

3 March, 2000

While looking for material for Phil, I found a couple of references to you and other matters in my father's letters to my mother, either written from Fremantle while waiting for Sydney to return from convoy duty, or those written at sea while Sydney escorted convoys round Australian waters.

Do you remember our conversation last year about my father's job on Sydney? Although my mother told me he was Chief Buffer you were of the opinion that he wasn't. Here's some extracts from some of his letters. .

22 October, 1941

**"I have the job on deck we spoke about and feel sure [that] in a few weeks I'll be as good as ever, all the people that matter understand that I've been ashore for a long period and therefore would be a little rusty but I told the Commander that in a couple of weeks I ought have a good grip on the job"**

Does that tell you what the job was? Probably not. My only comment is that they must have been very short of CPO's to have need of a 44 year old with no recent sea-going experience.

31 October, 1941

**"Went ashore at Bunbury [Qld ?] with Bill Sands. We had a couple of drinks, a good time and was back on the ship by 8pm, what a good influence I must be. Perhaps it was to create a good impression, his wife and family are still in Sydney"**

Did you know Bill Sands? Apparently he liked a drink. His wife and family eventually lived in Frankston. I think he was based at FND.

7 November, 1941

**"We will be calling at Fremantle on our way up...the ship is rolling badly..."**

**The other day we passed Torchy's ship, there is a possibility I may see him at our next port, their convoy is much faster than ours but I hope they will not have left before our arrival...Every morning at dawn, we have what is called a stand to, that means that every man is at his action stations, these days it means turning out about half past three..."**

After my 1990 trip to Hamburg and the Kormoran reunion, an ex Sydney sailor Alastair (Slim) Templeton wrote to me saying that he was coming to London and had something to tell me about the Sydney/Kormoran action. We eventually met and he told me that he had served on Sydney under Burnett while she was on convoy duty in Australian waters (this may have been October '41, just before my father joined). He said that one night in the Bight, a mystery ship was detected from the bridge.

Burnett had ordered a search light to be switched on and the 'mystery' turned out to be part of the convoy. Templeton said that an older sailor alongside him commented 'Slim, this bloke will be the death of us before too long' Templeton also said that Sydney was a notorious for rolling in even moderate seas.

Given that Sydney's first salvo went over Kormoran, perhaps excessive rolling was a factor in her being fatally crippled before she finally was able to deal with Kormoran. What do you think?

**9 November, 1941 (10 days before Sydney/Kormoran action)**

**“Tomorrow we arrive in port...(Fremantle?) there is a chance that Torchy may be there, their convoy is much faster than ours...they made a fine sight when passing them in the Bight...How are the Thompsons keeping, hope Hugh will be home for the event (reference to Nancy's impending birth). A chap on here seems quite content with the job and I think he is the one Hugh would relieve so unless it is done from depot he safe for some time yet”**

Well, sadly you never met again. I would have thought that anyway the RAN, given their limited resources would not want two of their warships in port at the same time. I am wondering which ship you were on at the time.

It would appear that Hugh T. was eventually going to be posted to Sydney.

Finally, I'm amazed these letters from my father were not censored. He mention that there was none in Australian waters.

I've finished with 'The last corsair' so don't need it back. Perhaps Robert would like to read it.