

~~-CONFIDENTIAL-~~

AUSTRALIAN CRUISE.

LETTER OF PROCEEDINGS.

H.M.S.A.S. "TRANSVAAL".

26th DECEMBER, 1950 TO 4th MARCH, 1951.

~~-CONFIDENTIAL-~~

H.M.S.A.S. "TRANSVAAL",
SALISBURY ISLAND,
DURBAN.

Sir,

I have the honour to submit the following Letter of Proceedings for the period 26th December, 1950 to 5th March, 1951, during which H.M.S.A. Ship TRANSVAAL under my command voyaged to AUSTRALIA to attend the Jubilee of Commonwealth Celebrations.

2. Certain aspects of the period under review have not been included, as they form the contents of the reports submitted by the Senior South African Naval Officer for the cruise. Observations and records in detail are submitted as annexures to this Report. A list of these annexures is appended.

3. The following personnel additional to normal complement joined the Ship before sailing :-

Commander H.E. FOUGSTEDT, V.R.D. as Senior Officer
for the Cruise.

Surgeon Lieutenant J. B. PORTEOUS, S.A.N.R.
as Medical Officer.

Captain W.A.F. CILLIERS, Chaplain.

Sub-Lieutenant K. ENDERBY, of the Port Elizabeth
Detachment, S.A. Naval Reserve.

Sub-Lieutenant J.B. WESTON, of the Durban Detachment,
S. A. Naval Reserve.

Mr. S.M. DE VILLIERS, of the South African Broadcasting
Corporation.

9 Ratings of the Johannesburg Detachment, S.A. Naval Reserve.

7 Ratings of the Durban Detachment, S.A. Naval Reserve.

7 Ratings of the Cape Town Detachment, S.A. Naval Reserve.

2 Ratings of the Port Elizabeth Detachment, S.A.N.R.

On departure from South Africa, a total of 152 persons were embarked.

4. Having fired a gun salute in reply to that of the visiting French Cruiser "JEANNE D'ARC", the Ship slipped and proceeded at Noon on Tuesday, 26th December, 1950, and at 1232B the Initial Course of the Great Circle Track from Durban to FREMANTLE was set (113 degrees). Speed 12,5 knots. It was my intention to proceed on a modified Great Circle Track in order to both reduce the distance to be steamed, and to obtain the benefit of following winds in the higher latitudes, without proceeding so far South as to enter an area of rough seas and heavy swells.

5. On departure from DURBAN, the ship encountered a rough Southerly sea and heavy SSW swell. Following on the excesses of the Festive Season, these two factors had an effect on the Ship's Company which can only be described as disastrous.

6. Courses were adjusted to follow the Great Circle Track until the latitude of 37 degrees 43 minutes South was reached at 0745 D on Sunday, 31st December, when course was altered to 090 degrees.

7. On New Year's Day, New Year messages were signalled to the Honourable the Minister of Defence, the South African High Commissioner, Canberra, the Australian Commonwealth Navy Board, the Director-General of Naval Forces and the Naval Officer in Charge, Fremantle. Seasonal greetings from I.N.S. "RAJPUT" and H.M.P. Ships "SHAMSHER" and "SIND" were reciprocated. When sixteen beels were struck at midnight on Old Year's Night an impromptu "sing-song" in which Officers and Men participated was held on deck until 0200. This was a most happy occasion.

8. Signals were exchanged with, and weather forecasts received from the French Meteorologists on AMSTERDAM ISLAND on the first two days of January. The six inhabitants of the island extended a cordial invitation to us to land at the island, but this was to prove impracticable. The island was detected by radar at a range of 75 miles at 0045 E on Wednesday, 3rd January, 1951, but was not sighted until 0530 E being completely enveloped in low cloud.

9. As the Admiralty chart of Amsterdam Island is based on the running surveys of D'ENTRECASTEAUX in 1792, supplemented by those of H.M.S. "PEARL" in 1873, with few recorded soundings, a gingerly approach was made towards the island. On approaching HOSKEN POINT, a group of neat well-built buildings surrounded by vegetable gardens indicated the site of the meteorological station, situated near the landing place opposite Pearl Anchorage. A small steamer was observed to be at anchor close inshore about a cable north of NOVARA POINT, and a motor-boat was sighted making its way towards us. Our visitor proved to be Commandant VERDAVAINNE of the M.V. "SAPMER" of Marseilles, who greeted us with Gallic enthusiasm. His boat was crammed to the gunwales with crayfish, which he presented to us without further ado.

10. The M.V. "SAPMER" is a fine modern vessel of about 1,000 tons gross, fitted with refrigerated fish holds. We learned, to our astonishment, that she makes regular voyages between France and Amsterdam Island, fishing the prolific grounds until loaded to her marks. Surely this must be the longest regular fishing venture on record! Commandant Verdavainne, an Officer in the French Naval Reserve, was a most unusual type of man to be master of a fishing vessel. I obtained the impression of a charming and cultured personality with a keen sense of humour. He made great play of the fact that we were meeting on the 38th Parallel, and when we made a gift of whisky to him, he insisted that we closed his ship for more fish!

11. An exchange of ship photographs further cemented the "Entente Cordiale", and at 0900 after an exchange of friendly farewell messages with the "SAPMER", and with our Quarterdeck strewn with fish, we returned to the Meteorological Station. A northerly swell rendered any attempt at landing out of the question, but a series of flag hoists were made and replied to by the disappointed group standing on the

foreshore. Course and speed were resumed at 1015 E.

12. AMSTERDAM ISLAND would cause our own meteorologists on Marion Island to be most envious. Hundreds of wild cattle were observed to be roaming the island and fresh vegetables can be grown with apparent ease. Unlike the old chart of Marion Island, the existing chart of Amsterdam Island appears to be fairly accurate and reliable.

13. The Great Circle Track was resumed at 0600 F on Saturday, 6th January, on a course of 076 degrees. The voyage proceeded without incident until the first sign of Australia was observed at 0325 H on Wednesday, 10th January, when the loom of ROTTNEST ISLAND Light was raised at a range of 60 miles. During the entire passage from Durban to Fremantle, apart from the M.V. "SAPMER", no other ship had been sighted.

14. Arrival was made off the Breakwater at FREMANTLE at 0950 H, and the ship secured alongside E/F Berth at Victoria Quay by 1040. The Officer of the Guard, Lieutenant-Commander R.A. BOWRA, R.A.N.V.R. boarded on arrival alongside, and at 1100 the Senior Officer and I called on the Naval Officer in Charge, Captain H.L. HOWDEN, C.B.E. R.A.N. This call was returned at 1130, and at 1145 Senator MALCOLM SCOTT, representing the Commonwealth Government, and the Honourable Mr. WILD, representing the State Government of Western Australia, officially welcomed the Ship to Australia. Before departure, Senator Scott told me how impressed he was with the youthful and healthy appearance of the Ship's Company.

15. In the course of the afternoon, calls were paid on His Excellency the Governor, Sir JAMES MITCHELL, and the Honourable the Premier of Western Australia, Mr. McLARTY. The Governor's Aide-de-Camp returned His Excellency's call at 1630. A tour of PERTH and its surroundings had been arranged by the State Jubilee Committee, and 66 ratings availed themselves of this opportunity to see the sights. In the evening, Officers and ratings attended a Reception in Perth held by the International Goodwill League.

16. At 1100 on Thursday, 11th January, all Officers attended a reception by the Mayor of Fremantle, Sir FRANK GIBSON, M.L.C., at the Town Hall, Fremantle. At 1245 a call was paid on the Lord Mayor of Perth, Councillor J. TOTTERDELL, followed by a Civic Luncheon for the Officers and Ship's Company in the Town Hall, Perth. The Ship's Company showed their appreciation of this honour by giving three rousing cheers, a gesture greatly enjoyed by our hosts. At 1430 Officers and men attended a reception by the Returned Servicemen's League held at Anzac House, Perth, and in the evening a Dance was held for ratings at the Town Hall, Fremantle. This was a great success. Officers were guests at a private dance at the residence of the Naval Officer in Charge, a function also thoroughly enjoyed by all present.

17. Departure was made from FREMANTLE at 1030 H on Friday, 12th January, and on rounding ROTTNEST ISLAND the Ship encountered a strong head wind, a condition which was to prevail for nearly the entire passage to SYDNEY. CAPE LEEDWIN was rounded at 0108 H on Saturday, 13th January, and the Ship entered the Great Australian Bight when ECLIPSE ISLAND was abeam at 1610 H on that day.