, the Corregidor Bluff, and they were absolutely mown down. They did make a beachhead on the plateau and finally held it with great courage, and with the loss of a very high number of men.

It was quite obvious that these men went in not perhaps prepared for what was to happen. They got there by the skin of their teeth, but the sight of these people going into the water - we picked some up - not my ship, but the various other ships picked up parachutists - others were just left in their foxholes. The Japanese, of course, were dug in to the sides of the cliff faces and the parachutists were just mown down. So that was a dramatic scene that is recalled to my memory of those days.

You probably felt frustrated, you couldn't do much about it.

We were bombarding, that's the best we could do - we were, we were doing the job of bombarding, yes, we were bombarding known targets and hope, assisting those who did survive the landing.

We were in Lingayen when the war was eventually ... when the bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki - atomic bombs - and, of course, that was the cause of great jubilation, we didn't consider the moral rights or wrongs of dropping atomic bombs in those days - we do today - but that was the greatest event of the war, as far as we were concerned. From there on we went off - I was still in *Warramunga* - we spent the next two years of the war being over in Occupation duties. We went back and forth, we went back to Sydney, refit, and back to Kure where our Commonwealth base - *HMAS Commonwealth* - was in Kure, and we did all Occupation duties. Then back to Sydney and posted to a nice dull routine job at Flinders Naval Depot, that was the end of my war experiences.

That was a long war for you and you certainly experienced a lot in that war. You were in everything, weren't you?

It was a long time, yes, that's right. I was very fortunate in being at sea for all the war, that's where anybody would like to be.

Were you in Tokyo Bay during the signing of the Japanese surrender?

Yes, we were there, we were right alongside - not alongside, but close by the *Missouri*. Captain Collins, of course, was - I think he was Commodore by this time - he was our representative on board the *Missouri*. Yes, we were there, we had visual contact.

They called you the 'Little Moe', didn't they, the ship?

She was the 'Little Moe', yes.

The *Warramunga* was the 'Little Moe'?

Oh, not, not *Warramunga*, no, no, we didn't get that name.

I thought you used to follow the *Missouri* around and ...

No, that is not correct. We were just the 'Munga', we didn't have any particular association with *Missouri*; we did with *Maryland*. There's a very nice song about the *Maryland*, and if I was in good voice I'd sing it for you, but I don't think it's a good idea. No, the *Maryland* was one of the American battleships, the big battleships, which was sunk - badly damaged and half sunk - in Pearl (Harbor). She was, like several others, a marvellous job of rebuilding and refitting, and set off to sea. She was sent out into the Pacific waiting for some real opportunity to use her 16-inch guns, and when we were with her she had a torpedo net around her in one of these South Sea islands, and the song included the words, 'She was sunk by some fast-growing coral there', or 'hit by some fast-growing coral'. She spent a lot of the war there, which is much better than her experience in Pearl Harbour.

Well, that certainly prepared you for what came along in '50-'51 with the Korean War. You were certainly a very experienced officer by this stage as, I guess, a lot of your ship's company would have been on the *Murchison* as you prepared for the Korean War,

a lot of World War II veterans.

Oh, yes, a lot of World War II veterans - not all that many that I'd served with previously, but oh, yes - if I may go to the *Murchison* now.

I spent two or three years in Flinders Naval Depot at the Seamanship School, and the Petty Officers' School, doing things like that, and then I was posted to the *Murchison*. We were doing exercises down in Hobart with the fleet, and the New Zealand fleet - New Zealand had had quite a good navy at that stage - and we operated together. I was detached and told to return to Sydney to prepare to go to Korea.

With demobilisation ships had been absolutely reduced to a minimum, but some more than others, and *Murchison*, who should have had a war complement of 180 or more, we were down to 80 men. We were flat out to keep the ship steaming with this number of men, but we did. I recall the communications people were flat out in two watches - most ships, as you would know, would be in three watches or four. We were told by the flagship that why didn't we do our signal exercise the previous night. As you would know, at eight o'clock, or whatever time it was, the flagship would flash out exercises for the night on the flasher - the Aldis or the signal lamp - and all the ships around would do their exercises, send it in to be recorded. I told my fellows to go to bed and I got into great trouble for that because we only had ... that was the difficulties of being under manned.

However, the point I'm getting at here, we were told to go back to Sydney and the fleet was told to build us up. Normally, drafting is done by head office, but in this case, because this was urgent, the ship which was going, which was *Tobruk*, was not ready and we were going instead - 'Thank goodness', we said - and the fleet admiral was instructed to build up from the existing ships - existing complements in the fleet - the *Murchison* to war complement. So, as you can imagine, the commanders and the executive officers went around - they were told to send so many able seamen, so many stokers, so many signalmen - they looked at those with the worst conduct records and said, 'Well, he can go, he can go, he can go', and we got all these fellows from the fleet; we had a bunch of scoundrels, really. So we were built up and they were a pretty rough crew. I'll tell you, that by the time we got up to Korea and got on the job they were the best crew you could ever find, but they were no good in peacetime activities, lying around, reading signal exercises and things like that.

We sailed from Sydney and we were still short handed, and the Naval Board posted a class of recruits from Flinders Naval Depot. They'd been in the Navy twelve weeks, they were flown - no, I think they had to come by train, we didn't fly much in those days - up to Brisbane. We got into the *John Oxley*, the pilot ship - pilot boat - and we picked them up off Brisbane, twelve brand-new, never-been-to-sea, ordinary seamen, just out of recruit school. So here we had this mix of tough, rough and bold old sailors, all with wartime experience, or mostly, and these very young, inexperienced crew, and they formed an absolutely marvellous combination.

We put this particular young crew of twelve ex-recruits as the guns' crew of the aft 4-inch guns - twin guns. The chief bosun's mate, who was a RAN, whose name was - oh, it doesn't matter, can't recall - I should - he trained them up. He was as rough and tough as they come, and he trained these fellows, they responded to him, and they became perhaps the best guns' crew I have ever seen, and they did a wonderful job. But those kids had been in the Navy twelve weeks and twelve weeks later, after that, they were in action up the Han River.

It's surprising the Navy dispatched the recruits to do that. Is that how short the Navy was at the time?

Oh, we were demobilising, we were short everywhere, there weren't too many recruits either. But no, that was what happened.

So really the preparedness of the Royal Australian Navy for its role in Korea was not exactly up to speed, as you said, with the demobilisation and the shortage of personnel?

That's quite right. There were still a lot of ... All the permanent members of the Navy were still the nucleus, and all had wartime experience of various degrees. We also had a big influx in 1949 of Royal Navy personnel who were allowed to transfer to the Royal Australian Navy. You may remember some of those, I don't know. They were a large number - petty officers, chief petty officers, mostly of that rate - and they were a great middle rank bastion for the reforming of the Australian Navy. We had some in the *Murchison* fortunately and they were excellent personnel. But the Navy wasn't ready. *Tobruk* was supposed to be going, she was not ready, she just hadn't been finished, she hadn't done her trials, and *Murchison* was sent in her place.

Now, when the Korean War broke out *Bataan* and *Shoalhaven* were in the Occupation force, we kept two ships up there, and they were immediately dispatched when war was declared against ... we joined the United Nations force, they were our first two ships in.

Tobruk was the next ship to go up; she was not ready and so the Naval Board sought around for another destroyer because the US Command were very insistent on having destroyers, for obvious reasons - firepower - but they acceded, because there was no alternative, to a paltry frigate, for the time being replacing a destroyer, until another destroyer could be found to come up and take over. This proved to be quite a big point in the Australian Naval contribution to the war because although Admiral Joy, who was the Commander 7th Fleet, and Admiral Dyer, who was the Commander of the Korean Blockade and Escort Forces, were very opposed to just accepting frigates who they thought didn't have the get up and go of a destroyer. They eventually found that we could penetrate the inshore waters with much greater ability than bigger ships and so in the end actually frigates became the go, we kept frigates from then on, going on with destroyers up to Korea.

No, we weren't really ready, but we scrambled together, robbed ships of crews and equipment. We went up having a hurried refit at Garden Island. Unfortunately, when we got up to Japan, when we needed some of our spare gear, which had been refitted, we found it was back, hung up, in proper stowage in the ship's inner walls and they hadn't been refitted - like gaskets hadn't been replaced, and things like that - so we had a bit of trouble when we first got to Korea. We went off to sea on our first patrol and our fuel pumps broke down. We were going back to Nelson's age, we were steaming by hand, we were pumping by hand - fuel pumps - and we were making four knots in heavy seas. So from our first patrol we had to hang our heads, and turn around, and go back to Sasebo and send down to Sydney for equipment to refit these fuel pumps. It happened very quickly. Fortunately our system was good enough to get the equipment back speedily. We refitted the fuel pumps and we went off to sea. From then on we had no other troubles.

But yes, in answering your question, we were running on an empty tank.

I did read your reports of proceedings, I've done a little bit of reading in preparation. I

notice those problems that you did have. I was going to ask you, but I'm glad you brought them up.

Can I just go back to when you were appointed as the Commanding Officer of *Murchison* - this is your first command?

Yes.

How did it feel to be Commanding Officer?

I felt it was about time. Gough Whitlam said, 'It's time', and before him I said, 'It's time'. I'd had two destroyers, one as a midshipman when you learn a bit about the trade; I had three years in the *Warramunga*; I was pretty well experienced and I was very happy to be appointed, as we all were, with our first command. I was ready to go and I felt confident.

Actually, when I joined the ship our duties were 'clockwork mouse' out of *HMAS Watson* - out of Watsons Bay actually - 'clockwork mouse' being the target for submarines, submarine training exercises, and we just went in and out every day becoming a target and dealing with the submarines. With eighty men we managed to do that alright because we'd be back in harbour every night. So I was happy to be a 'clockwork mouse', but much delighted to be sent to do a real job.

I was about to comment on that, the frigates, I guess, at that stage, were in an ASW (anti-submarine warfare) environment, the Australian Navy was moving to anti-submarine warfare.

That's quite right, yes.

So you must have been pleased to get back to a gunnery environment in Korea.

Right. Well, see, the four frigates - I think they were *Murchison*, *Shoalhaven*, *Condamine*, and *Culgoa* - were primarily gunnery frigates, the other four were primarily ASW, so clearly the gunnery frigates were most desired for the operations in Korea and they are the ones who did. We had four 4-inch guns in two turrets and that was a very effective armament, particularly in the bombardment role of which we did a great amount.

Particularly swinging around (inaudible) to get out of the (inaudible), to have an after turret ... Of course, the Tribals didn't have an after turret, did they?

The Tribals?

Yeah.

Oh, yes, yes, yes, the Tribals had three turrets.

My memory is a bit vague because *Anzac* was the last commission and she didn't have one because it had become a training ...

We had X and Y and the forward turret in ...

Sorry, the Battles, I meant to say.

Oh, I didn't serve on the Battles.

I thought they had two turrets.

I think I'll leave that to you.

The only reason I brought that up was, your turrets, forward and aft would be much more useful than two turrets forward.

Absolutely, yes, well, if you want me to come to the Han River I can cover that right now, if you wish.

We'll carry on to that in a minute - I'll just try and follow the topics.

I think we've pretty well covered the next topic. It was: As a member of the Australian Defence Force you were simply expected to pack your kit and proceed on duty to Korean waters.

Yes.

Did that have any bad lingering memories of World War II? I think we've probably covered that.

Certainly not any ... the question goes on to say, 'Here we go again', or some such. No, it wasn't, no, it wasn't, most of my crew were saying - the old hands I've mentioned - well, let's get into it, this is what we are trained for, and really, they liked what they were doing and they felt they had a meaning and they were doing a job that was worth doing, and also they excelled at it, and they loved it.

Exactly.

And I think the young fellows thought, oh, this is something, let's get into this. I could not fault any attitudes at all about it. That's the answer to that question.

Were you in a position, as the Commanding Officer, to have enough background provided by the fleet to be able to brief the crew on the tactical and political situation in Korea? Did you have enough time to read up?

The short answer is no. I think there may be a misconception - not in your case because I know of your own personal experiences - but small ships, getting down to the smallest blue-water ships such as frigates, don't have an operations room for keeping plots, and keeping the air-sea picture, and all of this; we don't have that. You have that to an extent in destroyers and completely so in cruisers and above, but we, in frigates, had very little of the tactical picture, or the geographical picture - well, we knew where we were, fortunately. But no, the wartime picture - this answers a few of the questions, I think - our knowledge was what we read in the newspapers, there was no briefing. Perhaps that was a fault, but again, I think it also related to the run down of the Navy and the administration forces, backups - we didn't, we did our exercises down in Hobart, we did our 'clockwork mouse' duties out of Sydney, we went off to

Korea, and we, the officers explained to the assembled ship's companies everything we knew - we did have some information, I don't think we were absolutely raw, we were given instructions as to what to do. We weren't given any indication of what particular duties we would have when we got to Korea, first to Sasebo, which is the forward base.

My first duty was to call on the admiral - Admiral Scott Moncrieff, whom I got to know very well - and then, for the first time, he and his staff gave us the tactical picture and from there on we knew more of what we were doing and what the object was; but there were no basic principles of what our role in Korea should be. Perhaps that answers that.

Yes, it does, quite comprehensively.

On arriving the initial reaction to the operational environment, including climatic adjustments - and we can probably go on and do two topics there, including the questions, How about the ship's company, were they clothed? did they have enough equipment?

Right, I can answer that. We were not well equipped for the later cold weather, but perfectly comfortable, perfectly well equipped for moderate climate operations. But by the time it became November-December we were putting our heads in the refrigerator to keep warm, it really was very, very cold. Our ships were not insulated, we weren't built for cold-weather operations. The British ships, including their frigates, were built for this, they were built for the Murmansk operations during the war and the Arctic Sea. We weren't, we were built for the tropics and there's nothing you could do, they were thin-skinned, there was no lining. Largely we scrounged what we could from the US and the RN stores and they kept us clothed, but as for keeping the guns and the equipment going in the cold weather, it was constant grease and steam hosing, and rotating the equipment. Leave it for half an hour and the breach would seize up, and of course, the crew also had great trouble with skin contact with metal equipment. No, our ships were not adjusted to that.

We overcame - when I say 'we', I mean our sailors - the officers were obviously better accommodated, but still no ... it was just one ship's side, we didn't have two ships' sides. But the sailors bore it and they were cheerful, morale was sky high.

I told you that we came to - perhaps I'm jumping a few points - we had our break-down of the fuel pumps and that caused us to have to retire before we really got into the business of patrolling and action, which was very demoralising. However, when we got those pumps restored we went off and on our first patrol we were in action with a tank up the 'Cigarette Route' - all the various code names, in channels around the west coast of Korea, happened to have cigarette names - 'Cigarette' and 'Briar', and such and such.

Anyhow, we were headed up the 'Cigarette Route' and we found ourselves being targeted by tank guns, and we sighted a tank and escort on the hills to the starboard side and we engaged that and destroyed it, so that cheered the crew up - me too. It was a Russian T-34 tank, which was quite unusual for a tank and a frigate to exchange fire. But morale from then on was very, very high and after that we were sent up to the Han River. There's a story in that which I'm prepared to go in to when you wish.

Well, let's go on to that, let's talk about the Han.

Well, the purpose of the penetration of the Han estuary, which was totally uncharted by Admiralty charts or any other charts, was to ... The Peace Talks had started shortly after we arrived in the city of Kaesong, which was ... The war had stabilised around the 38th Parallel, Kaesong was just south of that. We were required to get up within range of Kaesong for the main purpose - the American belief was to bring harassing bombardment to bear around the outskirts of Kaesong, while the Peace Talks were in progress, to emphasise the power of the United Nations forces. At ten-thirty every morning we were required to bombard the outskirts - there's a ten-mile radius around Kaesong. This was the American belief. The British belief, headed by Admiral Scott Moncreiff, that there was a danger of losing ships in the falling tides and being stranded on mud flats for a very doubtful purpose, that is, to demonstrate our control by having this bombardment, apart from other more effective matters, like the bombardment of rail intersections and troop concentrations, which we did from the Han.

Anyhow, it was decided that ships should make their way into the Han estuary with the British lead frigate, the *Cardigan Bay* and a ROK - Republic of Korea - frigate, the *P-61*, and *Murchison*, we went off to force our passage up to achieve this object of entering the estuary of the Han river.

We made our way to the west of the main island of [Kwang-Do]¹, through very shallow waters, sounding as we went, and rapidly became lost amongst the sand leads. However, we anchored for the night - we had difficulty in finding our way out, but we anchored for the night and we did get far enough up to bombard Yonan, one of the main intersections. So we did a bombardment from that position, that was the only bombardment from that area we could do because next morning we attempted to find our way out - fortunately, I followed the leader - he went aground three times, but I profited from his experience and avoided going aground on these occasions. Eventually we got *Sydney's* aircraft to guide us out and we got back into deeper water in our main anchorage area of [Sono Saru]² which was charted water.

And from there we decided on our next effort which would be to go up the eastern channel on the other side of Kwang-Do. We spread our boats out - we had additional frigates now, we had four frigates, the *Morecombe Bay* joined us and a number of JMLs - motor launches operated by the Korean Navy, and with our motorboats fanned out ahead of us, we made our way up slowly sounding and charting as we went. We made thirty miles of channel that we charted and finally found ourselves in the middle of the estuary of the Han at a point we code named the 'Fork'. From the 'Fork' we could range further afield and bombard the necessary targets.

For many days and months we and other ships rotated, and as the time went on we expanded by motorboats and launches, plotting channels further to the west and further to the north bank where the Chinese and North Korean forces were situated. We went, first of all, to a point to the west which we called 'Knife', and from 'Knife' we went to a point further west which we called 'Knife Edge', all with motorboats sounding ahead of us, and then frequently under machine gun and other fire. We were suppressing the fire with our larger equipment.

We furthermore then extended our range right up through various channels, right up to the north bank of the Han, closer to enemy shores, and named these. They were given various codenames - 'Pall Mall', 'Sickle' - and I thought it was time Australia had a mention so I had the chief name on 'Woolloomooloo', so 'Woolloomooloo' has a mention up in the middle of Korea, in the Han

¹ Not identified in the index to the official history 'Australia in the Korean War' by Robert O'Neill.

² *ibid.*

estuary, now. We got as far as the [Resong]³ River, which is the closest point to - the mouth of the Resong River - which is the closest point to Kaesong, the 'Peace Village'.

We and other ships continued our series of bombardments and we had lots of intelligence provided to us by ROK - Republic of Korea - guerilla groups who were very brave. They were mostly headed by US Army officers, equally so, and named such as 'Leopard' - I can't remember the others, but I'll find them soon. They provided us with targets, so we would go off to 'Knife Edge' and bombard a series of targets, including the railway concentration and reports came back of very effective results.

We had come now, I suppose, to the most effective engagement in the *Murchison*. We, on 28 September, I was required to go down the channel out to open water to meet the Commander of Task Force 95, Admiral Dyer, who was our boss, and our immediate superior, Captain Norfolk in the *Black Swan*. We embarked them, the captain and the admiral, to show them around to see what we were doing. If you remember, the American admirals were very keen on bombardment around Kaesong and they wanted to see it happening.

So I took them out, first of all, to 'Knife Edge' which is the most westerly point where we could bombard Yonan and [Tekchong]⁴ area with targets provided by - 'Wolf Pack' is another one - 'Wolf Pack', 'Leopard', and these guerilla groups - so we did a very effective bombardment there with air spotting from the *Rendova*, the US carrier. Then back we went up to the north bank, through various channels.

I might say, when you are plotting these movements through the channels you must have a diagram of the rise and fall of tide, which is twenty-eight to thirty feet, and you must only go when you've got enough water to go where you are going, and do it on a rising tide so that if you do get on the mud you still have a bit of rising tide to get you off. If you wait until the tide is falling, well, obviously, if you touch the mud you are history and you'd be shot to bits by (the North Koreans). So we always had two hours on the top of the tide, before it turned, to do these exercises. So we'd go out to Yonan, bombard, and then we went back through the channels as the tide was still rising, up to the mouth of the [Eysong]⁵, which is the eastern most point of the north bank of the Han estuary where we operated and within the closest range of Kaesong.

There, as you mentioned, we anchored, as one must because there's no room to turn, other than on an anchor, and swung to the anchor, bombard, then having completed our turn, or about to complete our turn, we came under heavy fire for the first time. We had had occasional fire previously, but this was heavy fire from concealed guns in farm houses, anti-tank guns, and we even had bazookas and 0.5 machine guns. We also could see, because from time to time we were within 200 yards of the shore as the channels wove their way down, riflemen shooting from amongst the reeds.

Admiral Dyer and Captain Norfolk were there, seeing for themselves first hand what was happening - I had nothing to do with them, I was busy doing what I was doing, and so were the rest of the ship's company. We opened fire with all weapons, targets of opportunity - there was no way of directing from the director because of the short range of the targets - there were open sights and guns firing at targets of opportunity in independent control - local control - in the main.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.*

We had heavy fire; most of the shells went through the ship, in one side and out the other, because obviously they were using armour-piercing weapons, or shells, and fortunately they went through the mess decks and the mess decks weren't occupied because hands were all at action stations and the damage was not great. But we had a lot of upper deck damage and bofors guns put out of action, minor flesh wounds, and off we went and we eventually had to anchor when a rainstorm came - there was no way of negotiating these channels without visibility, without visual observation of your buoys that we had placed, and this rain squall came, as they do, straight down upon us and totally blocked out all vision beyond a few feet. So we actually anchored. Fortunately, the other side of the coin was, we were invisible too from the ships. As soon as that passed - we anchored at short stay, of course, just to hold the ship in position. So as quick as we could - with a gallant, I might say, cable party working out there in a totally exposed area of the ship - so we got the anchor up and the gunnery from both sides started again. We headed off and eventually returned to our position at the 'Fork', having engaged most of the weapons, and by later reports, having destroyed most of the weapons that attacked us.

I might say, talking about people on the forecastle, also we had ... in shallow waters one has the leadsman with chains. The leadsman heaves the lead and measures ... as the lead ... hauls it taut, and as it goes underneath him he measures the depth of the water, and he calls out, 'By the mark - mark six'. You might remember, there's a famous author called Mark Twain, and his name came from the calling the mark up the Mississippi, 'mark twain', that is, 'mark two'. We never got down to mark two, fortunately. I heard amongst the rattle of the guns and everything else this chanting of the leadsman - I was taking no notice of that because you didn't have time to stop and wonder what it was. They were doing a very gallant job, working away there, outside the ship; they would be the nearest people to the enemy. So I did hear them and I stuck my head over the side and shouted out, 'Lay in the lead and take cover', which they did promptly, as you might imagine, and they took cover in the hedgehog magazine, which is the readiest magazine just off the forecastle, little did they think, perhaps, that they were then sitting on about two tons of very volatile hedgehog ammunition. So they might have been out of the frying pan into the fire. But that was a Leading Seaman [Foy], I remember; he later became the president of the Murchison Association.

These are examples of the gallant sailors and officers that I had the privilege to command.

That was a great story, sir. I'm just trying to come to terms with ... you've got this two-hour window of tidal opportunity ...

Yes.

You've swung around to come out on the tide, I guess, and you are then under fire - you are in a squall - you have to anchor. You must have been saying, well, 'How long have I got? How long have I got before we come aground, before I touch?'

You can do a lot in two hours, the distances were not great. But that's true. If you touched and you are - there is a great - there was - and a lot of the - it was not generally recognised, particularly by the American command - and I might say that I'm a great - having served throughout the Pacific with the Americans - I admire them tremendously, the American Navy is absolutely marvellous, their carrier force, and their heavy landing forces - terrific. But in this case I believe they were wrong; they were hazarding ships. Every ship, all our frigates, went up and down these channels, we were at risk, not so much in the early stages of enemy action, but

of tidal action, if you are at risk of being stranded on a falling tide. When the tide had fallen it was just mud with gutters, and the gutters were the channels when twenty-eight feet of water went off. We'd have only about fifteen feet of water under us - not under us, fifteen feet of water with a draft of twelve or thirteen feet, so we didn't have much to spare.

You are quite right, you are always worried about getting back before the tide turns, but you knew your timing exactly because the tides are predictable.

You talked about finding your buoy, so you laid dam buoys.

Oh, yes, we buoyed all the channels. Of course, there is always the chance too that the enemy at night could change your buoys, well, you had to watch out for that; but we didn't have that trouble, they did not get around to that.

Did you have the services of the Hydrographic Department?

No, we had all our own navigators - of course, we didn't have specialist navigators, just any seaman officer can be told to be the navigator. They did it, and they did it under fire, and they were assisted by the South Korean naval launches, and they did very well too.

Your navigator, Lieutenant Kelly ...

Kelly, yes, Jim Kelly.

He was likewise awarded a Distinguished Service Cross.

He was, yes.

You obviously recommended him for this.

I did, yes.

His wonderful skills in navigation in the Han.

That's right, he did a great job, without him I would have found it very difficult. But our first navigator was a chap called Peter Reece, he took us up, he came with me up to the 'Fork', but having got there and done all the hard work, plotting his way up there and begun the plotting of the channels, he was posted away to do a communications course.

He was a communicator, yes.

I'd recommended him for it, but I didn't want to see him go, but Jim Kelly was posted in his place, and Jim Kelly was equally a very fine officer. So yes, that's quite right.

Anyhow, to get on with the Han, two days later - that was Friday 28 September - on 30 September *Rotoiti*, a New Zealand frigate commanded by Brian Turner, arrived to replace us, but Brian came over with his navigator and we decided we'd do a run and show him the ropes. So they came on board and we went off on the Sunday to repeat the run, but this time, of course, we were more than ready to engage. And certainly it happened, we went up and there and there was heavier fire on this occasion. We turned again, swung to the anchor at Eysong - there is no

way of turning around other than that - and the same matters occurred - heavy fire from farm houses, we targeted the farm houses and destroyed the guns in them. We got intelligence back from the guerilla groups who always assist the results of various bombardments.

On one occasion a shell went straight into a foxhole, or a bunker, in which forty men had taken refuge, and unfortunately for them that was ... And I think that forms the subject of the picture of the *Murchison* in action in the War Memorial. That was one of those lucky, or unlucky - however you like to look at it - flukes that destroyed ... Within a foxhole or a bunker you can imagine the compression that destroyed anybody who happened to be there.

So we did that and came back to the 'Fork'. From then on, because of these two weekend actions ... I might tell you, if you mentioned morale, or we mention the morale, of the ship's company. On the Sunday, the second day, when we had Brian Turner and his navigator on board, as we got out of range there was a song being sung right around the guns' crews and the deck, and it wafted up to us. The song was, 'Sailing Down the River on a Sunday Afternoon', so the sailors were pretty cheerful.

That indicated very good morale.

Yes.

It's a big job for the commanding officer, and the first lieutenant in particular, I think, to keep morale of the crew up.

Yes, oh, yes, they have to. When we went back, of course, to harbour we had sports and, when time permitted, groups would be allowed to go off to sites of interest in Japan. We all saw, at one time or another, Hiroshima of great recollection in the Second World War.

There is something here in your questions about beer issues. Well, that's a very hot topic right now, I can tell you. But no, we didn't have beer issues at sea at all, we were always ... we were never in a stand-down situation at sea. We had beer issues when we were in Sasebo Harbour or Kure Harbour. Those that didn't go ashore could have a beer on board, but they couldn't go ashore *and* have a beer on board. But if they decided to stay back and relax there was an issue of beer. But no, there was never an issue of beer at sea, so that answers that question.

Yes, it does. Well, you were in a war zone, you were in a defensive state.

Absolutely, that's quite right, you'd understand that well, of course.

Apart from the Han, did you ever get across to the East Coast?

No, no.

You stayed on the west coast?

No, we didn't have any ... the east coast ... the destroyers could get in close to the east coast and do all their bombardment and escort work; we on the west coast ... Korea, as is well known, is very mountainous, mostly to the eastward. The east shore is steep too, the west shore and all the rivers flow out to the west and you get these sand leads and very shallow waters in the Yellow Sea, they are much better suited to the smaller ships. And, of course, the destroyers of the west

coast blockade force too, they had to stand off further than you could on the east coast, but we were never used on the east coast for that reason, we were more useful on the west coast.

On one occasion we saw a B-29 limping home and it crashed on an island inland. We didn't see the crash, but we know from the radio reports that the crew had bailed out before it crashed and most of them had been picked up. But then, later, came a report of one member being sighted up north of Cho-Do - the island of Cho-Do was our main naval anchorage. So we were told - I think we went without being told - to go to his rescue. We had to go straight through a minefield and all the routes - 'Cigarette', and 'Briar' - all the 'Cigarette' routes were named so after being cleared of mines, they were kept clear, they were mine-swept channels. So you tried not to have to go through the unswept areas; well, in this situation you had to go through.

So you ping away with your sonar and hope to pick up any mines. We did locate mines, but well to either side, didn't have to alter course. We went through, but you always bring the crew aft, out of the forward compartments, at least in a situation like that.

We then went through these sand leads. Once again, the charting was very inadequate, but we did get through to this fellow, we could see him - his name was Lieutenant [Bysner], he was the copilot of this B-29. We did ground - touch the ground - you could feel it, and eventually we plotted our way in and anchored for the night and sent the whaler in - it was about a two-mile pull in a rising sea - to pick up this fellow. He was very happy to be recovered, he came back on board, none the worse for wear. The crew - a very brilliant crew of mostly old timers - had all leapt into the whaler when a sea boat was called and the first there were these old hands. They rode this boat and it was a really fine exercise. They brought Bysner back and, once again, we were stuck on our way getting out, but *Sydney's* aircraft then came next morning and guided us out. So always, in that situation, the second biggest enemy anyhow are the shadows.

The aircraft were marvellous, they'd just show us the way by flying down the direction they thought we should go, and thank goodness, they were right.

You worked closely with *Sydney* for naval gunfire support, spotting.

With the aircraft, yes, the air squadrons on the *Sydney*, we saw a lot of them. We didn't have much to do with the *Sydney*, we didn't escort her, or anything like that, at any time. We only met up with *Sydney* once and that was in Sasebo Harbour briefly, and that was - no, not for Ruth (Typhoon Ruth) - but the aircraft were invaluable in getting us out of these tight, shallow situations.

You just mentioned Ruth. Now, that is a topic. It played a major part in *Sydney's* story.

As I know, yes.

But you were comfortably - well, can I use the term 'comfortably'? - secured alongside in Kure Harbour.

That's right - not alongside, I'll tell you. Real typhoon experience was Marge, which was in August; Ruth was November. If I may I'll tell you about Marge.

We were in the Han River when Marge was detected moving across the Yellow Sea, so we were withdrawn, told to sail from the Han estuary and return to Kure. So we came out of the Han

with another frigate - yes, it was, it was *Cardigan Bay* - we had a lot to do with *Cardigan Bay* - and we came out of the Han and made our way down to Inchon - not directly to Inchon, we were on our way to Kure - when all the predictions were that the typhoon would meet up with us at Kure, and we thought it would be better to stay where we were. So we went, with the approval of higher command, to wait out the storm in the approaches to Inchon. And we had a reasonably comfortable ride there at anchor, although the typhoon passed fairly close. But we had no trouble at all except that we were running very short of fuel. When the typhoon situation eased we headed back for Kure and we arrived with fifty-seven tons of fuel left, and that was really scraping the bottom. So that was our main worry in any typhoon, and that was typhoon Marge, which doesn't get much of a mention. Ruth is better known.

Ruth is the popular one, yes.

But for Ruth, I was in Kure. We'd been there for a bit of refit and when the typhoon was reported approaching we moved to a typhoon buoy out in the harbour. So we put two bridles on the typhoon (*sic*) - that means two shackles of cable, anchor cable - onto the typhoon, one out of each hawse pipe. That's the way of riding out anything like this because the weight of the cables will give you the flexibility.

But also, in a situation like that, you would have your engines going half ahead, or slow ahead, just to keep ... as the typhoon comes closer, as the winds get stronger, you have to steam into the buoy. So we were there, we rode out typhoon Ruth quite comfortably. The only problem we had was a liberty ship, a merchant ship, who was anchored up ahead of us, up wind from us, and our worry was that she would drag on us. Sure enough, she did, but fortunately dragged down a hundred yards to the east starboard side of us, down our side; but had she dragged onto us we'd have been in serious trouble. But typhoon Ruth did not cause us any concern.

It certainly caused *Sydney* a lot of bother.

Sydney had a lot of trouble, yes, they lost many aircraft and they had a lot of damage.

If you can just skip back to the logistic arrangements. You were short on fuel getting to Kure; what were the arrangements for the frigates with regard to food, ammunition?

We had supplies, United Nations Forces provided the supplies, whether they be American - we always fuelled from the American fuelling base in Sasebo, at [Joska]; in Kure it was American fuel installations we fuelled from. It was totally United Nations, it was an international operation. All our fuel - not so much victualling stores, not so much food and that type of thing, we got them up in store ships that came up to Sasebo. We got this from the RN, but not from the Americans; but fuel, yes; ammunition, we were compatible with the RN and we shared ammunition. At least, when we left Sasebo to go on patrol we always loaded the ship with ammunition on deck, and of course, that was another activity which did not conform with the Naval NRMA - not NRMA, but whatever it is about the explosive regulations - the Naval Explosive Regulations did not permit you to carry ammunition on deck. Well, we carried vast amounts of ammunition on deck to store our fellow ships. Equally so, on one occasion we had to go to sea, transfer at sea, from the *Rendova*, the aircraft carrier, 30,000 rounds of Browning machine gun ammunition. We took this on board and transferred this to another ship to give to the guerillas ashore. Things like that were just incidental, daily occupations.

Did you do much under-way replenishment?

Oh, yes, we did plenty of that. We had *Wave Chief* and other ...

Royal Fleet Auxiliaries.

Royal Fleet Auxiliaries, quite - the tankers - and transferred mail, of course, and we transferred all this ammunition, and we did all that.

Was that a burden, or was that a break, a different activity from ...

It was fun, yes, we all enjoyed doing it. You know, you get a great kick out of doing the jobs and doing them well, you'd know that.

Oh, yes. In Vietnam we used to go about three or four days out and replenish.

That's right. I'll tell you, as a fellow communicator. My yeoman was Yeoman Terry, a very fine petty officer. The first shot that was fired - when I had Admiral Dyer on board and we really for the first time came under serious gunfire - you know, you are all ready for action, and action stations all the time, but you are not quite as on the ball as perhaps you should be, including the captain. So righto, we are at action stations, alarms started, and everybody grabs for their tin hat - because we are in pretty close range at this stage. So I looked for mine and it's not there, so there's the captain, the only one without a tin hat, and the yeoman saying, 'Here, take mine, sir.' I said, 'No, you take yours and go and find mine.' 'Take mine,' he said, and he insisted I take his. He said, 'If you go, we all go', so he wanted to give me his tin hat. Now, that's a man who will lay down his life for another. But he was quite right, I suppose, we all had a job to do. I think if anything happened on the bridge tin hats wouldn't have made much difference to us.

Of course not, it's a psychological thing. How did your systems perform - the fuel water pumps?

Well, that was early in the piece, after that the ship was excellent, we had no troubles at all. I think I've written it here - fire control systems, radar communications, we had no serious problems. I can't go on further. From time to time we had to change barrels of the 4-inch guns, but that's standard when you reach a certain number of rounds fired, you must change the barrel.

You certainly got through a few rounds. I notice that in July, your first month of operations, you fired over a thousand 4-inch and a thousand (inaudible).

That's right. We, up in the Han, we were doing a hundred rounds per day, that was our allowance, and they eventually later cut it down to fifty rounds per day because of ammunition ... where by decision that we should not be expending more ammunition than need be. But yeah, we were doing a hundred rounds a day and that's a lot. My guns' crews were doing twenty-one rounds per gun with their 4-inch, and that hand loading is absolutely terrific, they were like clockwork.

And there's one story up the Han River where one young recruit in this aft gun which the recruits were manning, or the ordinary seamen who had been a recruit team, and he had a shell in his hand, the cartridge in his hand, and a splinter - do you know the story? It went through the cartridge, through the metal of it, it folded in his hand and dropped on the deck, and he quickly heaved it over the side. But I remembered that for a long time.

You put him straight back into it?

Absolutely, oh yeah - well, he went on, he didn't need to be put back, he just went on with it.

Dangerous stuff. You mentioned earlier that your communicators were in two watches. What was the traffic like, signal traffic load?

When I mentioned that, that as back home when we were short staffed. But the traffic ... oh, heavy, but we had a full war complement and were quite able to cope with it. So we were in three watches most of the time at sea.

The enormity of the US Navy's communications network, by that stage ... you were still sort of communicating with the Far East Fleet of the British Navy, I suppose, you weren't in the big American network - verbosity.

That's quite right - no, no, no. Oh, I remember in the *Warramunga* at the Layte landing, and the troops had landed and the Americans were talking on the TBS, which we heard, and they were going on and on and on discussing about tomorrow morning and the provisions they would land, and it was really a very lengthy, verbose conversation in the midst of battle - it might have been a quiet moment in the battle. Finally somebody cut into the TBS and he said, 'This is ...' - the admiral, the famous admiral - I'll tell you soon - he said, 'This is Butch himself ...' - whatever his name was - 'And whose nickel was all that on?' he said. He didn't think much of it.

Who could that have been? Was it Halsey?

Yeah, Bull Halsey - he said, 'This is Bull himself; and whose nickel was all that on?'

No, we didn't have much trouble with the communications. Down at the level we were our communications were mostly tactical, we had to go here and go there and we didn't get into the big scene.

You are quite clearly proud of your ship's company, and here I say, 'The performance of the ship as a fighting unit, capability of leadership, morale, discipline, personal training'. You've already stated that - that's sort of Question 14.

Yes.

You've already quite handsomely described that you were pretty proud of your ship's company. Were there any weaknesses at all?

Oh, I think you have a range of good and better, and not so good. Of course, in every ship you have the outstanding, but everybody isn't outstanding. But no, I could not ... I've said here that we had a well-trained crew - by the time we got there they were well-trained - I pointed out that they were thrown together - rearing to go, and they demanded aggressive leadership. The crew displayed the highest dedication, courage and skill, and they were a great team to lead.

Discipline; well, I told you about the King's hard bargains, as my first lieutenant called them. They were, to a certain extent, undisciplined ashore, but they were really very fine at sea. The story has gone the rounds that when the American 7th or 8th Army, whatever, entered Sasebo,

the gates of Sasebo were crowned with 'You are entering Sasebo by courtesy of the 7th US Army', and one night the sailors, the old and bold, climbed up and changed it to, 'You are entering by courtesy of *HMAS Murchison*'. So they were disciplined in a way.

Yes, they were very good, they were happy in what they were doing and they did it well.

Back on Topic 14: What were the circumstances of the operational environment that put most strain on the ship's company? For example, whether enemy activity, patrolling commitments, casualties, that sort of thing. The main threat - I noted here that aircraft, surface craft, mines or submarines - you certainly had a problem with the minefield at one stage.

The main threat was enemy shore batteries. There was an operation called Smoking Concert that was on the Amgak Peninsula - there was Cho-Do, which was our main harbour base - I mean, action base, on the west coast - and there was Sok-To which was a mile and a half to the east, and then the Amgak Peninsula which had a heavy battery of communist guns, and they were causing a lot of damage. We considered ourselves to be, and we were considered to be, the floating west flank of the 8th Army. The more we could get into those islands with our guns, the more we held communist forces back. They had to keep them back and therefore ease the pressure on the army formations further eastward. These gun emplacements on the Amgak Peninsula caused a lot of trouble to our forces and there was a fear that there was going to be an invasion of Sok-To and Cho-Do, our main base, so we assumed the Smoking Concert operation, anti-invasion patrols. We in *Murchison* were ordered to block the northern approach of the northern side of Sok-To - there were other ships on the southern side and elsewhere.

Now, we had heavy, big tides running and we anchored in the entrance that we were blockading, and for the first time in my history we decided it was necessary to take up positions to repel boarders because the scenario was that if the communists strung together a number of junks and sampans loaded with troops and floated them down on the tide at eight knots, there is very good reason - it's an old pirate's trick of just snapping both sides of the ship, hauling themselves up on the anchor cable, or whatever. And so there I had my gunners' mates and all his team handling Bren guns and other small arms right through the night in that event. So I think it was perhaps one of the unusual occasions where a blue-water ship requires to repel boarders; we didn't have to do it, fortunately, and that invasion bombardment took place. We all closed on the enemy forces and silenced the guns, and I think the invasion threat dissipated.

The west coast force was very frustrating to the movement of the North Korean Army and the Chinese Army south, weren't they? Because they didn't have control of the waters off the west coast, or indeed, the east coast - nowhere - but it really frustrated the army because they had a lack of naval power.

You mean the American Army?

No, the Koreans and the Chinese.

Yeah, we had the islands. The movement of the war started off in June 1950 when the allies were forced right back to Pusan in the south, the perimeter in the south which ... and we looked like being pushed right out of Korea. In fact, moves were afoot to take the United Nations forces

back to Japan when General MacArthur executed his really brilliant ploy of landing behind the enemy lines in Inchon so therefore getting the enemy in a pincer movement. From that moment the flow of the battle went right back up to the Yalu, up to the top of Korea. Then it came back when the Chinese then flowed over the border and reinforced - in fact, really took over - the battle for the North Koreans and it settled down around the 38th Parallel. But we managed to keep friendly forces on the islands of Taewha Do, right up by the Yalu, and right south to Cho-Do and Sok-To, and all those that one has mentioned. They were a thorn in the side of the communist armies, yes, indeed they were, and they were very anxious to take them back.

The big task of the Blockade and Escort Forces was to protect these islands because they were of great value for intelligence purposes and keeping a hold on portions of the territory, including right up to the Yalu. Taewha Do itself, we had a big operation at Taewha Do, various ships went up there, as we did, on anti-invasion patrols there. I was there with the *Murchison* patrolling and illuminating with star shells. Taewha Do was our northern-most friendly island, but it had stepping-stone islands - Yak-To and Ka-Do over to the Cholsan Peninsula which was occupied by China. Their forces were massed there ready to invade, and in fact, on the night of 30 November we had landed some intelligence people on Taewha Do, but on 30 November we saw and we realised that the invasion was, in fact, in progress. It happened that night, they took Taewha Do, we never got it back, and we never got these intelligence staff back either.

So yes, the islands were of great benefit to the UN forces, and it was a big task of the naval forces to protect them.

Enemy mines; the biggest threat was, obviously, shore batteries; mines were always a threat. Collision with small craft is another worry we all had. In fact, on our last patrol, our very last night we sailed out of Korea, we ran down a fishing junk. Unfortunately five men were lost and we picked up the rest and took them back to Sasebo. But unfortunately, economy being the name of the game, they would have no lights while they were fishing, they didn't want to keep lights going and they didn't have the fuel to keep them going, I suppose. They'd only flash up their lights and burn them up when they saw something coming; well, of course, that could be too late and in this case it was too late and we sank this quite big fishing junk. But we got about five men back and about five were lost.

So that was another hazard that you had to keep in mind, operating blacked out at night.

Moving to Topic 15, *Murchison's* performance compared with the other allied units. You were obviously very chummy with the rest of the Commonwealth units. Did you work with the US Navy much at all, at the tactical level?

Ah ... no, not very much at all, we weren't closely associated with them at all at the tactical level. The answer to that is, no.

Commendations. I don't know - I've lost my piece of paper - what does commendations say? - what does your question say?

Oh, I haven't got that far yet.

Oh, you haven't?

No, I'm still on comparisons between ...

Could you just call a halt for a moment while I find my piece of paper?

(break in interview)

We are talking about Topic 15, are we?

Yes.

Compared with other allied units. It's very difficult, I would say, to compare our performance with, as you say, the Americans, the British and New Zealand - well, British, New Zealand, and Australian, and Canadian, are absolutely compatible. We could move into each other's ships and slot in without even saying how do you do, and ships as a whole can move into a squadron of Canadian destroyers, a destroyer can slot into that, so there is no need to compare because we are one and the same. And I think I wouldn't want to go and say we are the best, or the Canadians are the best, or New Zealanders are the worst. I think we were all trained, at that time, in the same pipeline.

Sailing under the same ensign.

And sailing under the same ensign, exactly. But the American; well, I saw a lot of the Americans in the war, as I've said, and they do things the way we often wouldn't do them, but they do a lot of things very well too. And, of course, they rely on firepower and quantity. The quality is, perhaps, in some areas, is less forceful than ours, but in some areas - I can quote the Fleet Air Arm, or, as they call it, Naval Aviation - I think they can't be surpassed.

Oh, no.

The air battles in the war in the Pacific would fire the imagination.

They had the 'turkey shoot', didn't they - Midway, was it?

Midway was the 'turkey shoot', yes.

In your time in Korea, ship rotation, did you think it was too short, too long?

No, I thought, naturally, when you are told, you get your orders, everybody says, 'Whacko!' but no, we were ready to go on. I think we were there eight months and the ship was still operationally effective, the men were perfectly ready for extended operations, but I think we were glad to be called home, that's all. You see, the Peace Talks were on by this time - well, they were on all our time there, and they are still on today ...

Of course, yes.

... fifty years later.

You had spent a considerable amount of your time away from home during the Second World War so this was probably a relatively short time by comparison.

Oh, yeah.

I suppose the young ODs were probably keen to get home to Australia.

I'm sure they were, yes, but there was never any ... I never had any compassionate ... I don't think I had a compassionate request at all, the old story of mum needs me, or something. No, I think they had a very dedicated attitude to their work; they were happy to be sent home, but had we been required to carry on I'm sure there would be no slackening off.

A very, very good friend of mine was the chief bosun's mate before you sailed, a guy called Keith Baker. He would have loved to have been in your crew with you.

Yes, I remember him. Now, his replacement was - now, I've tried to think of his name a little while ago, got it written down there somewhere ...

He was the fellow on the back in, encouraging ...

That's right, that's right ... 'honours and awards', because I thought he should have got some.

Yes, well, let's talk about that, sir.

Just let me find his name - let's stop the clock for a little while.

(break in interview)

So I'm out of this equation and that needs no further saying; I was rewarded. But Kelly likewise, I recommended him and he was rewarded.

Now, no sailors were recognised at all, despite, I would say, anything up to fifteen or more recommendations that had been made through the usual channels.

Now, *Murchison* won the Gloucester Cup for 1951. I have the commendation there which says, 'For the most meritorious service, of any ship in the Royal Australian Navy, for the year 1951, particularly in the Han River.' Now, we got that cup which is very well regarded, but we didn't get a sailor decorated and I always regret that I didn't take it up officially; I didn't, I went on to other jobs and, you know, something new.

Now, we had people like Reg Farrington - that's who I'm trying to think of - Reg Farrington was chief bosun's mate. He was a brave man, he was the officer quarters of the aft 4-inch, as I've mentioned, and he was a fellow who was overboard pulling fishermen out of the water in these freezing conditions. He was a man who was always there when anything was happening. Terry I mentioned, the yeoman. The coxswain, Warwick Rowel, he was absolutely immaculate. When you are travelling in these channels - steaming in these channels - you are steering to half a degree, and he would steer exact, he was never flustered. But apart from that, his general conduct - he was one of the oldest hands on the ship - his influence on the ship's company was terrific. He had young helmsmen in the wheelhouse with him, in action, and he was very calm and doing exactly right. I relied one hundred per cent on him. If he made a mistake, we were up on the mud.

Now, all those people were recommended, and others too - I don't remember all the names - so if the ship did the best performance, why did the sailors not get recognised? You ask me about

honours and awards and was the system adequate. I don't think it was. The system, I think, depends upon ... I used to say how flamboyant the captain's secretary could be in writing recommendations, or how flamboyant the captain himself might be. That is very much so. There are situations, I know, where people guild the lily. Well, if I was doing it all over again I would now guild the lily to see that I got some reaction; I didn't.

I think, from my understanding in recent readings of awards and honours, there's a big barrel. You probably didn't have to guild the lily too much, there's big barrel which had to be shared amongst all the Commonwealth Naval Forces and the Commonwealth Armed Forces, the Army and the Air Force. So it the 3 RAR is getting heaps of DSMs and whatever, going up the hill, the batting order changes a bit.

Well, that conforms with what I'm saying. I think you have to encourage the whole raft of units. But in this case, why were my sailors left out? Now, I'm not asking you, but that's what I ask myself. I'd say, in answer to your question about honours and awards - Is the system adequate? - I think no, there should be an index type. Should it depend on how flamboyant your language can be, how far do you go? I've always considered it desirable to maintain a reasonably factual level of reporting. However, that's history.

Well, there's the obvious glaring omission, that was Lieutenant Commander Rank and H Marsh-Yarrow.

Oh, absolutely, oh, yes, there are many examples like that, I quite agree - and (there was) Sheahan, of course. Later there was a submarine named after him, but he should have been rewarded long before that.

I just want to ask you about your relationships with senior officers. You indicated that you had a bit of time with Rear Admiral Scott Moncrieff.

Well, when I say a bit of time, I called on him every time, as we all did, captains, every time you came in and reported. No, he was very good to work with, he hoisted his flag in most of the ships, he hoisted his flag in *Murchison* for our last tour of the Han River, and he made some very complimentary remarks about us, and our relationship with him was first-class. He relied upon us, he believed all the Australian ships - I'm not talking just about *Murchison* - he had an admiration for the standard of the Australian ships. No, our relationships with senior officers was good - British senior officers. With the Americans; I had one personal relationship with Dyer, he was very nice, very complimentary, very interesting. He knew exactly what was going on. I took him on a cook's tour of the Han River, which erupted under fire. We sailed back that night down to the charted area of [Samosamu], and returned him to his ship, the *Toledo*, and Captain Norfolk to his ship *The Black Swan*. He was very impressed with the work that the frigates were doing up in the Han River, and it changed his opinion too and we had some very nice signals back from him. But no, we got on well.

Do you want to know between the high command, there was a lot of discord - not so much discord as disagreement on, particularly, in our particular case, the matter that affected us, the desirability of risking ships for the PR effect of bombardment around Kaesong village about which they had different views. We didn't have any views on it, we just got ahead and did it. You get very involved in what you are doing, you are not too concerned at the lower level, in the small ships, about why you are doing it.

You had your job to do. We spoke about beer issues and things like that, and runs ashore in Japan. One question: What events, and perhaps administrative actions, had the most significant effects on the raising or lowering of morale?

Administrative actions?

Yeah, were there any?

External?

Yes ... Topic 21.

Yeah ... No, I don't think that flowed down to the small ship level. We didn't have any ... I'd been through the lowering ... the crew level of 80 - we built up to 180 - we had the old hands who were tough, and we had the young hands, and we had the breakdown of the fuel pumps and steaming by hand, which was a very depressing situation. That was a momentary or short-term lowering of morale only because they wanted to get at it, and so did every officer and sailor; so that was a disappointment. We were, perhaps ... there was a feeling that the ship should have been ready and we should have got it ready, and I think we should have had it ready. Whose responsible for seeing the spare gear is not right is the captain. But once we got involved in action, you are in action all the time, either sitting duck, as we were - called 'sitting duck' - in 'Smoking Concert' or up the Han River, or up Taewha Do, all over the place - you are active all the time and you are in two watches. You haven't got time to worry, and moan and groan about anything.

I never had any worry about health - we come to that, of course - that has a bearing on morale. Health was very good except for the perennial, never ending worry about VD; it was a real hazard. Unfortunately we lectured - if that's the word - or we talked to the crew, divisional officers spoke about it, but it didn't stop the instance of it, and it's still going on.

Was there any noticeable psychological problems with members of the ship's company?

No, nobody went mad, nobody fired a gun out of order, no, nothing happened at all.

You could expect, in those conditions, to probably have some stress of the mental ...

Well, you could have, but ships' companies are self-supportive, self-supporting, they lean on each other, and a fellow gets a lot of support from his mess mates. No, we didn't have any. I mean, if somebody really went off his rocker, well, obviously it's got to be dealt with, but we didn't.

And family's reactions to your absence in the war zone. Well, they were probably fairly used to you ...

I think they were glad to get rid of me. No, I was not married during the war, no, and I would always recommend any war people should not be married - I say that flippantly because you can't do that - because you don't have the worry. I do understand the worry that married men and their families have, but bachelors, unmarried men, and now women, they don't have the same level of worry - what if? - and so the war, to me, was never a worry. In Korea I was more anxious to get home to see my wife and new babies than I would have been had I been still

unconnected. We had one or two people wanting - before we left - who pulled out for compassionate reasons, but none after we sailed. I think, apart from the natural ...

The mail was mediocre, a lot went missing, which is the biggest worry - the mail is delivered by (inaudible) a lot of the time. They were pretty good, but not a hundred per cent. We had movies on board, we joined the Royal Navy movie fund, and we had movies whenever we could - the usual things.

I was going to tell you (in reference to the question), 'Were there any events which caused amusement or light relief?' When we left the last time with Admiral Scott Moncrieff flying his flag, we got a lot of signals from chummy ships and people saying the usual things - 'Goodbye', 'Good luck', 'Happy Homecoming', and all of that - and in amongst them was one from Kim Il Sung, who was then the President of North Korea, saying, 'Goodbye, good luck, we shall miss you as you have so often missed us.' We think that might have come from some sneaky source in one of our fellow ships.

It's got here that Moncrieff gave you the title, The Baron of the Han.

Yes, he did.

That was rather nice, wasn't it?

Have you read this book?

No, I haven't.

This is by the present president of the Murchison Association, Bob [Capes]. He just produced this, not long ago. It's very entertaining. Admiral Scott Moncrieff said to us, 'I dislike the thought of continuing the war without *Murchison*, but we'll have to accept it as a fact. You have been a tower of strength and your good name will always be associated with the infamous Han. No ship could have done better for fine seamanship and steadiness under fire. You have proved yourself beyond reproach. Good luck in all your sailings and a happy homecoming to you all.'

Now, while we were patting ourselves on the back for that he made another signal - I don't know whether it is here - in which he said, 'For your infamous ... you should be created Baron Murchison of the Han, Lord Fork and Viscount Spoon.' So the ship's company took it up and they called themselves 'The Baron of the Han'.

As we close now on this most interesting interview, Topic 25 allows for any particular recollections of interest or sensitivity that you'd like to discuss, if you wish to; or maybe it's a nice time to lead into reading the short article.

I don't think I've looked at that - I haven't got any subjects which I'd like to raise, I think they've all been raised in the general discussion. I have nothing further. If you'd like me to I'll read ... I wrote this ... so this is 'Real Time' which I gave to the ABC when we returned from Korea in February 1952, which is now clearly fifty years ago, so it does relate to the time as it was. I won't go into the introduction except to say that we arrived there with the Peace Talks in force and they were still going forth when we left, not having resolved anything except the stabilisation of the fighting around the 38th Parallel.

Actually, I've been back to Korea twice - this is not of this article - I've been back to Korea twice since the Korean War and I've been up to Panmunjom and seen the same divided line around the Han estuary where the two opposing forces are armed to the teeth, bristling at each other. The Americans have 37,000 troops there, the South Koreans about 500,000, I think, and the North Koreans anything up to double that, and they are all bristling at this demilitarised zone. You can look across the border and see the North Korean guards, armed of course, and knowing that they have heavy equipment - tanks, aircraft, everything - ready to go at a moment's notice, in the same way that the Americans and the South Koreans have. It's a very surreal situation up there.

This goes on to say:

'Ships of ten navies form the United Nations Naval Forces whose duty it is to conduct war from the sea against the enemy. This falls into three main tasks. The first is the support of our ground forces. This is given in the form of bombardments along both coasts, wherever the ships can bring their guns within range. Around-the-clock bombardment goes on from the fighting line to just short of the Chicom border on the north. As the main roads and railways, which are the enemy's supply routes, generally follow the coast this bombardment and harassment of the enemy has played a large part in upsetting his war potential. Ships have not had it all their own way as the enemy has been forced to divert some of its sorely needed artillery to the coast to answer back.

The second task is the enforcement of the blockade of Korea. At the outbreak of the war President Truman announced that in accordance with the Geneva Convention a blockade by sea of the Korean coastline was forthwith in effect. Since then, little or no outside help has reached North Korea from seaward. This has only been achieved by ceaseless patrolling and investigating by the United Nations Blockading Forces. This activity has included the supervision of fishing off the coasts. The staple diet of the Korean people is fish, their livelihood fishing. It is, therefore, a sound presumption that to deny the North Koreans the right to fish is to hasten their downfall. One of the greatest difficulties of blockading forces is to distinguish between North Korean and South Korean fishing junks. Both coasts abound with such vessels operating in all weathers and at night, usually with no lights until a ship approaches; then they show their lights, then, at high speed, the darkened warship weaves its way through this mass of lights.

The third and vital duty of the naval forces is air-sea rescue. Our airmen range by day and by night, far into enemy territory, and meet with stiff resistance both from AA batteries and from fighter aircraft. Ships must be constantly on the alert to rescue ditched airmen. This is often a nerve-racking job in the shallow waters of the west coast. The overall command of this naval force of mixed nationalities is invested in the command of the United States Naval Forces in the Far East, Vice Admiral C Turner-Joy, who is also the senior United Nations delegate at the Peace Talks. Working down through a chain of command, we in *HMAS Murchison* were under the direct operational control of the Flag Officer, Second-in-Command, British Naval Forces in the Far East, Rear Admiral A K Scott Moncrieff. In this force were ships of the Royal Navy, Australian, Canadian, New Zealand, Dutch, American, and South Korean navies. They worked in complete accord, showing the world a fine example of international naval cooperation.

For the first two months of our service in Korea, *Murchison* joined in the patrols in the Yellow Sea on blockade duties. The first excitement came on 21 July when, patrolling

close of the west coast, a tank was sighted and engaged. This was our first firing in anger and probably the tank received far more than it deserved. But the results were satisfactory in that the tank was seen to disintegrate and the spirits of the ship's company were uplifted by this brief encounter.

The following day we were ordered to join with other frigates to commence an operation to penetrate the Han River. Three frigates, *HMS Cardigan Bay*, *HMAS Murchison* and the Republic of Korea frigate 61, accompanied by three small patrol launches from the ROK Navy, formed the original force. The first night we proceeded through poorly-charted shallow waters to a position from which we could bombard the north bank of the Han. In the morning a survey showed that there was no further progress to be made in this direction so we retraced our steps. Unfortunately we got off the beaten track and found ourselves among sandbanks from which there seemed to be no opening to deeper water. The leader, *Cardigan Bay*, grounded several times while probing for an opening, but we astern, profiting by her experience, managed to keep some water beneath us. Eventually, with the assistance of carrier aircraft to guide us through the channels, we made open water.

The next day we were joined by another frigate, *HMS Morecombe Bay*, and choosing a different route commenced the tedious entry into the Han River. It took thirty-six hours to reach our final anchorage with ship's boats sent out ahead, sounding as they went. From this new advanced anchorage, which was eight miles west of the truce-talks city of Kaesong, our guns commanded a large area of the north bank of the Han. From here troop concentrations, supply dumps, and other targets, were subjected to round-the-clock bombardment.

During the first weeks there was little enemy reaction to our occupation of the Han other than to retire into the hills. Good use was made, between tides, which ran at rates of us to eight knots, to survey this muddy waste. Both crews and survey parties from the ships, assisted by Korean patrol craft, did a magnificent job under most difficult and unpleasant conditions, often under fire, and finally completing sounding and charting twenty-six miles of channel beyond the original anchorage, which was called the 'Fork'. During this period ships changed round, others joined and were relieved for replenishment and rest, but always during these months we found ourselves back in the Han.

Excursions in the Han by single frigates commenced in August. We found the channels, though navigationally hazardous, took us within close range of the north bank and added miles to the range of our guns. The communists were forced to withdraw further. It seemed only a matter of time when the enemy must take some action to dispute our complete control of these waters and, sure enough, it came. And while we in *Murchison* were carrying out a 'cook's tour', several senior officers, under whose orders we were operating, chose 28 September for an inspection tour of the Han estuary in *Murchison*.

We commenced our run at 1 p.m. and, having bombarded from all points, were on the last leg when we were met with heavy enemy fire from the nearby shores. Most of this fire was wild and inaccurate and became more so when all guns on *Murchison* returned fire. The ship received several minor hits and considerable shrapnel damage, but only one serious casualty, he being a member of a bosun's gun crew, who received a machine gun bullet through his arm. Most of the enemy guns were silenced.

Two days later we again proceeded up the same channel, this time anticipating trouble, and we were not disappointed. The outward leg was without incident, and having turned on our anchor and gathered weigh on the homeward run, battle again commenced. This time we received several holes in the side and one more serious casualty, and again, at point-blank range, varying from 200 to 4,000 yards. Our guns had the measure of the enemy and as we drew out of range at high speed most of his points had been destroyed.

Shortly after this action *Murchison* was relieved and we returned to Korea for repairs. For the next months we had no part in Han operations, but we were employed in defence of friendly islands on the west coast. A battery of enemy guns was causing considerable damage and casualties to a friendly island. From a sheltered anchorage on the disengaged side of the island we could range on this target by employing a ship's spotting team on the high point of the island. Successful countermeasures were effected.

Shortly afterwards *Murchison* was tasked to rescue survivors of a B-26 aircraft which had crashed further to the north. Most of the survivors had already been rescued by the air-sea rescue flying boats, but the copilot was eventually picked up by the ship's whaler manned by a stout-hearted crew who completed their job in the face of extreme difficulty and hazard.

In November we were required to operate in the Yalu Gulf in defence of islands in that area, and finally further duty in the Han River. In January the Han was at its most unpleasant with temperatures down to 9° Fahrenheit and ice forming on the river's surface. We paid the river our final visit on our last day's service in Korean waters, 31 January 1952, when we took Rear Admiral Scott Moncrieff for an inspection. When we sailed that night there were no expressions of regret that we would return no more. The Han with its mud flats and fast-flowing tides, and rising and falling 28 feet daily, and its inhospitable people, was a good place to leave.'

That mostly is a recap of what I've been saying, I think.

And that was from which journal?

United Nations.

The United Nations Services Quarterly.

I wrote that for the ABC; I gave it to the ABC, but they gave it to that (journal), I guess.

So that was in the United Nations Services Quarterly, Volume 5, Number 5, or April 1952. That was excellent, sir.

That brings to the conclusion - two hours and twenty minutes, would you believe?

I didn't think I talked for that long.

It's been an excellent interview.

Well, thank you for prompting me along the way, it brings back memories.

It helps me be part of it. It was a pleasure, and indeed an honour, for me to be here with you. Thank you, sir.

Thank you, Sam.

10/03