

Dear Lorna,

I have been going to write to you for a long time, at last I have started.

Well what do you think of your Uncle Stan didn't I tell you what we would do to any enemy the warship which crossed our path, & we weren't even trying either, next time we will use both hands.

Some one told me that you had been keeping Mummy a lot lately, so when I get home I will let you have the honour of starting our first fight. I reckon I ought to be just about ^{ready} for an encounter too.

I have no idea when I will get home though, I hope it isn't too long, but when I do I will have a lot more leave than I had last time.

I might want to sleep all the time to catch up on what I have lost

over here, & it's great to think of
a good bed after spending so many
nights on the deck or tops of business.

Helda told me that she had
joined the A. S. F., I am glad
I am in the Navy & not the
army.

I sleep in ^{late} some times of a morning
when we are in harbour & one
morning I was caught & nearly
got run in.

I suppose you must be in a high
grade at school now & I hope you
still are at or near the top of
the class. There must be lots of
kids at school whom I don't know.

I can't think of any more to
write you Lorna so I will back
up now hoping you are well & don't
fight with Leslie, not too much
anyhow.

Your Warrant Officer
Wm. L.

Steve

THE MACKAY DAILY MERCURY.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1941.

MEDITERRANEAN EXPERIENCES

Marian Man's Service On H.M.A.S. Sydney

THE demeanor of the lads of the Royal Australian Navy during numerous stirring actions in the Mediterranean was vividly described by First-Class Stoker Stanley Paul, of H.M.A.S. Sydney, to a 'Mercury' representative yesterday.

As previously mentioned he looks the picture of health after his lengthy sojourn at sea, and is enjoying immensely meeting many of his boyhood friends in Mackay.

It is seldom that occurrences of such a momentous nature have been crowded into the life of a young man who has just reached his 21st year and leaving the new world to see service on seas which the navies of the world have furrowed for thousands of years—Singapore, Colombo, Aden, the Suez Canal, and the Mediterranean have constituted scenes which will doubtless remain long in his memory, particularly that of Arab camel trains passing over the desert. In peace time, of course, such would very likely be more numerous but there was sufficient to add that mystic touch which the desert supplies as the sun sinks to rest beyond the interminable stretches of sand.

"ALWAYS IN TROUBLE."

The monotony of shipboard life was relieved in many ways, but in the circumstances there was sufficient to keep the men alert in the fact that they were liable to attack, either by hostile ships or aircraft, at any moment. This is emphasised by the fact that H.M.A.S. Sydney became known as the vessel that was always striking trouble. She was in numerous air raids, indeed, so often was she attacked in this manner that her crew became so accustomed to it that members would rush to the decks to get a good view of Italian and German planes circling overhead at so high an altitude that they appeared to be mere dots in the sky.

As a consequence of their endeavor to keep out of range of the "flaming onions" from the latest A.A. guns, their aim was inaccurate. To such an extent was this so that the Sydney at no time received a direct hit, although splinters flew with practically no damage.

In addition to encounters with aircraft the Sydney was included in the squadron which chased the Italian fleet on more than one occasion. That, of course, said First-Class Stoker Paul, was an exciting phase of the cruise, and the men, although somewhat disappointed at being unable to overtake the fast-moving enemy, were pleased to know that they had pursued their quarry almost to his home ports.

FIRST TASTE OF WARFARE.

The Sydney's first encounter was with three Italian destroyers, of which one was sunk, and from which 47 survivors were picked up. The other two managed to get away under a smoke screen. This was the first taste the boys had of actual warfare and they were beginning to feel supreme confidence in their officers and ship.

A port bombardment brought forth the first "angry" shot from the Sydney since the war commenced. The guns roared as they were deftly served by the ratings, but although it did not last very long a considerable amount of damage was occasioned.

The Bartolomeo Colleoni was the next incident, and was regarded by all on board as a real "dinkum go." Looking upon it as a major engage-

ment the boys considered they were at last at grips with the enemy. Jokes were passed and here the Australian spirit was revealed as it was on the fields of France and Flanders on many historical occasions.

It appears that immediately prior to the engagement, cards, huckees, and other games were beguiling the tedium of life on board. When the call to stations was sounded a change seemed to come over everyone, and there was light-hearted banter, with such humor as "Mate; hold my bank book." &c.

The roar of the guns was terrific, said First-Class Stoker Paul, who was below with the fire-party close to a gangway leading to the upper deck. He added that he did not actually see the fight itself, but when the action was over he was able to view the Italian cruiser which was in a desperate plight from the mauling administered by the Sydney. The vessel was blazing in several parts and presented a spectacle of hopeless wreckage.

He saw the destroyers closing in and finishing the Bartolomeo Colleoni with torpedoes, which work was carried out with the skill always shown by British seamen.

The enemy cruiser in a space of time which seemed to be about a minute went to the bottom and 500 survivors were rescued. The Sydney sustained only two slight casualties and no damage of any consequence.

Vigilance was the foundation of life aboard the Sydney. The work was not strenuous, he said, but the routine was hard. Each man was at his action station at night and slept on his post. The lookouts, of course, were ready to give the alarm at any moment. This was the regular practice in waters carrying hostile craft and air bombers ready to attack at any time. The companionship was good and no one seemed to worry.

ANCIENT WORLD VISITED.

In his travels First-Class Stoker Paul was fortunate in being able to visit such ancient cities as Athens, Alexandria, and the naval base at Malta. Here again it was the old and the new, and the reception, received by the crew at Athens, he said, was beyond description. In fact, everywhere the men landed they were received with open arms.

It can be very cold, as well as very hot in the Mediterranean, said the young sailor, but he found the Red Sea the worst in regard to the latter. He added that he had seen more in a 12 months' cruise with the navy than he would have seen for the rest of his life if he had remained a civilian.

All phases of human existence had held the stage, and the Oriental habits and character gave much food for contemplation in quieter moments.

A native of Marian he was educated there, his teacher being Mr. H. Grant, who has long since been transferred to other parts of the State. He was working at the Marian mill when he felt the call to the sea and, sensing a clash in the offing, he preferred the navy to the army. He added that he had received three months training before the war and had not been troubled by seasickness.



Hearty Greetings from Egypt

From Stan

To Edie & Andy

Lorrie & Leslie

'Tisn't new, 'tisn't clever
But it's the greatest greeting ever,
Merry Christmas
And here's its twin, that fits right in
Happy New Year.

Do. hope you can make a story
from what I have sent,

have enclosed two photo's of Stan.
could not decide which of the two

Laura Dennis



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