Australians at War Film Archive

George Bourne - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:32 Right, my name is George Bourne. I was born on the 10th of January 1923 in Winton, Queensland. Lived between there and Emerald for two or three years

01:00 and then moved to Brisbane. Was in Brisbane living at Coopooroo for probably five or six years and about that time my mother and father broke up and I went to Quilpie with

01:30 my mother and sister who by that time was a petit mal epileptic. And we lived with her brother on a property between Quilpie and Eromanga. We were out there for twelve months, a little bit more perhaps. During which time I

02:00 was taught by the correspondence school. Lessons used to arrive in the mail regularly and we would work at them doing the things we were supposed to do. There were a number of other children there, cousins of mine and it was a very interesting life so far as I was concerned.

02:30 A city kid way out there in the country. It was a sheep property with a lot of sand hills on it, a lot of salt bush but it was a soft sort of salt bush, grey salt bush grew on the sand hills. And what wasn't sand hills and other sort of

03:00 mulga country, was clay pans which, when it rained, grew lots of herbage for the sheep and so on. My first experience was out there with really cold weather. I had only recollections of Brisbane, no specific recollections of Winton and the winter out there

03:30 was very cold. I can remember the creek near the house and the earth tank near the house freezing at the edges and walking around in bare feet was quite good fun. We used to catch crayfish in the creek and boil them up. They were very nice to eat. The property

04:00 had a well established citrus orchard and it was all together quite a pleasant time as far as I was concerned. After I left there, I went to Sacred Heart boarding school at Whinstanes [Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College for Boys at Whinstanes] It ultimately became

04:30 I understand, a theological college and it is now at Coopooroo. I spent about eighteen months there and had to leave there to have some surgery on my nose and that was my scholarship year. I

05:00 went back to school but not to Whinstanes, I went to the Warlin State School for the period when I got over the surgery until the end of the year and I sat for a scholarship in a school somewhere down in the Valley [Fortitude Valley] somewhere, near the Valley baths I know, but I can't remember the name of it.

05:30 And of course didn't pass because I had missed some months of the year. No recollections of what happened over the Christmas break that year, but at the beginning of the next year, went to Ipswich Grammar School and I was there for two and a half years,

06:00 and straight from there to employment. Just a diversion, back on Quilpie, I can remember an occasion when we kids used to drive and ride the calves around the cow yard and if the calf didn't want to perform, somebody usually wielded a bale pin which is the broken end of an auger and it had a ring on the end about so big

06:30 and a piece of steel about this long and I can remember one day somebody whacking one of these calves and brought the thing over their shoulder and whacked me fair across the nose. Well I carried that broken nose until I was about seventy when it was straightened. I can't remember any other really interesting things,

07:00 other than there was an old black stockman employed on the place. He was a quiet old fellow that just used to sit on his haunches around the yard if he wasn't mustering or doing any of the station work. Seemed quite happy with the life. Crows and their behaviour was quite interesting

07:30 on that place. They were most unpopular because of the damage they would do to young stock. And if somebody got at them with a shotgun, usually one of them would fall out of a tree going, “hark, hark, hark!” and wander around on the ground while everybody else got out of the road and then he would fly off.

08:00 I haven’t seen that done by any other birds in my life time. Went to Ipswich, I wasn’t new at boarding school but it was a big school and the one that I had been at before had only been a small one. Big, I say because I think there were about a hundred students there at the time and this would have been

08:30 about 1935, thereabouts. We had no swimming pool at the school when I first went there. You had to participate in all sports, particularly the football. And it was a bit of a learning curve

09:00 as far as I was concerned. Coping with all of these fellows that were bigger and stronger than I was. And there was quite an established pecking order, you know, the new boys did all of the fetch and carry ,and the ones that had been there twelve months, somebody went and got things for them. And then when you had been there twelve months and there was some new ones

09:30 well then, they went and got things for you and that’s the way it went on right through the school. I can remember we had a scout troop there, of which I was a member. I can remember on one occasion going and camping with another scout on the Brisbane River. Catching fish out of the river, which was possible in those days.

10:00 Wrapping them up in newspaper putting them under the fire. Building the fire up and letting it go down overnight and then next morning there was your breakfast all cooked and ready. That was interesting from my point of view. We used to go finding

10:30 fossils and things in the overburden or the rubbish that was dug out of the mines in Ipswich. That was quite an interesting activity, extra curricular activity anyhow. And when the Bremer River was in flood, it was to get out of school somehow, nobody knew we were out of course, and have a swim in the river.

11:00 And you would, we had a favourite spot where you got into the river and swam across the river, but you were carried way down the river so you walked back up the river on the other side and swam back being swept down stream again. And you did that for as long as you thought you could get away with it and then you got back to school and you hoped nobody saw you getting back over the back fence.

11:30 I think the old shed that we used to get behind to get over the fence is still there. Haven’t been up there for a few years so it may not be. When I left, I did junior and was waiting for employment and went back and I was going to redo the junior exam. I had passed it on the first occasion

12:00 but if I had got a better pass it might have helped employment prospects later on. I went more or less straight from school to work at Primaries which was a wool brokering commission agent, stock selling

12:30 firm. It was a co-operative at the time. I think it has passed into limbo as such and is now a public company. I think they now call it Primac but I am not sure. Worked there as a junior office boy for some time.

13:00 I used to have to fold all of the circulars that went out with all of the market reports to all of the clients and collect mail, do bankings, get lunches for all of the staff. Did everything that a junior in an office does. There was about half a dozen of us, young fellows all about the same age.

13:30 Gradually as opportunity offered in various departments, we got moved up the ladder a little bit. We were paid when we went there a bit more than the award wage. We were paid two pound a week and that was because a lot of the young fellows who were there were country fellows or country boys

14:00 and they had to pay board. So that gave them enough money to pay board where the award wage wouldn’t have. But you stayed on two pound a week until the award caught up with you and that might be three years, four years whatever. I would have gone there working probably in

14:30 the middle of 1938, I think. Just over fifteen. And well the war started in September ‘39 and I would have been then sixteen, nearly seventeen.

15:00 I was too young to be thinking of war service, at that time anyhow and we just worked on, the young ones. As time went on some of them went off to study at night doing maths with the idea of becoming air force air crew.

15:30 I reckoned that the maths was too much for me so I didn’t take that on and wasn’t particularly keen on the army so that only left the navy to be of interest. And I, one of the fellows in the office who was a little older than I that had joined

16:00 the navy, and I talked to him a bit. At the exhibition, those times they used to have displays of the equipment and uniforms and all of the stuff that went with the various services, and I went and looked at all of that. It was a very serious business,

16:30 and then decided I would join the navy.

Could you go into a bit more detail about the presentations they had for the different services?

Well they were designed to recruit people. It was a fairly extensive display of uniforms,

17:00 types of things they did, types of equipment they used. I imagine in the air force display, would have been the guns, the various types of guns they were using. Photos of planes, because they wouldn't have had any actually planes there,

17:30 details of what sort of training you undertook, what you finished up doing when you got to where you qualified to where ever it was. Much the same as navy, they would have had a torpedo there broken down so that you could see some of the bits of it,

18:00 uniforms, signal lights, probably a gun of some sort, naval gun of some sort there, and experienced people there to talk you about it. And the army probably would have had a Bren gun carrier and the ordinary rifle and then they had a light machine gun, Bren gun

18:30 they used to use in those carriers. And all of the normal sort of stuff, what you did, where you went, what camps were like. What the training, what you imagined training might be like. Training wasn't necessarily what you thought it would be when you

19:00 got there. And that would have been there each year in August at the exhibition. And of course they would have had their recruiting offices in the city which would have had similar sorts of displays. See most of the services, well all of the services at that time were

19:30 all volunteers. There were no called up people, although I remember when I was eighteen they started to call up people for army service mainly. The other services remained fully volunteer during the whole of the war. But on

20:00 the first occasion when I went to the recruiting office of the navy, which was down in the Alice Street Depot I think, well to apply anyhow, I was rejected as not being medically suitable. I had flat feet. And so I went off to get some treatment

20:30 and correct these flat feet and so many months later when the bloke that was looking after the process said, "Well you should be right now", I applied again and got in and nobody ever asked or wanted to look at my feet subsequently.

21:00 I stood on them for four years or so and flattened them properly by the time I had finished.

What was the treatment for flat feet that you were getting?

I wore a pad under the arch of my foot and I did exercises and that strengthened the feet apparently sufficiently

21:30 and got them strong enough to stand up and not sort of go flat under my weight. I wasn't heavy at the time, I was a pretty slim sot of fellow. I had to wait some months for call up.

22:00 Just how many months I don't know. I was ultimately, I was told to present myself on the tenth of January 1942, the day I turned nineteen, to be sworn in and we marched from the depot all in civvies [civilian clothes],

22:30 we marched from the Alice Street Depot to South Brisbane station. Got on the train and off we went to Melbourne. I don't remember how we got from Melbourne station to Flinders Naval Depot. Because we would have got into

23:00 the sort of country railway station in Melbourne, Spencer Street, I think it is and we would have gone to Westernport [Westernport Bay], down to Flinders. I can't remember how we went down there. But that was an interesting time. We arrived in civvies of course.

23:30 I think it was a day or two before we got any uniform issued to us. But we had to sleep in hammocks from the very first night so that the first thing we had to learn was how to get into a hammock without

24:00 falling out of it. It takes a little practice. And they used to have bins about, five or six foot high in corners that all of the hammocks were rolled up and stacked in there during the day. They weren't ever left hanging.

24:30 And the hammocks were always hung, that would be on bars, about every three or four feet, I suppose every four feet, they would be apart. And they were far enough off the floor that you could walk around underneath them without banging your head so they would have been six to seven feet off the floor.

25:00 And the hammocks that you were issued with were a piece of canvas about three foot six wide and six foot long and a whole lot of holes in the end of it and fine ropes into a metal ring, in

25:30 which was spliced a rope about an inch, three quarters of an inch diameter and you had to learn how to secure that rope, one end on one rail, the other end on the other rail, so that they wouldn't slip when

you got into the hammock.

26:00 And then somehow or other you had to get off the floor into that hammock. Well if you were there early enough, you slung your hammock over the top of the bins so that you could climb on the bin and get into your hammock without trouble. But you weren't always there early and you had to do it the hard way. And there were a lot of people who swung themselves up one side and straight down the other side of the hammock.

26:30 If you fall, you know, six foot onto the floor a few times you soon find a way not to do it. That was the first experience I suppose, apart from going into a big mess full of lots of people lining up with a plate and the food

27:00 being whacked on the plate as you go along. Not like they have these days it is not.

Were there any similarities of boarding school that came to mind?

I suppose the principal one was the fact that you had a lot of people there that you didn't know but had to live with

27:30 and you found ways of doing it. There was enough interest in the process though, you were pretty happy. I don't remember any bad blood on any occasion during my naval service. They all seemed to be able to live, and

28:00 you live pretty close together. We went in as a new entry to the course, into a particular part of the place. Oh before we get away from the hammocks, you had to learn how to roll up a hammock and tie it up so that it wouldn't come undone. And you had to put seven turns of rope around it

28:30 and then secure the end of it so it didn't come undone. So that the thing would stand on its end because inside the hammock you had a narrow mattress, about eighteen inches wide and an inch and a half thick and a blanket and that was it.

29:00 If you wanted extras you had to acquire them, buy them. The issuing of uniforms went on over a period of a bout a week I think and the unusual nature of the arrangement in the navy was that you received a

29:30 clothing allowance, you received so much a day plus a clothing allowance and after you got your initial issue of clothing and kit, any replacements you had to pay for. They had a store where you could go and buy them at I suppose naval cost prices, I don't know.

30:00 But if you wanted an extra shirt, pair of boots or towel, you went and paid for it and nobody worried about how much gear you got. The only thing was you had to carry it with you where ever you went. You had a hammock and a kit bag which stood about

30:30 four foot high, about eighteen inches round, with a rope re-enforcement on the bottom of it and that was your gear. Anything else you had to carry in other bags or ports [suitcases] or anything that you could get a hold of. Later on, when you were on ships it became a question of where you

31:00 store all of these extra carrying receptacles and of course there wasn't anywhere to store them anyhow.

Did any guys go a bit crazy with having too much gear?

No. You don't, you can only wear so much at a time. Whatever you have got you have got to look after, you have got to wash it and iron it and there was

31:30 quite an attention to your turn out in those early few weeks, which you spent parade bashing. I am not sure how many weeks we did, seemed a long time at the time but it mightn't have been too long. You learnt to march, you learnt to move in various directions under marching direction.

32:00 You did regular PT [physical training]. By the time you were finished you were pretty fit. One thing I was quite surprised about, we were wearing square necked shirts which came out well clear of the neck and round hats that gave no shade

32:30 and I got the best sunburning I ever had in my life on my shoulders, marching. You just had to put up with that, that was part of the, you had to wear the right gear. You couldn't have anything covering your burnt areas,

33:00 they just had to get better under their own steam.

Did you get taught to iron your uniform properly and that sort of thing or?

You were shown by an experienced sailor and that was all. It was usually, "What do I do here?" They had a couple of old hands in every group. See I went down as a potential signalman,

33:30 so there was say forty of us in that class, which was a mess. That was treated as a group in a mess, we had a certain area in the dormitory which was ours and we all moved as a group. If we went from the dormitories to the parade ground

34:00 we went as a group. We always moved, if we marched from the parade ground back to lunch, we marched as a group. We formed up somewhere regularly and we marched everywhere, always the same group. After we finished our time on the parade ground, we then went off into our various directions and in our case we

34:30 went to the signals school which was a separate establishment away from the other parts of the depot. And at the same time we moved out of the original dormitories we were in, into the big brick blocks that faced the parade ground.

35:00 They were open to the westerly and southerly winds and the doors were always open, there was no,

Can I ask how you were identified as a potential signalman?

Well I was offered a choice of,

35:30 I wanted to do, did I want to be a seaman, seaman gunner, seaman torpedo man, writer, which was a clerk, did I want to be a cook? A steward? You were given an option. They were recruiting for certain of those things. Could have been a stoker which was

36:00 the bloke that looked after all of the engines and motors and thing. They were usually recruiting for various callings and fortunately for me, I was interested in the signalling probably because of what I had seen on the displays and what they were doing.

36:30 They only sort of took groups that were going to go into the various areas at the one time. Now when we went down there could have been a group of seamen went down and a group of stokers, and a group of signals and one of the others.

37:00 Now in the case of the signalmen, I think we went into the signals school probably in February and we came out in June which was four months. Now there might have been two classes in the signal school at the time, that was as many as could be trained.

37:30 Where we were in Flinders for six months, the seamen were in Flinders for three months, they went off to their training and then to ships more quickly than we did. As to why I chose to be a signalman, the whole process seemed to interest

38:00 me at the time. When we were in the parade ground, part of our training, we were offered the opportunity of doing an officer training course. I think the educational qualification for signalman were probably higher than the

38:30 educational qualifications for some of the other ratings. Anyhow those with sufficient educational qualifications were offered the opportunity of applying for an officer training course. I was sufficiently interested in the signalling at the time to not apply

39:00 and I don’t think there were any of our crew that did. But it was very interesting time. You were learning Morse [Morse Code], learning to send and receive it, learning to do semaphore, learning to do semaphore with mechanical arms,

39:30 learning a whole series of flags. The naval flags are quite different, that’s probably not quite right, the naval code of flags uses international flags

40:00 in different places to what they are used in the international code. For example flag A in the international code might be D or something else in the naval code and those naval flag signals,

40:30 which were usually three flags in length, were what we used primarily for manoeuvring at sea. So we had to learn the flags so that we knew exactly where to grab a flag out of the locker, where it would be,

41:00 to bend it on and hoist it. We had to be able to recognise the flag by its silhouette so that we could identify the signal. And then we had to have an idea what that signal might mean or where to look for it in the book which was ‘so’ thick,

41:30 and see how ships manoeuvred. We used to do them on a board with little ships about an inch and a half long and the various turns and manoeuvres that they could do. We would hoist these signals and then execute them and then they would be manoeuvred. We got into some

42:00 real funny messes on that manoeuvring board.

Tape 2

00:36 Well, the procedure with the flags, signals, is that the senior officer in a fleet will hoist a number of flags in a hoist and the fleet signal book is a series of three letter

01:06 signals which mean certain things. Now those signals are hoisted by the senior officer. When he wants to do whatever the signal tells you, he just drops his signal and everybody else drops theirs and away they go because everybody repeats his signal

01:36 and the time to take action is when he drops his signal. And the game used to be in the fleet, this is a little bit out of time, but the game amongst the destroyers in the fleet anyhow used to be,

02:06 the bloke who got the signal up first, the repeat of the signal up first, was top boy. It was a competition between the various destroyers who had probably four signalmen and a leading hand and yeoman on board and they were competitive because they had the same staff. The cruisers and battleships and carriers had lots more signalmen so there wasn't any point in competing. But to get back to the manoeuvring part

02:36 of the works, the manoeuvre may say 'turn ninety degrees port' and you might be steaming in line and it might say, 'turn in line', or you might be steaming abreast and the signal might say 'turn in line' which means that

03:06 if it says ' turn 90 degrees port' well that's 90 degrees to the left and all the ships have got to turn. Well if they're in particular formations, it might be dangerous to turn everybody sharp left. Somebody might end up inside

03:36 somebody else. When we were learning all this, we used to have a whole series of little brass ships shaped like rowing boats and they were just moved around on the table according to

04:06 the signals that were sent. The yeoman might have certain, he was the instructor, he might have had an idea in his mind that he'd move that whole lot off in that direction or he might want them to reverse course. He might want them to do anything. You had to read the signal, in other words

04:36 recognise the flags, decipher what the signal meant which meant refer to your book and then execute the manoeuvre and if you didn't read the signal properly or if you didn't do what the signal said, you could finish up with these little brass ships in all sorts of funny situations.

05:06 That was how we learned how important it was to know exactly what was happening. In the signal school, that practice could gone on in a room because we had little flags, plywood flags that could be hooked on to masts, not like the ship masts,

05:36 but they did have a very tall flag mast with a couple of, you know, a top yard and a lower yard on it with signal halyards attached on which we practised hoisting flags. This is where the recognition of the flags

06:06 in the locker and the position where they'd be in the locker was important. The yeoman would sing out the flags that he wanted hooked on and it was your job to get them out, get the right one out and hook it on, get the next right one out and hook it on and the next one and while you were doing this somebody was dragging, gradually lifting that hoist. Of course if you missed hooking a flag, on you

06:36 might have to go up the mast and recover the hoist because it's gone and the rest of it is still, it doesn't get up there which could be tragedy. So there was a sizeable mast with sizeable halyards so that you knew what it was like to haul them all the way.

07:06 Then there were lights of various sizes: Searchlights, twenty inch searchlights that had shutters, smaller lamps, we had a nine inch one, I think, that had shutters on it, and then Aldus lamps and little lamps that you could use over,

07:36 that screwed onto binoculars, lamps that were used for broadcasting, in other words could be viewed from everywhere. All the other ones I mentioned were directional. Quite often we were practising reading these signals that were sent by Morse Code

08:06 on the lights and then we'd have to take turns in transmitting it, certain words and messages and we did the same thing with semaphore. Gradually we developed a proficiency and we had to, I can't remember what the speeds

08:36 were we had to perform at but twenty words a minute sort of comes to mind, but if you start thinking about sending twenty words a minute by Morse light, that light tends to be flickering fairly fast and likewise, the semaphore. So you sort of developed a means of short cutting

09:06 like, 'Are you something?, you just send an "R" and a "U". Instead of A.R.E. Y.O.U, you just send the "R" and the "U". Don't know whether everybody approved of it but that was the practice.

09:36 And we were pushed all the time to get to this speed and we must have all managed it reasonably well I think because they were all, all came out of the school as signalmen so that sort of ended our time at Flinders.

How did you find that improved as your career went on?

10:06 Ah, well I'll tell you more about that as time goes on. Flinders to me was the place where I was, up to

that time, had never been as cold and never been so badly burned as I was down there. So Melbourne, in the winter time,

10:36 with the rain coming in horizontally, was a new experience to me. And of course, Flinders Naval Depot is open to Westernport Bay and the south-westers just come straight in off the South Pole and it's cold. But we left Flinders, I left Flinders and came back to Brisbane for leave

11:06 and finished up down on the examination vessel off Caloundra for a while. I think they had the Matthew Flinders and the John Oxley as pilot vessels in those days and the pilots used to come down

11:36 and on the ships. Come out of the Brisbane [Brisbane River], and then they'd drop the pilot off, the pilot boat would send a launch over and pick the pilot up and bring him back to the pilot boat. The next vessel that came in, picked up the pilot from the examination vessel and took it up into Brisbane. And I did a little bit of signalling,

12:06 not much, with the Port War Signal Station at Caloundra which was just light, it wasn't anything else and probably with an Aldus lamp. So I didn't do much signalling. I didn't do any flags and I didn't do any semaphore and I did a little bit of light. And then,

12:36 I was in the depot, it must have been back, they used to rotate the people on the examination vessel and I must been in the depot and they needed a signalman to go down on a motor launch to take the crew off an American liberty ship that had run aground

13:06 between Moreton and Stradbroke [Islands]. And we took off out of the Brisbane River in this forty-two foot launch. It was spic and span. It was beautifully clean, carpeted inside, the decks were covered with canvas that had been painted.

13:36 It was lovely. In fact I think it was Eiger's launch, I wouldn't be sure. And we got down to the Rufus King and the seas were about twenty feet high. By the time we got there, the Rufus

14:06 King had broken its back and the weather side of it had split so there was a mixture of fuel oil, and seawater and sand mixing up on the weather side of the ship and of course with this big sea running, it was just splashing right over the top of the ship onto us and our nice little launch

14:36 soon became a very dirty looking launch. And I don't know if you've ever tried to walk on an oily, a wet oily surface. It's like standing on ice in bare feet, wet ice in bare feet. It's like glass. We came along aside or manoeuvred

15:06 alongside on the leeside and they let down a rope ladder as far as it was sensible to do it because we were going up and down the side of the ship about twenty feet on every wave. And of course, nobody was particularly interested in signalmen, I just happened to be another pair of hands on board

15:36 then and my job was to try and keep a fender between the ship and the launch as it was going up and down. And each time we went up, we took a crew member off the bottom of the rope ladder and put him down inside and the next time we went up we picked up another bloke and we did that till we had

16:06 the launch with enough people on it that we shouldn't put any more on it and we went off into Cleveland then and dropped them off at the jetty and came back and got the second lot. By this time, the launch was covered in fuel oil and it was soaked in fuel oil. All the carpets

16:36 inside were soaked in fuel oil. It was a real mess and you can imagine what we were like. Anyhow, we got the rest of the crew off. The ship eventually broke into two pieces, both of which were eventually towed into the river. And later in the war, I saw half of it sitting sort of off one side,

17:06 tied up in the river. And I believe there were tins of coffee and goodness knows what floating around Moreton Bay months and years afterwards, off that ship. It was a cargo vessel, and the weather was foul, it really was, and instead of coming around the north of Moreton Island, they tried to come through between Moreton and

17:36 Stradbroke and of course came straight up onto the sand bar and 'help, help'. But that was the Rufus King, that was the name of it. I had a pillow case that I must have been handed for something and I remember putting on it 'Rufus King'

18:06 and kept it for years. I don't know where it is now. It's gone, probably amongst all the other stuff that's disappeared. So that was my first experience of foul weather. I didn't have to go far from home. We went back to the depot, we went back up the river of course. I never ever saw the launch again but it took me days to get all the fuel oil off.

18:36 Of course, all the uniform I had was soaked in oil so it was replaced fortunately by the navy but I had real trouble getting that oil off hands and arms and face and hair and was a real mess. I can sympathise or empathise with people that have been in ships that have sunk

19:06 as a consequence of that and have come up in an oily sea, you know. Anyhow, I was backwards and forwards to the examination vessel for a month or so until some time in late August. I remember that I was on the examination vessel the night that the convoy of troops left

19:36 Brisbane en route to Milne Bay. We knew where they were going, they didn't, at the time. But it was the responsibility of the examination vessel to identify the ships as they came in. I don't know what we'd have done if we hadn't have identified each one as it came it or it had come in with

20:06 a nefarious intent, I don't know what we'd have done as we had no armament of anything it was just the pilot vessel that was used for that purpose. Anyhow I was recalled to the depot one day and told I should be on my way to the N Class pool and another fellow out of my class

20:36 at Flinders who was up at Archer Point which was up the other side of Cooktown somewhere, was also to go with me. So we thought we were off to UK [United Kingdom] you see, that was where they were building ships and N class pool meant destroyers. Well that's another thing,

21:06 as we came out the signals school, you were, you wanted to go to destroyers, that was the number one priority, or cruisers, or corvettes. You wanted to go to sea or anything else that might be about but the top so many per cent

21:36 of the class got drafted to destroyers depending how many they wanted and then the next ones went to the cruisers then the corvettes and then anybody else got the shore establishments and they might be anywhere from somewhere like Caloundra to Moresby [Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea] or Lae or like, one of the class finished up in

22:06 Merauke in Dutch New Guinea. But we were fortunate, Jack and I, to get the draft to destroyers which was our ambition and the navy in its inimitable form had lost track of us for a couple of months and it wasn't until end of August/September that they

22:36 discovered that we weren't where we should have been. I came back to the depot and I waited in there until Jack came down from Archer Point. He had to come down by train, of course. He would have come down on the troop train. And then I have an idea that we went

23:06 to Sydney by flying boat, Catalina because they must have wanted to get us there in a hurry because I can remember travelling in the Catalina and I think there was the two of us. That was a new experience because I'd never been in one. I'd seen them out there in the water

23:36 and this was wartime so they had their gun blisters and all these sort of things on them but it was just a ferry job I think. We went down to Redland Bay to get aboard it I think, because that was the flying boat base, used to be,

24:06 down there. I don't think it was in the river. And then flew down there with hammock and kit bag and ourselves and I can't remember what happened from the time we landed in Sydney to the time we were onboard a Blue Star refrigerated

24:36 meat transport that carried some passengers, leaving Sydney. We embarked on the ship called the Umtali which as I said was a Blue Star Line vessel and it had an Alaska crew

25:06 and room for probably fifty or sixty passengers. And the passenger list comprised we two Australian sailors, a number of Royal Navy sailors obviously on their way back home, and a draft of

25:36 Air Force Empire Air Training pilots heading, we didn't know where. And we must have picked up cargo in a number of places en route because we embarked in Sydney and we were in Adelaide

26:06 I remember, and Fremantle so we could have been picking up fresh, you know, more frozen meat in those places.

Did you go down around the bottom of Tasmania or through Bass Strait.

No, went through Bass Strait.

What year was that?

September, 1942.

26:36 When we left Fremantle, we went south probably for a week into the Southern Ocean. We had no escort so we were just on our own. We went south for days and the further south we got, the colder it got of course. And that was the first time we

27:06 saw albatross and they're incredible birds. And of course they followed the ship wherever it was because the ship threw gash overboard and that was easy feed. And then we turned west and we battled through this Southern Ocean until we got

27:36 about the latitude of Durban and we turned north and came straight up to Durban. When I saw that Bullimore [Tony Bullimore – International yachtsman] story on TV, when they were showing the seas, it reminded me of my time in the Southern Ocean. It was really, you know, strong winds, the roaring forties,

28:06 the ship sort of whistled. All the wires in the ship were whistling, it was blowing so hard. We arrived in Durban and to our great disappointment we were put ashore there and sent to Petermaritsburg in Natal. When we got to Petermaritsburg, nobody wanted to know us.

28:36 'Who are you, where are you going, what are you doing here?' Well, we didn't know much about what we were doing here either. So we arrived at 'Maritsburg' one day and the next day we were sent down to Durban to the signals school and we spent a bit of time there, at the signals school in Durban, but we didn't do

29:06 much signal practice or learning. We were living in an ex-Italian POW [Prisoner of War] camp under bell tents on red sand and we were living in white uniforms. White uniforms, navy long socks and black

29:36 shoes. We had lots of fun keeping our uniforms clean or clean enough. But we must have had duck boards or something in the tent because the hammocks didn't seem to get too much red sand in them. And then we ate in

30:06 a building that was, the roof was atap and atap sides and the sides just lifted out to let the breezes in. There wasn't much to it. We spent a bit of time there and then we went on passage on an RN [Royal Navy] ship up to Mombasa in Kenya. I can't

30:36 recall what ship it was. It was a cruiser, I know that and I'm not sure whether we did one trip up and a trip back and another trip up or whether we did a trip up and spent some time in a camp ashore at Mombasa. And

31:06 whether we came back down to Durban and joined the ships there or whether we were down there and back again, I'm not sure about that because at the time the N Class destroyers that we were to join, were engaged in the occupation or capture of Madagascar from the French

31:36 and it wasn't until that finished that we finished up joining the ships. And that was early December, I think or in late November, early December so we spent all that time getting to our ships.

How did that make you feel, the fact that it was taking so long.

32:06 Oh, you couldn't do much about it. I don't think we ever got paid all that time. Nobody wanted to give us any money. So, we had a bit of time in Durban, and we had a bit of time in Mombasa.

Where were you staying all this time?

In barracks. Well, in Durban we were at the signals school

32:36 in this Italian ex-POW camp. I don't know where the prisoners of war went to after they left there.

So you're not getting paid but you're still being looked after?

Still being fed. Oh yes. We had all our gear and we were fed three times a day. Just a little aside, there wasn't much to do on this

33:06 vessel while we were making our way over there and we used to occupy ourselves by playing cards. And the favourite was Pontoon or Slippery Sam which was an adaptation of Pontoon. And the ship had Alaska crew so we ate in a dining room,

33:36 they had a bar on board and we lived in cabins so we were quite comfortable. And these card games, we had to have some money in it, so Pontoon, you bet on it

34:06 and if somebody won a pool, they bought a round of drinks. And we reckoned, the two of us, that we were rather successful because we landed in South Africa with the same amount of money as we left Australia and we paid for our share of the rounds of drinks.

34:36 We had no other thing to spend our money on. And I still, I'm not sure whether I still have that pack of cards but I had them for years and I've never played cards since. No, I'd reckoned I'd had my share of luck and if I touched them again, I'd never have any luck

35:06 so I never have. But we used to play cards a bit pre-war. As kids, we used to play Euchre and cribbage but I haven't played it for years and years and years, well since

35:36 childhood I suppose. Now, get back to the story, I'm not sure where we joined the ships, whether it was in Durban or Mombasa. But Jack went to the [HMS] Norman and I went to the [HMS] Nepal. And the staff of signalmen on this ship is not large. You can't have any

36:06 freeloaders, you've got to pull your weight and I had to build up my proficiency very quickly. And I can remember on one occasion, trying to send a signal to the shore signals station in Mombasa and the WREN [Women's Royal Naval Service] that was trying to read it, sending me

36:36 'Send Better Angles' which insulted me no end. But I must have been trying to send her a semaphore message and making a mess of it. But that insulted me. I always remembered that and I never ever got

another one.

37:06 We must have gone to sea, backwards and forwards, we were doing a lot of convoy work or escorting the bigger ships when they went out. I didn't go to sea as often as we did. But I spent Christmas in Mombasa that year.

37:36 Got a couple of photos there of the mess on the ship at Christmas time. My recollections of where we went and what we did are not great because you spend so much time at sea,

38:06 you were either escorting cargo vessels or you were escorting fleet vessels and you were going from Point A to Point B and Point B was much the same as Point A. But I think in the period between then and when we came back to Australia for a refit,

38:36 we must have travelled up and down the coast of East Africa to Durban and further south, although we didn't go into any of the other towns further south, we could have been escorting ships

39:06 to meet other escorts off Cape Town or somewhere. I'm just trying to think of where we might have been. I can recall being in Aden but whether that was at that stage or later, I'm not sure

39:36 but it could've been because it could've been vessels coming around the Cape and going up into the Med [Mediterranean]. Not real sure about that. And Durban, would've been in Durban and then we came home in March, I think we left

40:06 on the first of March, to come home to Australia for a refit in Sydney. Now, we travelled I think from Durban to Diego Garcia [American Naval Base] and from Diego Garcia, that was to re-fuel, and then

40:36 from Diego Garcia to Fremantle. In the process of getting from Durban to Fremantle, we went straight through the middle of a cyclone. Was straight through one side, through the middle of it, out the other side. In the process of getting through there,

41:06 that was where I was tossed out of my hammock incidentally. Went down off watch, I'd only been on the ship for a couple of months. I was a very new boy. To this day, I don't know how it happened but the mess on the Nepal was the lower forward mess deck, as far forward as the mess decks go

41:36 and the lower one. In very rough weather, the ships are inclined to this sort of movement then come down, bang. And the hammocks of course swing and if the lift's enough…

Tape 3

00:30 Okay, it was during this crashing that I got tossed out of the hammock.

Sorry George do you just want to take your glasses off?

Tossed out of the hammock, the movement of the ship in very

01:00 rough weather tends to roll and rise and fall in a sort of sequence and hammocks start to swing, and if your hammock swings one way and the movement is hard enough to throw you up,

01:30 it is quite on the cards that the hammock will go back the other way without you in it and this is what happened to me. I finished up on my knee on one of the stools beside the mess table and then carried on and down onto the deck, back into a staunchion

02:00 or table leg to stop me sort of sliding right across the ship. Don't think there is anything more to say about that other than I was very young and inexperienced, and I never said a word about it because I thought sailors never got thrown out of their hammocks.

What about

02:30 **the storms itself? Can you describe that?**

Well the storm, the sea, just gradually built up and the wind built up. In the process of getting through that cyclone, there were four boats on board, a motor boat, two cutters and a jolly boat. And all of them were smashed to ribbons.

03:00 The only things left were little bits of boat and motors and things. The sea carried away the carly raft, it was secured below the search light

03:30 platform, and one of the uprights, a four inch pipe that was riveted to the deck was bent like a match stick. I don't think anybody who has not seen seas like that can have any conception of the power.

04:00 It just carries everything in front of it.

Was it frightening as a young sailor, being your first big storm?

I think I was too busy getting where I had to go and doing what I had to do. During one stage of that crossing there were only

04:30 two people allowed on the upper deck and that was on the bridge and that was the officer of the watch and the signalman. Any of the crew that were aft had to stay there and nobody could move aft or forward because of the amount of water that was coming over the iron deck.

Did you have safety wires or anything like that?

05:00 I was going to say there was a wire run from the break in the fo'c'sle to the support that carried the aft Oerlikon.

05:30 And then from it to the structure that carried the BX gun. And they were wire ropes and on those were hung ropes with turks heads on the bottom of them, so that

06:00 you could grab one and walk and it would travel with you. Those wires that they were run on, you could watch them flexing as the ship moved through the water. The ship was never still, it was always flexing.

06:30 Don't know that I can say much more about that. Yes, they were there as a safety measure for people who had to go forward or aft in rough weather. It was only in extreme weather people weren't allowed on the upper deck. You had to look after yourself, know how

07:00 to look after yourself. There were people lost overboard at various times. Just carried away by the sea. Some of them were found, some of them were never found. But it never happened on any of the ships I was on. We got back to Australia and we had no viable life saving equipment on board because

07:30 all of the boats were match wood and half of the carly rafts and things were gone. Fortunately we got into Sydney without any mishap and went into dock for refit and went on leave. I must have come to Queensland I think at that stage,

08:00 for leave, and then would have gone back to the ship and stayed on board when they were refitting it. While I was home I think that might have been the occasion I sat for an accountancy exam which completed my intermediate stage study. I had done a bit of study

08:30 while I was at sea to prepare for that.

Did many guys study at sea?

No. I didn't do any more either. There was that one to go and I reckoned when I got back, it might be a long time so I had probably get it out of my head

09:00 while I was still a bit familiar with it.

You said before that maths wasn't really your strong point. Do you find it ironic then that you studied accounting and became an accountant?

I don't know that maths, simple maths is okay as far as I am concerned.

But what led you in that direction?

09:30 I think I got a job as a clerk and my mother said, "Well you're a clerk, you had better be an accountant" and arranged for me to do a course with the accountancy training establishment and that's what I did. And when I got home

10:00 I was, when I got home from the war, I was married and then it became essential that I qualify and get cracking. I think when we came back on that trip I must have had, I don't know how much leave, a fortnight or something like that,

10:30 wouldn't have been much longer. And then I would have gone back and stayed on board while the various repairs and things were done to the ship. I am not sure when it was, but we must have left to head back to east Africa early

11:00 in June because I got so far along the way in Australia and I was shifted, The [HMS] Quiberon came back for refit about the same time as the Nepal. The Nepal went to Sydney, the Quiberon went to Melbourne. They both had

11:30 comparative work done and they were ready to return at the same time. So we went around to Melbourne and picked up the Quiberon and we travelled in company then back to Mombasa. And during our passage, whether it was in Melbourne or Fremantle I am not sure, but I was drafted

12:00 from the Nepal to the Quiberon. Nepal must have had a surplus signalman and Quiberon must have been short of one. And I spent the rest of the war then on the Quiberon. We headed back then to Mombasa and we carried on doing much the same thing as I had

12:30 been doing in the Nepal. In fact the destroyers seemed to run parallel courses for a lot of the time they were operating in those waters. During the time we were there,

13:00 sometime not long after we went back over there, they moved the fleet from Mombasa to Trincomalee in Ceylon. But we did a lot of convoy work between Bombay and Aden,

13:30 Colombo and Durban, up and down the east coast of Africa, across the sea from Bombay towards Aden. Sometimes we would go all of the way, sometimes we would go part of the way and meet other ships that would take the convoy over.

14:00 A lot of the travel, while those convoys were going on, was at relatively slow speeds. You might have been mooching along at ten knots. The speed on the convoy was usually fixed at the speed of the slowest ship. So that if you had a slow ship in the convoy well that

14:30 was the speed you travelled at. Whether you could have travelled at three times the speed, it didn't matter. And in the tropics, unless you have a storm the seas are usually flat, you might have a swell. There is quite often not a breeze. It gets quite hot.

15:00 and it is a lazy time usually. There wasn't usually a lot of signalling done between convoy and escort but the escort could be signalling amongst themselves quite often. Most of that would have been

15:30 done by light. And quite often, the convoy escorts were in a wedge shape. If you had three ships you would have them in an arrow head formation far enough apart that the ASDIC [submarine detection]

16:00 sweeps of the three vessels would overlap, so that you would have a safe channel say, swept of submarines. An area which should be clear of submarines. Because there hadn't been any, the ASDIC hadn't located anything in that

16:30 area. If the convoy was slow enough of course one could always come up. But a submarine could usually on travel fast enough on the surface, at a speed fast enough to catch up with the convoy. So it would normally only be at night that they would have that opportunity. It depended on how many

17:00 escorts there were. If there were three, it was a simple arrowhead. If there were five it was wider. Naturally a bigger convoy was involved.

What were the biggest convoys that you were on?

Can't remember that. The most important one we were involved with was on

17:30 the return of the AIF [Australian Imperial Force] from the Middle East. I think there were three or four troop ships escorted by destroyers. And there was a force of cruisers over the horizon between them and any anticipated Japanese

18:00 visitation to protect them. We brought them sort of half way across the Indian Ocean and then passed them over to somebody else to bring them the rest of the way and then sailed back up through the middle of the convoy, which didn't usually happen. But being an Australian

18:30 ship and they being all Australian soldiers, we steamed back through the convoy with the Australian ensign hoisted at the main mast so that they would identify what we were because there was nothing on us that was different to any other British

19:00 naval ship to identify us. Unless we hoisted an ensign (and the naval ensign was the same), it was the same one that was flown on Australian, British, New Zealand and Canadian ships at that time. So if you wanted to identify yourself as Australian,

19:30 you had to hoist the Australian ensign which is the blue ensign with the Union Jack in the corner and Southern Cross and Federation star on the fly of the flag. So they would have known that we were an Australian ship and so cheered like mad when we went past, which we thought was great. Now,

20:00 when we moved over, more towards the East Indies, and the fleet got established in Trincomalee. There was

20:30 an ambition to, shall we say, annoy the Japanese? At that stage they had occupied most of Sumatra, Timor and East Indies. Singapore of course had long gone.

21:00 And the Philippines and by 1943 I think the Americans were starting to work back into the Philippines. And we were, we made a couple of sweeps east from

21:30 Trincomalee towards Sumatra, Java, and on two occasions we were involved in aircraft attacks on Japanese installations and some surface

22:00 bombardment. The first time I can remember operating with an American ship was when the [USS] Saratoga came up from, it think it must have been at Exmouth or somewhere like that in Australia. And we rendezvoused with the Saratoga and

22:30 an English carrier with our force and they flew off aircraft. They went to within a hundred miles of the islands and flew off aircraft and bombed Japanese installations at Sebang I think it was. And then later there was another

23:00 similar activity where they attacked Surabaya. On both occasions, I think there was some naval bombardments of the places. But just how successful they were nobody really knew. It is surprising how little

23:30 space you can destroy with four point seven shells. I mean in an area of some consequence you could destroy buildings, but you can't devastate the place, it just doesn't,

24:00 unless you get a concentrated fire into it. We only had four guns so we could only land four at any one place at any one time. I guess if you're on the receiving end of it you reckon there is plenty. I always felt that there wasn't enough to be really

24:30 effective. That changed I guess as you got to bigger guns, bigger diameter shells, greater damage could be done. We always felt that our four seven guns were pretty good when

25:00 it came to aircraft and those sorts of things. But I have always wondered just how effective they were from the point of view of bombarding shore installations. I think the best way I can describe the rest of the time I spent in the Indian Ocean, we of course at that time were

25:30 attached as part of the British Eastern Fleet. It was formed in I think 1942 or thereabouts, when they had to move major fleet units out of

26:00 the Med because of the problems they had in maintaining shipping in the Mediterranean. And as a protection form any Japanese infiltration from the East, when they took Singapore and all of that, they had to have some force to protect

26:30 shipping as best they could in the Indian Ocean because there wasn't anything else. That's how it came to be, I don't know what the powers-that-be say is the reason for it, but that is my understanding of it. It became gradually more powerful,

27:00 the fleet. They brought out newer ships, newer battle ships, newer cruisers, newer carriers, so that by the time we got to' 43, '44, it was a pretty solid sort of fleet, large fleet.

27:30 It seemed to be doing nothing much except for a general protection role for the Indian Ocean. We did a number of the east west sweeps looking for Japanese forces. On one occasion I believe they steamed

28:00 past one another about fifty miles apart. Goodness knows what would have happened if they had met, but they didn't, fortunately. I think gradually as things started to go bad for the Japanese, the need for the fleet in that area reduced and

28:30 they decided to form a British Pacific fleet to provide extra back up, shall we say? For the American forces and their progress in the Pacific.

29:00 Go back a little bit, in the course of our convoy duties at one stage, we escorted the ship, the Duke of Gloucester came out, the Governor-General of Australia, and we escorted him around to south of Albany in Western Australia. I think

29:30 we picked him up in Colombo or something like that. Escorted him down as far as Albany and some of the ships from the east came and escorted them east from there. They tried to use Australian escort for that trip, I guess because

30:00 it was Australia's Governor-General that was travelling. I don't know of any other particularly interesting, oh during the time that we were in Mombasa and before we went to Ceylon,

30:30 there was a time when the German U-boats appeared in the southern Indian Ocean, and they sunk quite a lot of shipping in the Indian Ocean for a while. And we were all shoved off down to Durban for convoy escort duty. A lot of the ships that were sunk may

31:00 have been convoy but some of them must have been travelling independently I think, not that we would necessarily hear about it. But I can't remember much about convoys getting into difficulties in the Indian Ocean. We did spend a bit of time around Durban

31:30 escorting so far, on one occasion we went around as far as the Congo River on the west coast of Africa. We had to go up into the river to fuel, because the ship must have taken us just about to the limit of our endurance.

32:00 It was a strange experience because the river flows very fast. The tanker was anchored in the river, but it had its engines going all of the time to keep it there. And we had to tie up alongside the tanker with our engines doing likewise to keep us

32:30 alongside. If we had have not done it, we would have never got secure, and when we came out of the

Congo, a hundred miles offshore, we were still going through muddy water and rubbish that had been swept down out of the river. It was quite surprising. You

33:00 wouldn't imagine that the river water would carry rubbish a hundred miles out to sea and still there was rubbish around us. That was as far around that side of Africa as we got.

33:30 I suppose the next period of interest would be when we escorted the carriers back around to Australia. We brought

34:00 I think it was either Illustrious or Indefatigable [HMS Illustrious and HMS Indefatigable were Royal Navy fleet carriers] around to Sydney and the fleet assembled there initially, or the initial parts of it assembled there. Ultimately the whole fleet apart from the older vessels moved around

34:30 into the Pacific. They didn't send around any of the old battleships like the Queen Elizabeth [HMS Queen Elizabeth and the Valiant [HMS Valiant] and the Renown (that's a battle cruiser) [HMS Renown]. They kept a few of those older vessels in the Indian Ocean,

35:00 but we had KG 5 [HMS King George V] and Howe [HMS Howe] I know and a number of the newer cruisers came around and a lot of destroyers. And then we had, as I say, the two battle ships and

35:30 the fleet carriers were the Indomitable, Implacable, Illustrious, Indefatigable [all Royal Navy fleet carriers] I think they were the four that ultimately joined the fleet. We spent a little bit of time in Sydney and then we went to Manus, I think it is in The Admiralty's,

36:00 Manus, and the ships arrived gradually. They didn't all come up as one big crowd. And then we went to Ulithi [Island]

36:30 I think it was it is in the islands up there somewhere. I can remember being back at Leyte at one stage but that must have been later. Ultimately they assembled the fleet, and the battle fleet comprised the

37:00 two battle ships, a number of cruisers. Gambier [USS Gambier Bay] comes to mind amongst them and the four carriers that I mentioned and sufficient destroyers to screen them. Now the fleet

37:30 operated in a circular arrangement. About ten miles across, and there were destroyers all of the way around that circle in a position where their asdic sweeps overlapped so there was maximum protection for the capital ships. Now it was

38:00 no use sending that battle fleet into action without having a means of supplying it. And in parallel with the gathering of all of that body of ships, they were at the same time gathering a whole collection of supply ships and tankers and ammunition ships,

38:30 and escorts, what we called Woolworth carriers, that would carry aircraft off and could fly them off. They were little carriers built on the top of Liberty ships that could operate aircraft. They did use them in the Atlantic convoy work, to fly aircraft, to do

39:00 convoy work as well. But they were part of that second body of ships, which came to be known as the fleet train. And the way that the whole process operated was that the

39:30 fighting fleet, shall we call it, moved into operations for two days and there had been an American force moved out for two days, and while they were out, they provisioned, oiled and ammunitioned ship from their fleet

40:00 train and then when we had done our couple of days in there, we would come out and the American force would go in and we would come back and meet up with the fleet train, and we would fuel, ammunition ship and store ship. We would get whatever we could in the way of stores.

40:30 And that went on indefinitely. You never saw land for weeks and weeks on end. I think on one occasion we were six weeks at sea and by the time, I was going to say,

41:00 by the time we got back to land, we were very low on all of our provisions and so on, but that's another occasion I think.

That might be a good place to stop there George.

Tape 4

00:36 **Can you tell us about the Woolworths carriers?**

Well the RN usually had three classifications of carriers. They had a fleet carrier which was the heavy one, then they had a light fleet carrier which was not quite as big or heavy, still built in

much the same way with much the same finish, and then the Woolworths carriers were Liberty ships that they stuck a flight deck on the top of. They looked as if they had been made at Woolworths, they looked cheap and nasty, there was nothing redeeming about them.

They didn't really look like carriers to those of us that were used to looking at carriers.

What was their exact support role?

Well in the Pacific all they did was to transport replacement aircraft up to operational areas. They came up as part of the fleet train

and the aircraft, if a carrier lost aircraft, replacement aircraft and pilots incidentally could be flown off the Woolworth carriers and landed onto the fleet carriers. The pilots could have been replacing pilots that were lost or

they could have been in excess of numbers once they had flown all of the aircraft on. I am not real sure about what they did about getting those pilots back off the fleet carriers. But it was the Woolworths carriers looked cheap and nasty but they did

an effective job in what they were designed to do, I guess. They were used in various places as aircraft carriers, and being built as they were, they were more or less expendable too. I think they were used to some extent in the North Atlantic,

to provide aircraft for spotting purposes. There were parts of the Atlantic that aircraft of the day couldn't reach, so they needed some means of getting aircraft into the air to cover that gap in the middle of the Atlantic, and I think that was the way that they did it.

They wouldn't have been prepared to risk fleet carriers because they would have been very exposed where they were. Now, there was another thing that I thought I should mention.

At one stage during our convoying times, we could be shifted form one convoy to another convoy to another convoy and never finish up in harbour anywhere because we were quite capable of fuelling, if there happened to be a tanker in a convoy he quite often would fuel the escorts. Fuelling at

sea became a well practiced art. And I can remember one occasion when we were six weeks before we saw land, and by then without being provisioned in any way, all we had on board to eat were dry biscuits and jam. Provisions were never

a high point of the navy while we are talking about that. The way we were fed was quite an interesting process. Each mess was responsible for preparing their own meal. The

cook on board, baked bread, usually white bread. The cook used to cook any meal that was prepared by the mess, now we used to have to take it in turns to prepare this meal.

There was one of the people in the mess who usually went and obtained, shall we say the provisions, a) from the butcher if there was meat, and b) from the store to get anything else, whether it was potatoes or onions, while

they were fresh. And then whatever else was available be it in tins of all shapes and descriptions and he would get what was provided for that day. And out of that he must imagine or think

of something to make, to feed all of these people in the mess. He prepared that, took it up to the cook, the cook cooked it and when it was ready it was brought down and served out. In our mess, which was what they called a watch keepers mess, there was always somebody

on watch. There used to have to be a certain amount set aside for those on watch and the rest was divvied out amongst the crowd. As you can imagine some of the meals were good and some of the meals were anything but good. I have been told since, I wasn't aware of this at the time,

there was a certain amount of money allowed for each person each day to provide their rations. I can just say that by the time you had been at sea for some time, the rations were very ordinary. Eggs were powdered

eggs. Potato was powdered or evaporated potatoes. Tomatoes were tinned tomatoes. The only other thing, I don't remember any greens ever being in tins. We got some M and V's, meat and veg, in tins.

Bully beef sometimes. We must have had access to flour and that sort of thing. Must have had access to grease because I can remember while we were around India we used to get ghee rather than butter.

Ghee is a sort of an extract of butter oil, I think that's about all you would call it. Of course they don't slaughter beef cattle in India. We would get yak which… the meat was usually black and tough as old boots, it was.

But generally speaking diet was, unless you were somewhere where you could buy fruit, and of course you couldn't buy it in those sorts of places. Anything that was bought ashore, that wasn't cooked before

it was eaten had to be washed in Condies Crystals [preparation used for its antiseptic/antifungal properties]

11:00 to prevent the possibility of all sorts of diseases being acquired.

You spoke earlier about a Christmas meal. What sort of fare was put on for special occasions?

Well I spoke about

11:30 Christmas on Nepal in Mombasa, You see we were in harbour, we had access to stores, vegetables, so we would have had a rather christmassy Christmas dinner with a Christmas pudding for sure.

What about Sundays? I have

12:00 **heard Sunday meals in the navy were always special?**

They maybe are in the younger navy. Days didn't matter. It was, one day was the same as the next. You never knew where you were going to be. You didn't come in and stop the war on Sundays you know?

12:30 **We have been told by a few fellows that they always seemed to have pork on a Sunday?**

I don't remember it. The ships that were on the Australian station would have done a lot better than we would.

13:00 Most of the time we were in India and Africa and those sorts of places. You were reliant on local sources for meat, for potatoes when you could get them, onions. I don't remember ever seeing cabbage, but they must have at some stage had some cabbages.

13:30 But that fresh vegetable stuff used to be stored in a locker about four foot square, six foot high or so. And in the tropics, potatoes and onions don't last long. That was out on the iron deck, out in the open. By the time you had been at

14:00 sea a week or so, most of that stuff was used or putrid and you were down to tinned stuff then. I could never say that rations were things that I thought a lot of. It

14:30 was only something to keep you going. I am not real clear on what we used to do for three meals a day now. But it was, we must have had porridge, I think, in the mornings.

Can you remember after coming in from that six weeks on biscuits and jam, what your first real meal was after that?

No. I can't, to be honest.

15:00 Oh we survived. Nobody got fat. Everybody when they went ashore had a good feed, wherever you were. If it was Mombasa, well it was Mombasa food you ate. If it was Ceylon somewhere

15:30 well, Colombo or around, that was the only place we really got ashore in Ceylon. You ate what was available or what you could get. But we seemed to spend a lot of time in and out of Bombay so we must have done a lot of work in that Maldives area.

16:00 I can remember one occasion getting to Seychelles, didn't get ashore there. I think it was the place where I saw what I thought was the clearest water I had ever seen. When you put you anchor down ,you put some length of cable out

16:30 to hold you in position and there is so much goes down to the bottom and the rest of it lays out on the bottom of the sea. And that's the only place I can remember where you could see the anchor, right out where it was. Of course Seychelles was French. We would have loved to have gone ashore, but

17:00 we never did get ashore there, well I never did. The island of free love it was known as in those days, but we never discovered what that meant. Aden, just thinking about that area, Aden, I

17:30 thought was the last place on earth. It was a gibber desert around it really. The only thing I have seen a bit like it is the gibber desert in the centre of Australia. But there was a strange series of wells in Aden, down a slope of a

18:00 mountain. They called them Cleopatra's wells, whether she ever bathed in them I never found out, but the whole series of them started quite small and they got bigger as they went down, and the bottom one would have been twice the size of this room. And the Arab kids used to dive in that for pennies.

18:30 If you threw a penny over they would dive in and pick it up before it got to the bottom. Bombay, apart from going swimming there on occasions, we used to go to the races. There were a few Australian jockeys racing in Bombay at the time. We had one of the signalmen was

19:00 a hopeless punter, and he reckoned he knew this bloke, the jockey's name was Edgar Britt, I never did catch up with him. But we used to go ashore to the races, and we would put in our other pocket enough money for a feed and to get us back to the ship after the races because

19:30 we never seemed to win any money betting on these horses. I reckoned the races over there were more crooked than they were here. That was our entertainment. Or we would go to a film there or wander around the streets listening to the weird music and strange things that went on.

20:00 It was interesting there sometimes at night getting back to the ship. Because all of the locals, nobody had a house to live in, all they had was a little mat about eighteen inches or two foot or so wide

20:30 that they used to roll down on the footpath and sleep on that. It was made out of what looked like palm leaves. Woven out of palm leaf, roll it out on the footpath and there they slept, miles of them. I don't think, I guess that's still happens there too. I don't

21:00 imagine things have changed a lot. But those sorts of things and the conditions in which they lived were just horrendous to our eyes. We were just happy to be back on board. And in those sorts of places, it was the only time we seemed to get salad

21:30 vegetables, which as I say used to all have to be washed in Condies Crystals before we could eat them.

What sort of flavour did that impart to the food?

We didn't notice it, probably a bit innocuous. You know you would have to wash them in a purple sort of fluid, and then of

22:00 course, they would be well shaken. But we didn't get a lot of that sort of food of course. Another probably interesting little side line. If you went and had an ice cream in an ice cream bar over there, they always gave you a glass of water with it.

22:30 That was the way it was served. Which was good because you had your ice cream and drank your water, it cleared your palette. Seemed to be not a bad idea, particularly in the tropics like that too. We sometimes had

23:00 boiler cleans in Bombay. Which was a time when they put out the fires in the boilers and they got in and chipped all of the scale off the boiler tubes. It was a job I never wished to do.

And that was done by navy personnel or locals?

Yeah usually done by the stokers.

23:30 The boiler cleans like that were usually done by the crew on board. If there were any other jobs that needed to be done that needed particular expertise they may get someone from shore, or they may have come from naval establishments ashore to do whatever was required. You know something might have got broken somewhere and have to be welded up, that sort of thing

24:00 sometimes happened. I remember on one occasion (where would we have been?), must have been operating in a fleet. We were on duty boat one day which meant you went from vessel to vessel in the fleet passing

24:30 dispatches or mail. And you usually done it by firing a cross pin line over to where you were delivering your messages to, and then the package was sent over on the line or on a stronger line if it needed extra strength to support it.

25:00 And we were coming up, (you usually approached a ship from the quarter, which was from the stern on one side) and you usually came up as close as you could reasonably get so that it was not too much distance for the rifle to fire the line. And on this occasion

25:30 we must have got a bit too close or the KG 5 was going a bit too fast or something because those capital ships are very elliptical in their line and the water coming around will wash you back into the bow of the ship.

26:00 And those battle ships have armament on their water line and above. I don't know how deep it goes but it's about 'that' thick. Solid steel. We'll say twelve inches thick.

26:30 And for what reason I don't know, but we finished up sliding down the quarter of the KG 5, rattle, rattle, rattle as we went along. And great panics, the ships is going like this and the mast is going like that and we're standing under the mast watching it. And then

27:00 of course there were some holes in the side of the ship. And 'Oh we're all right , we can go back to Leyte or wherever to get fixed up.' Not on your life, they found a couple of plates of steel big enough to cover the holes and a couple of mattresses to go between

27:30 and a good bolt to go from that piece of metal to that piece of metal. Put that one outside, stuck a mattress between it and the ships side, another mattress on the inside screwed it up tight and away we went. We didn't get any dock time out of it at all. We didn't get in until the next

28:00 time the fleet went right back to Leyte or wherever it was when we got fixed up. I was always cranky about that, I thought we might have had a holiday.

Do you know if there was any damage done to the other ship?

No. well when you consider we had a side about half an inch thick and we were sliding along twelve inch thick steel.

28:30 I don't think we ever scraped the paint off him. Yeah, that was a job that we used to get sometimes, come in off the screen and you would pick up all of the information that had to be passed around. Usually things that couldn't be sent by signal,

29:00 and they were delivered to the various responsible ships in the, be they the commander of the screen, or the cruisers or various carriers, whatever. That used to happen on a regular basis.

29:30 By now we have just about got, apart form this latest dissertation, we had just about got to the stage where we were going into action in the Pacific, we went to Manus and then Ulithi. I don't know whether we went to Leyte first, probably did. And then from there we went into the operational area. At the time

30:00 I believe that Okinawa was being, they were landing on Okinawa. I am not sure of this, Okinawa, I don't know if Ewogima was before or after Okinawa I can never remember. We thought it might have been Iwo Jima but I believe it was Okinawa. And as I say

30:30 we used to go in and we were responsible for tying up an area where the Japanese could fly aircraft to attack the landings on Okinawa. It was our job to keep them occupied so that they didn't get aircraft off there

31:00 to support their people in Okinawa. We did it by bombing and strafing and generally making nuisances of ourselves on their airfields that were within range of Okinawa. We would go in and do two days in there. The carriers

31:30 would fly off their aircraft. Go back to the beginning, the fleet would go in in its ten mile circle. It operated in a circle so that whatever the wind direction was, the fleet could turn into the wind to fly aircraft on or off and everybody

32:00 would remain in the same relative position. It would only be a course change, everyone would remain where they were, except for the destroyers who were attached to the carriers. There was a destroyer attached to each carrier

32:30 and their responsibility was to offer fire support to the carrier when it was being attacked by aircraft and to pick up ditched pilots or aircraft that were lost overboard and so on.

33:00 We were attached to the Indefatigable. And we sailed about, I think it was two cables lengths, which is about six hundred feet, probably twelve hundred feet astern, so we were on the same course as her. If she turned around we would have to follow

33:30 her. We couldn't just alter course or we would be out of position. We had to be there close by and if a carrier was under attack, we had to move up closer so that all of our fire power could be directed at whatever it was that was attacking the carrier.

34:00 We apparently were expendable. That went on for the whole time that we were in that area. We went in and out, I don't know how long it took them to finish with Okinawa and then it was Iwo Jima.

34:30 We left Australia I think in about March and so we were up there for six months on that two days in, two days out. In between landing activities of the Yanks [Americans], we

35:00 probably would have come back to Leyte and the fleet would have had a bit of a spell. The Yanks would have done the same thing and then up for some more. The whole time we were there I can remember American super fortresses flying over the fleet. They were

35:30 flying from Guam to Japan and back again and day and night they were going overhead. There couldn't have been much of Japan left standing because it must have been all burnt. From our recent trip, my observation

36:00 was that there wasn't a building there that was more than forty years old apart from the temples and those sorts of places. I think it must have been just about all burnt. It couldn't have been but it seemed that way. On one occasion while we were

36:30 up there, we were detached with I remember two ships were involved, the KG 5 and the American cruiser ship [USS] Chicago. And a couple of the destroyers from the British fleet were detached. The fleet usually operated about a hundred miles off the coast which was within range of aircraft from the shore

37:00 but it gave them room to manoeuvre and they wouldn't be likely to run into islands or anything where they could get in trouble. We left the fleet say lunch time today, or might have been early in the morning today, and we steamed at twenty knots or whatever, and we arrived

37:30 off Japan mainland after dark, with the intention of bombarding the steelworks at Hitachi. Now the English ships like the KG 5 which fired I think fourteen or sixteen inch

38:00 shells, had flashless cordite so they could fire a shell at night and all you would, you would never see any flash. So she could just pop away and all you could hear was the woof of the guns being fired,

38:30 but no flash. As opposed to that the Chicago which I think was probably an eight inch cruiser, which meant she fired eight inch shells. She didn't have flashless cordite so every time she fired a'broadside, there was a great flash off light and nobody could see anything for a couple of

39:00 moments afterwards. And we happened to be steaming in line of stern and we were just astern of the Chicago. How we didn't ever run into her or she run into us, I don't know as a consequence of that. But it was incredible, the difference. This great flash of flame.

39:30 It was a dark night, no moon or anything. Why they didn't have flashless cordite, I wouldn't know. I suppose they reckoned they would know we were there, why worry? But it seemed to me a strange thing.

That would be a good place to stop there George.

Tape 5

00:30 Okay. We continued to steam on station up there until the war actually finished. I think while we were up there, we got news that Germany capitulated, that was in May sometime in '45.

01:00 And then we were there when they dropped, at sea in the fleet operation sort of mode, when they dropped the first of the atom bombs

01:30 and likewise when the second one was dropped. And when the surrender was accepted by Japan we were all still at sea, and immediately after the announcement that the war was over, in brackets,

02:00 the order was given by the commander of the fleet to 'Splice the Main Brace' which in RN terms is to issue an extra tot of rum to all hands. And as Australian navy ships didn't carry rum for issue to ships, they

02:30 suggested that the Australian ships issue a bottle of beer to each man. That was the extent of the celebrations. Everyone was still nervous that the kamikazes would come visiting again. But apart from

03:00 one or two individual planes, they never did in force.

03:30 The time after that, gradually the blacking out of ships was eased off. See the normal procedure during wartime was that all ships should be blacked out. There would be no lights visible on deck at any time, not even cigarettes. The only light

04:00 you would get would be the phosphorescence in the wake of the ship. Nobody but nobody ever breached that requirement because your life depended on it or could well depend on it. So you could be steaming with a whole lot of ships and all of them blacked out, and the only way you could see

04:30 where any of them were was by their bow wave, the reflection of the phosphorescence of the bow wave on the ship itself.

Was that an eerie feeling when you were sailing?

Unusual. I don't say that it was eerie because that was just the way it was. That was the way things were done.

05:00 Anyhow after that time we were detached I think with one other ship to go to a place called Chilung in Formosa [Taiwan], bearing in mind that the British fleet had been close

05:30 to the islands to the south of Japan all of the time. That was their operational area. They were there to prevent aircraft operating from these islands and attacking the fleet and b) to prevent any re-enforcement from coming from the south, Singapore and down there. Anyway we went into Formosa,

06:00 the first Allied vessel in there after the war. This was just days after the 15th of August, and we had dealt with the process in there which was, I imagine, accepting surrenders and arranging for transfer of POWs and that sort of thing.

06:30 We were sent to Shanghai. We went up the Yangtze with a couple of other ships and the Yangtze River is wide enough, that is, you are sailing up the middle of it, you don't see the banks on either side, down near the mouth. All of the water tight doors on board were closed.

07:00 We didn't know whether there would be mines in the river or not. Fortunately we didn't strike any. And

we spent a night in Shanghai. I must have been the lucky watch because I got ashore in Shanghai. I can claim to have been a millionaire. We spent around a

07:30 million Japanese occupation Shanghai dollars in a night. Each drink cost us about thirty-five thousand dollars. If your maths is good you will not what likely amount of drinks we consumed in an evening. We were there overnight,

08:00 and then we left from there and went to Manila. The war was all over by then and we were steaming with ports open, doorways not screened for light. They used to have a canvas sort of light trap,

08:30 and you used to have to go through to get into the ship. That was taken off so that the doors just opened onto the deck fresh air, which was good. We got to Manila and we discovered that there were Australian POW's ashore. Most of the ones in

09:00 Manila had come out of Japan, been flown out by the Yanks to Manila and they were just waiting repatriation. We were returning to Australia with one of the carriers, I can't remember which one it was. It was suggested that our skipper go ashore and see if he could get a number of the POW's

09:30 on board for transport home. And when that was done, it was decided that they would bring I think fifteen hundred POW's home on the carrier that was going to accompany us. So we arrived in Sydney in the early part of October, I am not sure of the actual

10:00 date, but about the middle of October with our few POW's on board. And a carrier with their fifteen hundred on board. I had never been welcomed into a port the way the ship was that day. It was incredible. There were people everywhere,

10:30 boats everywhere. It was quite a wonderful experience. And that's where my sea time ended. I had been basically at sea or overseas form September or August '42 until October '45

11:00 and they had a system of points, which gave you priority for discharge, and I was just chuffed off straight away as soon as I hit Australia. Because I had been away for so long, or at sea for so long. And then I went on leave to Brisbane.

11:30 My first wife and I got married then. And I came back to Sydney for a couple of months after the leave and ultimately was posted to Brisbane for discharge sometime in March and eventually left the navy on

12:00 the 1st of April 1946.

Did you ever have any thoughts to stay in the navy?

No. I think most of us were quite happy to get out of it. I didn't have any real thought of staying in, but there were times afterwards I thought

12:30 it would have been good if I had. But there were so many people without qualification in the navy that it would have been very difficult to attain any advancement in that occupation within the navy.

13:00 That would have meant re-training to do something else I imagine. I was freshly married, wanted to stay ashore, didn't want to go away again. I was happy to call it a day.

When you were away, how much opportunity did you get to receive and send letters?

13:30 Well mail was pretty good. It used to be just sent to us addressed to the ship, care of fleet mail and where ever you were, it just seemed to find you. But when we were at sea just off Japan, we got mail regularly from home,

14:00 not only letters but parcels. My wife-to-be used to send cakes done up in tins with some sort of

14:30 icing stuff on them that was not icing, it was something else. It used to be very popular I know, in the mess. We got pretty good delivery of mail. If you didn't, people tended to get a bit fractured, they got a bit upset and wanted to know where the mail was. Not unusual for signals to be sent looking for mail

15:00 but as a general rule of things the mail deliveries were pretty good. And I think the mail that was delivered from us got home reasonably quickly .

15:30 It wasn't like today where you post a letter today and it will be in Tokyo in two days. It took a bit longer than that because it was all sea mail. It wasn't usually carried by aircraft in those days.

Having been away for so long , was it strange coming back to your wife-to-be? Was there a period where you had to get to know each other again?

16:00 Well I think the, she was a West Australian and during our time in the Indian Ocean and visiting backwards and forwards to Australia, I had been in and out of the west a few times. And that's where I met her and each time I would be

16:30 in there, we would be in contact, we wrote letters regularly. I suppose we knew more about each other

from letters than form personal contact and I guess form a personal contact point of view it was a new experience for both of us.

17:00 We were getting to know each other in a quote ‘different way’.

Ddi you feel that your war experience had changed you on a personal level when you got back?

I think so. It had to. I had well, as I have said, from pre-war I had had

17:30 to be fairly self reliant. And I guess the navy experience I was just dropped in the deep end again and I would not be wrong if I said that most of the fellows that went to sea went to sea as boys and came home as men.

18:00 You can’t be involved in that sort of thing and it not change you. Some people, it probably did them good, others it might have not been a good experience for them. There were some who came back alcoholics, there were others who came

18:30 back quite different people to what they were when they went away. Although very few of us had the opportunity to drink enough alcohol to make us habitual drinkers in those days. But you drank when you had the opportunity. And some fellows made a real mess of themselves, others didn’t quite make as big a

19:00 mess of themselves. Some didn’t drink at all. Like the rest of the community, general, depended a bit on your reaction to your circumstance. Where you were, what had been going on and how it had affected you.

Looking back, how would you say that it changed you?

19:30 Well I think I was a much more mature person when I came home. I was quite prepared to sort of stand up and stick my neck out and do things. I mightn’t have been as prepared to do that when I went away. Of course I was four years older

20:00 when I got home, so I must have grown up a bit in that time. I think generally, if you came home with a full skin it didn’t do you a lot of damage. And in those days of course there weren’t all sorts of

20:30 grief counsellors and whatever else you call them. You just got busy and did what had to be done. I just had to prepare to provide for my family, there wasn’t anything else I could do. So that was down to work and study as hard as you could.

21:00 **Was it hard to settle at all to get used to a different kind of routine?**

Well it was a different routine because I was married. I was in a different world to what I had been when I went away. I can’t say I had any real difficulty settling down. That’s what I had to do. There wasn’t any alternative. I had to work. I had to

21:30 study so work was done during the day and study during the night. I think it was about five years before I finished, probably six years before I finished all together. During that time we had three children. It

22:00 wasn’t until 1950 that we got a car. So any movement we did before that was in that initial five years was all done by tram or train, wherever we wanted to go. And as you can imagine with three little kids, there wasn’t much of it done. We spent a lot of time

22:30 at home. But that didn’t worry me greatly because I was studying. We had, we were, you could say, practically on our own. We had my mother handy but my wife’s mother was in Western Australia. We went over to Western

23:00 Australia in the April for me to meet the family and them to have a look at me, see if they were satisfied or not. Then we came back and settled down to

23:30 ordinary life, I suppose you would call it.

How would you describe the social and economic landscape of post war Australia?

Well there were very few people with motor cars. So most people travelled by tram, train or bus, if there was

24:00 a bus. Economics wasn’t too bad, there was all of the post-war building going on. After I had been back with Primaries for six months, I moved jobs to Wunderlichs in Brisbane,

24:30 their office was in the valley and they were involved with the building industry in quite a big way. They made terracotta tiles and asbestos sheeting and asbestos cement roofing and it was in great demand. There were builders building houses madly for all of the blokes

25:00 coming back. There had been nothing much done in the way of building during the war apart from defence building. There were restrictions on the size of the house you could build. And of course there

were all of the fellows coming out of the forces

25:30 wanting accommodation. A lot of them like me, freshly married. So I suppose in a word, the economic situation was fairly healthy although wages were not very

26:00 much. I moved from Primaries to Wunderlichs to get an increase of ten shillings, from five pounds to five pound ten. And I gradually sort of improved my position in

26:30 Wunderlichs and got better and better, but I don't know that I was getting much more than thirteen or fourteen pounds a week when I left there in the 50's. I went there in 1946 and I left in about 1953

27:00 then I went to work for a prudential insurance company.

When you went back to work at Primaries after the war, were there more women working there? Did they have to give up their jobs for the men coming back or anything like that?

I can't answer that. I don't remember there being any.

27:30 There must have been more women working there than there was before. But we, I guess it could have been, sort of. There was a change in the way of marketing principally wool. During the war they stopped having auction sales

28:00 and the wool was sort of all put into store and valued and taken over by the Commonwealth basically and distributed to wherever it was required. And I think very soon after the war finished, they went back to the auction system and that could have meant there would have been opportunities for quite a bit more staff

28:30 than there was in the stage where the wool was just passed into store out of valuation by somebody for the government. I think ultimately that wool was, I can't remember the term they used, but the wool that was

29:00 the property of the Commonwealth was ultimately sold I imagine at some profit to the government. I can't say that there was any great change in employment numbers really. Well, see, a lot of women were working

29:30 in places that stopped when the war finished. Like ammunition factories and clothing factories, all of those sorts of places. They just shut up shop when the war finished and I suppose a lot of the girls who were working got married and in those days once you got married, you left work.

30:00 **Had your wife worked?**

My wife was in the army when I met her. Prior to that she had been working for a firm call Harris Scalfe and Sandovers in

30:30 Perth as a comptometer operator. And she joined the army and worked for army canteens as a comptometer operator. And she was discharged in the early days of December 1945 before

31:00 she came over to the east and we got married. She had a couple of years at least in the army. Progressing, I went from Wunderlichs, I went there initially as a cashier and by the time I left I was a tailworks accountant

31:30 and they had an old tile factory at Ferny Grove and they built a new one during my time at Northgate, and I think they have both been closed now, I am not sure. I know the Ferny Grove one has disappeared off the map. I can't even find any of the old buildings out there. And as well as taking that

32:00 responsibility, I was sort of off-siding to the branch accountant. And if he was on holidays or was away and something had to be done, I did it. We were operating as a branch of the head office in Sydney so when we got our branch figures done, they were just sent off to Sydney and they prepared all of the final

32:30 figures. I left there to go to Prudential Insurance and for twelve months I sold life insurance.

Was that easy to sell in post war Australia?

No it never is easy to sell, I don't think. There was a need for it, I suppose. I did as well as average at it.

33:00 And after I had been out on the road for about twelve months, I was appointed as a supervisor of South-East Queensland and I was looking after the activities of a group of insurance salesman form Rockhampton to the border,

33:30 back as far as, into the Burnett, and down sort of east of the range. I worked there in that capacity for six or nine months I suppose and then I was invited to go into practice as an accountant in Warwick by a fellow that was in practice there at the time

34:00 and decided to do it. What I didn't know at the time was that he was an alcoholic and the consequences

as far as I was concerned were horrendous, in that I had to hold things together until I decided that he

34:30 had gone far enough and take over the practice from him and then proceed to convince all of the locals that I wasn't going to run away, and then build it up, which we did over a period of some thirty years.

35:00 **Can you tell us about Warwick at the time? What was there?**

Work at that stage was a dairy factory and a flour mill and a feed mill, two flour mills really. A railway workshop, main roads depot,

35:30 all of those general things. Population of about ten thousand people, servicing a district of about forty thousand people ranging from Killarney, Carrara, Texas, Inglewood,

36:00 that general area which was prospering at the time. Grazing, mixed farming area. It wasn't until a little later, see I went up there in 1955, and it wasn't until a little later that things got a bit harder, wool prices folded.

36:30 And wool never really recovered I think.

Can you talk about the effects of that on the community, what you saw?

Well now, when you talk about community, commercial community? Household community?

Both.

37:00 Well the effect was simply there wasn't as much money about. People just had to pull their horns in a bit. As far as I was concerned it meant that people were sometimes much slower paying their accounts. Which made the running of my business more

37:30 difficult and I guess the same could be said of everybody else's. There just wasn't as much money to be had. People didn't spend as freely, so there wasn't as much turnover in the businesses so they were a little less productive of income than they would have otherwise been.

38:00 But it gradually stabilised and the farming practices changed. In the early days, all of the wheat, barley and other grains were all bagged and stacked in great stacks at railway stations and shipped in bags overseas. Over time it

38:30 all changed to bulk handling. Now you're lucky to find a bag to put anything in on farming properties. They handle it all in bulk. Even their seed they handle in bulk which is surprising really.

39:00 Now farming practices themselves changed, there was more fertilisers used. There was a move to irrigation on the Downs [Darling Downs, South East Queensland], people were using water from bores to irrigate crops.

39:30 From very small tractors, the sizes of the tractors increased and consequently their capacity to work areas of ground increased. Farms got bigger. One farm would buy out his neighbour and he was able to work it with his bigger tractor.

40:00 So incomes started to increase again of course, but there were less people earning it. I suppose generally, it was generally progressive. But farmers generally are a fairly innovative

40:30 sort of people. They see something that needs to be done, or a way to do something that has been done a certain way for years, they will have a go, try it out. And I imagine, well one change that was quite a radical one really has been the change to irrigation

41:00 from harvested water. Pump it out of creeks when they're in flood time and put it into dams and use it to irrigate cotton or maize or other crops these days. You find these big earth dams all over the Downs now where

41:30 they were few and far between a few years ago.

Tape 6

00:30 Are you ready to go? Going back to the times when we were up in the northern Pacific, as you would be aware when they were putting up a barrage against aircraft, everything that goes up has got to come down.

01:00 And I can remember leaning over the lockers on the flag deck and watching little cleared spaces about six inches across appear on the iron deck every so far along, and not having the sense to move out of the way. It was spent cannon shells coming

01:30 down and hitting the deck and exploding and blowing these little bits of, it was a mixture of sawdust and bitumen that they used to put where you walked. Little sorts of clear patches along the old deck. You didn't think to get in out of the rain you know. Another occasion, when we had been told to

02:00 seek cover, I was up on the bridge at the time. I must have been on watch and we were told to take cover and myself and another fellow stuck ourselves sort of half into a

02:30 hatch cover, built in. It came up so far and then a quarter circle so that it was high enough off the floor so that if you slipped into it you would clear the top of it down a hatch to go down to the next deck. And we were sort of in under that. Me on this side and

03:00 he on that side. And there was a whack!. And a piece of shrapnel, I tell you no lie, about that long and about that far through both ways lodged on the back edge of the hatch that this hatch cover was covering, fair in the middle between us. If it had hit either of us it would have taken our head

03:30 or arm or something off. I carried that for months after that and eventually it got so rusty I had to throw it away. If I had had enough sense to oil it, I would probably still have it. You don't take much notice of these things initially. Another occasion we were

04:00 being strafed by a plane and I was on the flag deck watching the plane coming in. I reckoned he was getting a bit too close. I would have been safer if I had stayed where I was. But I, the flag deck had English flag lockers on either side

04:30 and because we were up with the Yanks, we had a Yank flag locker. Because the Yanks have got to use their flags and we have got to use their flags when we are operating with them, they can't learn about our signals and our signal book and all the rest of it, that would tax their capacity too much. I don't know what your reaction to the same gentlemen are these days.

05:00 We had to always use their procedures when we were in company with them, they never used ours. And I dived from the flag locker down into this locker which had two rails across it which the flags hung on. I had no trouble getting into it. I had real trouble getting out. I couldn't get out, and there had been a bloke

05:30 sunbaking around the Oerlikon mounting just a little bit over that way from where I was and I didn't know this until a couple of years ago, he repeated the same sort of story. He had been lying there sun baking and realised what this guy was doing and was trying to dig

06:00 holes in the iron deck to get out of the road, get in under cover somehow. The mounting for the Oerlikon had steps around it so that if you wanted to get up or right down, you could step down, and he was trying to get in underneath them to get himself protected. In the finish he had to help me get out of the locker.

06:30 **What was the general feeling for Australian Navy guys, their appraisal of American Navy?**

As individuals they were all right but they didn't think the way we did. The Yanks I mean. We would repair flags,

07:00 the Yanks would replace flags. And generally that's the difference in the cultures. We had been brought up in the frugal British philosophy, you don't throw anything out until it's worn out. But if it's not functioning you repair. it.

07:30 The Yank, if it is not functioning he throws it overboard and gets a new one. And that's generally the way it operated. They were better fed. They were a lot better fed than we were. And they made sure they were. And we did a lot less than

08:00 they did. But as individuals, there weren't any great blues or anything that went on because there was a mob of Yanks and there was a mob of Australians. That didn't seem to happen. We were dependant to some extent on each other. And you had to…

08:30 It's like living in a ship. You're dependant on the other fellow doing his job and he's dependant on you doing your job and the more efficient you become the better the ship functions, the happier a ship is. It is a strange thing. I mentioned before, those that

09:00 remain of that crew are still a crew. They're still compatible. They have gone and done all sorts of things. They were an ordinary cross section of community that were on there and as a consequence they did all sorts of things after the war.

09:30 I happened to become an accountant. I don't know, I must be a tiger for punishment but I got involved in the Society's affairs. Used to drive from Warwick to Brisbane for meetings and then drive home. Get home about midnight, one o'clock in the morning and then

10:00 front up for work the next day. I would have started that about 1965 or thereabouts. And that went on for fifteen years before I gave it up. In the latter parts of it,

10:30 I initially got involved as a, in brackets, 'Country Representative' involved on a planning committee or

group for public accounting conventions. We used to have one every year. A gathering of the accountants to

11:00 discuss matters of concern to them and to try and hear a bit about other things that were happening. And I got involved with that to start with and one day they said, “Well what about coming onto the council?” which was the divisional council that ran the state operation.

11:30 I was on that for ten years I think. About year eight I became state president of the society and then spent a year

12:00 and then reckoned I had done my share of work and retired for somebody else to have a go. I never found it a problem doing it at the time. Fortunately by then I had a couple of partners who carried the weight in the practice because I used to spend two and a half days a week in Brisbane during that

12:30 presidential year. And then you would be down for various social activities and that sort of thing. It was an interesting exercise. You got to know an interesting cross section of accountants and their different particular interests. You become very aware of their

13:00 different experiences and different spheres of influence and spheres of activity. And after I gave that away, in about ’81, I worked for another few years, retired formally

13:30 in I was about ‘62, so that would be in 1985 wouldn’t it? 1985. Left the practice in June,

14:00 worked until the following, went back there and worked for the other fellows for a month and worked through until March. From August until March. And then went overseas for three months. And while I was over there they phoned me

14:30 to say they were splitting the practice up. One bloke was taking this bit and another that bit. Would I come back and work for each of them two days a week. So I said, “I will do that.” So I came back and worked for each of them two days in the week. That meant I was working four days a week, for about nine months of the year, and then when it came

15:00 time for me to pack up, we used to go away somewhere for a holiday. And then the next year one bloke said, “Well I don’t think I need you this year.” And the other fellow still wanted me to go, so I started doing two days a week and it seemed to be too hard to keep

15:30 up with current information so I stuck with it for a year and then said, “I am finished.” And that’s when we came down here. In 1988. Been here ever since. My first wife died in June, 2000

16:00 and we were married in June 2002. I don’t know whether you want to know anything about family. We had four kids.

What have you told them about your experiences in the war?

16:30 Bits here and there. I never was shy about telling them about it but only if they were interested. They become more interested as the years have gone by, I find. One of the sons-in-law is particularly interested in anything of that sort.

17:00 I haven’t sort of particularly set out to tell them anything about it. Over the years I guess they have had bits thrown at them particularly when I have been attending reunions and that sort of thing. “What do you fellows find to talk about?”, sort of thing.

17:30 We never seem to have any trouble about that.

And what do you fellows get up to when you have your reunions. What do you talk about mostly?

Well we drink a lot less grog [alcohol] these days than we used to. And the conversation’s usually fairly general. People have different recollections of particular happenings.

18:00 And you find out about something that you didn’t know much about. You find a different story about what happened here or there. Just funny stories. There was an occasion in Durban, on the Quiberon when somebody, we had

18:30 been out and had a practice shoot. And instead of putting a thousand yards on the range finder somebody put ten thousand yards on the range finder, and of course the shell went way over to the horizon before it landed. So the gun layers were in disgrace.

19:00 Somebody with a sense of humour discovered a little decorative cannon, about two foot, two foot six long, I suppose, with a little stack of cannon balls in front of it, in front of one of the clubs in Durban. And the next morning when everybody

19:30 got up, that little cannon and its little stack of cannon balls was sitting up poking out of the ball ring of the foc’sle of the Quiberon. And of course the fat was in the fire. Who pinched that? Where did they get it from? Get it back there quick before somebody finds it’s missing.

20:00 I don't think anybody ever owned up to who sort of said, "Well if you can hit them with the proper gun why not have a go with this?" The ball ring on the foc'sle is the thing that when you're securing to a buoy, you put the anchor chain through to go down to the buoy.

20:30 'Tis a thing about so big. Those sorts of things happened. But I still have no idea who was involved. Now,

I was going to ask you, when it came to battle stations, if you weren't on duty at the time, did you have

21:00 **another job that you had to do in battle stations?**

Yes. Everybody had a position to get to when action stations were sounded. Whether they be aircraft or surface action stations. They were different , possibly for some people in some circumstances.

21:30 As a signalman most of your, well as signalman of the watch, your watch was always kept on the bridge. Now in action stations you could either be on the bridge or on the flag deck. The

22:00 yeoman usually, if it was action stations, the yeoman turned up on the bridge and the signalman of the watch who was there would be off-siding him. Any of the rest of the signal staff, which would be three fellows, would be on the flag deck, ready to hoist any flags or give any assistance required. If they wanted something in particular, they could shout over the back of

22:30 bridge. Say, "Do so and so." We didn't actually handle any of the armament of the ship. Our role was purely communication. The telegraphists were in much the same boat. They had their various action stations to go to. And when action stations was sounded you were closed, up there in a minute or somebody

23:00 wanted to know why. And if you were coming up to your action station, you came up one side of the ship. If you were going down to your action station you went down the other side of the ship so that you didn't have people meeting on ladders. You didn't waste any time because you didn't know what was likely to

23:30 happen. You didn't know how far things were away. There were times when the fleet was under some sort of threat, you could be closed up all day. If there were enemy aircraft say shadowing the fleet, there could be other aircraft just over the horizon just waiting to pounce.

24:00 You never took a risk.

How open to the elements did you feel that the flag deck was?

Well it didn't have a roof on it so it was fairly open. The

24:30 the flag deck was one deck below the bridge and it was where all of the flag hoists were made. Now if it was raining you were wet.

25:00 If the sea was particularly rough you might also be wet. But you had to be there. Usually we used to try and keep one man on the flag deck and one man on the bridge at all times. And there was a voice pipe connection between the bridge and the flag deck

25:30 so that you could sing out from the bridge if you wanted somebody to hoist a flag. If you were going into harbour, you would have to hoist your pennant numbers. Well okay the time to do that, you get the instruction from the bridge, "Hoist the numbers."

26:00 I used to spend a lot of my nights sleeping on the flag deck when it wasn't raining because below decks at night got very heavy. The atmosphere really got thick. You can imagine it is shut up

26:30 from before dusk until after dawn. No ventilation at all. The only ventilation was a bit of air that was blown into it through air ducts that had little openings about so big, every so far along. That was the only ventilation,

27:00 so if there was a chance of me staying out of that, I did. And what I used to do, I would drag out a few flags and lie down on them. Roll up a flag for a pillow, got to sleep.

Was that permissible or?

Well I did it. There were people

27:30 probably slept all over the place. So long as somebody knew where you were I guess that was the main thing. If I was on the flag deck, well I was pretty handy if anything happened. You didn't sleep on the flag deck or anywhere else in the day, it was only night and you can hoist flags or anything else in the night.

28:00 Another thing which I didn't mention about flags and the use of them. All of the flags in the naval code and all of the flags in the international signal code which is what the Yanks used, have a silhouette,

there are no two flags with the same silhouette. They might be different colours,

28:30 but if you're looking or trying to read a signal from five miles away you won't see the colour only the silhouette. And we had to learn how to recognise each flag by its silhouette. I don't know whether that's generally known, but that's how it had

29:00 to be done. If it was a hoist by the senior officer in the middle of the fleet well okay you can probably see the colours as they are coming, and we used to try and pick them up as they came up over the top of the locker.

Would any colours repeat or was it just one colour, one flag, that's it? There are not two red flags, there is only one red flag?

29:30 Well you could have a dark St Georges Cross on a light background, you could have a light St Georges Cross on a dark background. Now as far as the colours go they vary, but it is always the dark and the light.

30:00 It may be a diagonal like flag with the diagonal from the top of the flag or it could be a diagonal the other way which would give you a different silhouette. You had to be able to recognise each one.

30:30 **And were you assisted in reading flags with binoculars or things like that?**

We used binoculars or telescopes. Usually a telescope, it was easier.

And was that permanently mounted or?

No not usually. You usually found some support for it if you were reading flags. You used a telescope to read semaphore usually,

31:00 to read flags and if you had a light in a fixed position on a big ship you would probably use it to read that. Your binoculars you would use at night, because at night signals were sent in lamps, using a violet lamp about that far round,

31:30 an inch diameter, with a hood of about three inches on it so that it couldn't be seen anywhere else, and you had to be spot onto it to be able to read it. You had a little gadget on your, you screwed it on, this little light onto the binoculars and than if you were receiving signals, we used to pass signals around the

32:00 screen at night with this little lamp. And you would receive the signal from the bloke ahead of you and send it to the bloke behind you. And you would have to have somebody writing it down while you were taking it. The same with the semaphore. Whether it was the officer of the watch or one of the seaman on the

32:30 deck that was doing it. Somebody had to do it.

So if you were on watch on the bridge, was it mostly received from the flag deck, is that right?

No. It was received on the bridge.

So if you're on watch, is there any warning that a message is going to come through?

You have got to keep a look out.

Is there a pre-warning, saying message to follow or?

33:00 **will the message start straight away?**

There is a call signal which you answer and that lets them know that you are ready to receive. The semaphore at sea became quite an interesting exercise because I don't know whether you, I can't get over there, that ship on that.

33:30 **The one you showed us before, yeah.**

That's probably one of the frigates. Around the bridge on the front of the bridge was a set of windows and on the last one

34:00 on each end was a rotary piece of glass that spun so that you could look out in the rain and see what there is. Now that had a, the set of glass windows had a shelf about that wide that covered,

34:30 went back from the top of the windows. Now in the middle of the bridge in under that, was a chart table where the chart that you were working on was kept and at night there was a curtain that came down behind you and if you put your head through there to look at the chart and turned on a light it wouldn't get out anywhere.

35:00 At sea, most of the semaphore had to be sent standing up on the thing out towards the edge of the ship so that you got a clear background, because the bloke trying to read it wouldn't be able to read it if he couldn't see you clearly.

35:30 So you're standing out there with the ship moving. It was twenty feet down there to the deck. And if you went over that way you might have gone straight into the drink or you might have bounced on the deck on the way. So sometimes you had people hanging onto your ankles while you did it. It was a quick way to send messages.

36:00 You seemed to be able to get through it quickly. Took more time to send messages by Morse, by light. You raised a good point there, as a signalman you were supposed to be looking for somebody calling you or somebody starting to send a signal.

36:30 If there was a senior officer in the fleet wanting to send a signal to the fleet generally, he used to start sending the call sign, and he would send it for quite a while. Until he had a response from all of the ships in the fleet and then he would start to send his message. There

37:00 were a lot of things circulated within the fleet that way. Now it wouldn't matter where you were, you were expected to read that. If you were looking into the sun too bad, you just had to work it out but you could be just as easily as looking away from the sun, you could be looking into the sun. And they sent them

37:30 in the middle of the day, middle of the afternoon, any time that suited them, you could get one of those signals.

Can you ever recall a time where you really struggled to read a signal?

I can't probably because you block that out of your

38:00 memory I guess. But it is amazing how, see the signals usually are of more or less regular form. Not necessarily a standard form but a regular form and you can usually tell what word follows what word. Which can be a trap of

38:30 course. You are reading a signal and you see a word and you don't pay attention and the next word is quite different to what you think it will be and you can get into strife that way. Just an interesting sort of process. I don't know when

39:00 I became what I would call a proficient signalman. But there were various sorts of levels of training that we were provided with. There was the ordinary signalman. We were, we

39:30 came out of the signal school as ordinary signalmen and then the next thing you had to do was pass a signalman's exam. Then what you had to do, after that you became a trained operator which required a higher standard of proficiency. Then you became a VS3 which required a still

40:00 higher level of proficiency. Now there were quite a lot of us that got to the VS3 stage. And VS3 was the level where you got a leading rate. You became a leading signalman.

40:30 But there were so many hundreds of VS3's in the RAN [Royal Australian Navy] that you would have never ever become a leading signalman. And then the next course was the VS2 which was the yeoman of signals or the petty officer of signals, and then you had a chief petty officer for signals who was a VS1.

41:00 That's the way they classified us and each rating carried a little increment in pay. Very small I might add. It might have been sixpence extra a day or something like that.

We might stop there George.

Tape 7

00:30 Just thinking about some of the things that happened in different places. At one stage we went in Durban we went on leave to a place called Scottburgh. Went down by train from Durban to this seaside place called

01:00 Scottburgh which was south of Durban along the coast somewhere. It was the first time I had seen monkeys in the wild. They were all over the platform of the station and everywhere like wild animals could be. I had never seen them in the wild like that before. We had a very enjoyable time down there.

01:30 Three or four of us I think must have gone down as a group, had our three days or whatever it was and went back to the ship. We had off and on quite a bit of time in Durban with a bit of leave here and there or just day leave. One of the favourite places we used to go to was a Jewish club.

02:00 It had a sunken garden sort of area around it where we used to dance. I have recollections one day of dancing around there and becoming aware of the fact that I was dancing around. I have no recollection of how I got there.

02:30 It was interesting. No idea what antics I got up to before that. Other occasions when we happened to be in Australia, we came back around Christmas '44 it must have been, and

03:00 got to Melbourne. They sent all of the locals off on leave. That's people whose port of origin was Melbourne. And about midnight on Christmas Eve issued a recall for the crew from all radio stations and all other sorts of places that

03:30 could get in touch with them. But not many of them turned up. They just seemed to disappeared into the woodwork and nobody could find them. So those of us that were left took the ship to sea and we went chasing a submarine off the New South Wales coast. It had the day before

04:00 sunk a ship somewhere on the southern New South Wales coast so they reckoned we would be the closest and the most likely to find it but we didn't. We eventually finished up in Sydney and the fellows that got left in Melbourne had to come up by train to rejoin the ship.

04:30 I don't know that there is a lot, there probably are a lot of other things I can tell you but I can't think of any of them right now.

We have heard some interesting comments from navy fellows about waterside workers. What was your opinion or experience of them from what your ship?

I was not impressed. I can remember one occasion. Actually I thought they were despicable individuals.

05:00 One occasion I can remember that stores for the fleet. They had refused to load in Brisbane or Sydney, somewhere. And instead of things arriving when they should have arrived, they didn't arrive until much later which meant that they all had to be man handled from

05:30 the store ship to us by flying fox at sea while we steamed along and that didn't impress us one little bit. We had to work like steam to get this stuff on board which should have been put on board without any difficulty while we were in harbour somewhere.

How dangerous is doing that kind of transporting at sea?

06:00 Somebody is likely to lose a finger, hand or head when things are flying around. I mean one end of the line is moving one way the other end is moving another way and in between there is a case or two of something coming over in the net. You have got to get it down in a restricted space. It is dangerous,

06:30 yeah.

Did you ever see or hear of any instances where sailors and waterside workers were in the same pubs?

No I can't say but I would venture to say that if either side became aware, or the sailors became aware that there were people with waterside

07:00 affiliations, there probably would have been fun and games. I think the general attitude is not very friendly.

You spoke a little bit earlier in your training where you had to learn to hoist the flags with mechanical arms? Can you talk a bit more about that? Describe what it is?

Well that's sending semaphore with mechanical arms.

07:30 Now it was like you had two straight arms that were connected to a chain with a little gear on them and two handles at the bottom and instead of you putting your hands up to where ever you wanted to put them,

08:00 by use of these handles you could make the arms move to where ever you wanted to use them to make semaphore letters with the straight arms, rather than your arms, which didn't always come out straight. You had flags on the end of them and the aim was to get angles that people could

08:30 read. Well if you were using the mechanical semaphore you had no excuse. They were straight arms that you were using and if you didn't put it in the right angle, you were to blame not the machinery because the arms you were using were quite straight. Some people's arms bend in funny places.

09:00 **It sounds easy, was it difficult to master mechanical arms or?**

Well if you were, imagine that you're using a handle about so long to manipulate an arm that is two foot six, three foot long. It is likely to keep going more than you want it to

09:30 when you are using these ones down here. You make your angle there, and the arm may tend to go further on than you want it. Once you move it, it tends to want to keep moving and you have got to have a strong enough grip

10:00 to stop it where you want it and move it quickly but stop it.

I heard some things from ladies working at signal stations receiving some funny signals. Do

you recall ever sending or receiving amusing signals?

I couldn't really recall specific signals

10:30 but we had all sorts of shortcuts. And the more time you spent at sea, the more of them you acquired, particularly when you were sending semaphore, that you wanted to get it sent and get out from the exposed positions as quickly as you could because you were likely to end up breaking your neck,

11:00 standing on the space that you had. If you slipped, you had troubles. So yes, you were interested in transmitting it as quickly as you could. Consequently if you could develop, use a letter instead of a word,

11:30 I mentioned earlier 'U' and 'R'. There were all sorts of similar sorts of shortcuts. There were some signals that were routine that got that sort of treatment that you could send off in no time, where if you

12:00 sent the full signa, you would take quite a while. I don't know whether that makes sense.

What can you tell me about piping on board the ship? And how perhaps you learned about that as a young sailor?

Have you seen a boson's pipe?

12:30 **No. Do you want to stop for a second?**

There it is. That's a boson's pipe.

Do you know any pipes that you can do for us?

No I am not proficient. I might have been able to blow it successfully years ago. I wouldn't trust myself now. I might damage your ears.

Was piping something you learned in basic training or was it something you learned on board the ship?

13:00 I think it was learned on board ship usually. It was usually done by one of the seaman whose duty it was for that day. I never…on the ship. Signalmen didn't do it on board ship. And it was usually a seaman who,

13:30 I don't know what his particular duty would have been for that day, he would sound the pipes. It might have been for a watch. He would sound the pipes for that watch and you knew what to do.

So when you first get onto a ship and you hear these pipes, is there always someone around to tell you what they mean?

Usually yes.

14:00 Well sailors usually look after the new hands. It is in their interests to do so. Although I must admit that there were times when they didn't really try. And I could instance times when we might be sailing from Melbourne to Fremantle and we would take a whole draft of new recruits, fresh out

14:30 of Flinders Naval Depot, drafted to ships in Western Australia and they would come on board all fresh faced and keen and we would get out into the [Great Australian] Bight and it would get rougher and rougher, and they would spend the time lying on the iron deck around the funnel where it was a little bit warm and we would all have their rations. That was good.

15:00 **You mentioned before, I don't think you said it on camera, about one of your mates that had trouble with seasickness?**

Oh yes. He was a torpedo man and he used to keep watches at the same time as I did, both on the bridge. There was always a torpedo man on the bridge and a signalman on the bridge

15:30 with the officer of the watch, usually a bridge messenger and of course anybody else of the officers who wanted to be on the bridge. Navigator might come up and have a look. The captain could be on or off the bridge depending on how things were going or what you were doing.

16:00 But I can remember him when things got really rough walking around with this bucket on his arm. And I have seen him use it but one of the captains we had on board was usually seasick for three days every time he went to sea.

16:30 It's not an uncommon occurrence that people be seasick. Usually with a little bit of time at sea they recover, they get over it, sort of thing.

As far as food goes, did you have special food for action stations?

17:00 No if we were closed up all day, we would probably get sandwiches passed around. The cook would make sandwiches and pass them around.

Did you ever get a thing called tootie oggies?

Tootie oggies were sausages as I remember them.

17:30 Sausages in all sorts of shapes and forms. We used to get sausages in tins. I remember that now. But tootie oggies

18:00 I always thought were sausages in various mixes mushed or otherwise. It could be a form of dough with sausages in it. Another way they used to be, mix it up and put the sausages in it and go and bake it.

18:30 **We interviewed a chef the other day who invented the double tootie oggie which had apples in one end and sausages in the other. What can you tell me about tiddly on board?**

Tiddly. Well tiddly was just fancy gear. Tiddly gear was fancy gear, non standard equipment.

19:00 Most of the well it was the ambition of every young sailor to have a tiddly suit. Which was made in such a way that it stretched the limitations. It was tighter where it should be tight, but it was tighter,

19:30 and the legs were usually bigger and the material was fancier, generally speaking it was a flash thing. And then when it came down to the white fronts with the piping, they were usually, tiddly fronts just

20:00 came across, two bits with a hole in the middle. Two bits of white material with strings on each end, so you tied one around here and one around the back and that took the place of a shirt. And then instead of a collar being that wide which the issued one was,

20:30 the tiddly one was the narrowest you could get away with. And you had your silk and your tiddly collar which you did, have you ever seen the naval collar? You have seen the way they're made, one goes down the back and,

21:00 well think one of those was about half as wide as the issue one and that's a tiddly collar. And then you would try and wash them and wash them until they all faded, hardly any colour in them and the more faded they got, the better they were. And that was tiddly collars .The same thing went with the

21:30 dickie front, if the blue faded on that, that was good.

If it was every sailors ambition to have one of these uniforms, did you have to get them tailor made?

Had to get them made.

By someone outside of the navy?

Oh yes. There were tailors in Melbourne who made their fortune making tiddly suits for sailors.

Did you have one?

I had one, yes.

22:00 I also had a set of whites which weren't issued in my day. I can tell you a funny story. My younger daughter used to wear them when she was tap dancing and that sort of thing, and they fitted her which surprised me. I thought I would have been too big for them to fit her but they fitted her all right.

22:30 I must have a lot more weight on me now than then.

It is hard to get my head around the idea that you guys were that fashion conscious at the time, can you explain to me?

Well you were a young blade, dressed up. You enjoyed walking around with all of this good gear on. You looked a bit scrubby if you just had the navy issue one on.

23:00 Like the army issue stuff, although it is a bit better these days than it was. Then it was pretty rough and ready. Of course you had two sizes in the navy, too small or too big. Everything was the same, it was either too small or too big. You could never get the right fit.

Did anyone ever get

23:30 **stopped form going ashore for just pushing it too far?**

Oh yes. Yes that happened. If you got too fancy, you got pulled up and sent back to get properly dressed and then you might have to put up with going ashore in the issue stuff you see?

24:00 **Can you tell me whether you did any fishing at sea and how that happened?**

Well I can remember on one occasion in the south Atlantic, we dropped a depth charge on a school of fish, and of course when every boat leaves the ship it has got to have a signalman in it and I went

24:30 with this particular boat. And of course when we got to the place where all of these fish were on the

surface we dropped a depth charge, killed the fish and they came to the surface and I am helping get these fish which are about that big and get them into the boat. And I have been looking for the sort of fish ever since

25:00 I have never been able to find it. I grabbed one and it had a spine like that, laying facing forward along the tail so when I grabbed it my hand slipped back towards the tail. Of course I got these spines into the finger and hands, when I grabbed it and lifted it

25:30 so I didn't get a lot more fish. I had more blood on me than you can imagine. And I have spent my life looking for fish that had spines leaning backwards along the, laying forward in the middle of the tail and I have never been able to find it. Never been able to find out what sort of fish it was. It was quite good to eat anyhow, I assure you.

26:00 **Do you have any shark stories?**

We used to swim overboard. We used to play water polo actually over the side. Probably sailors have told you this before. Put a boom out so far apart and hang a goal from the boom down to the water and then play water polo

26:30 alongside the ship in whatever depth of water there was there. In harbour of course, but there was always a bloke up on the bridge with a rifle just in case there was a shark started to show interest in it. We swam in Mombasa and Trincomalee doing the same thing. It was quite a favoured

27:00 occupation actually or recreation. Usually did a bit of swimming around the ship and all that sort of activity.

What other sorts of things did you do on board to entertain yourselves? You spoke about cards?

27:30 There used to be card schools playing Bridge or Five Hundred on board. Sometimes in harbour we might be lucky enough to get a film and that would be shown on the foc'sle where everybody could sit around and look at it. Sometimes when there was the opportunity, there

28:00 would be football or hockey teams or cricket teams go off to play other ships. Sometimes they would have a sailing competition between a number of ships. A sailing boat, well it was a cutter usually, with standard sails on

28:30 and they would all race one another over an agreed course.

Did signallers ever have competitions?

We were always in competition with other ships. But no I can't say

29:00 we did. We used to have to keep watches even in harbour, where a seaman, seaman at sea would keep their watches and then they would do whatever normal ship duties that they had to do on

29:30 top of that. But we always kept watches and then we had to update signal books and that sort of thing. There were always amendments coming through for the various signal books we had and they had to be kept up to date so that we didn't make a mistake when we received a signal and do the wrong thing, or tell the officer to do the wrong

30:00 thing. It was our responsibility to keep all of the signal publications up to date. That took a bit of time off watch time. Mostly we didn't have a lot of that anyway.

You said before, coming into harbour was one of the busiest times for a signaller. Can you talk us through the procedure of coming into harbour and the things that you did?

30:30 Well you usually hoisted your pennant as identification. And then you had to keep your eye out for incoming signals, either from the shore establishment or other ships in harbour. They may have all sorts of messages for you and some may have had

31:00 influence on where you tied up or how you tied up or what you did as you came in. You might have to go straight to fuel, or tie up at a wharf and then go somewhere else. You had to watch that there was nothing like that missed.

31:30 It was just a matter of keep your eyes open and be aware. If you were on watch it was your responsibility. Usually coming into harbour, you had the signal yeoman there with you but it was job to spot the signals and report them. You weren't running around with wires or ropes or anything.

32:00 **What was your first experience or knowledge of the kamikaze?**

Well we were as I said earlier we were attached to the Indefatigable and a kamikaze support destroyer.

32:30 They just called us KK destroyers, and there was a destroyer attached to each carrier and they streamed one or two cables astern of them. One cable when they were under attack, probably two when cruising so that they had enough room. You didn't run up the stern of the carrier

33:00 if he had to slow down in a hurry for some reason. Now, there were lot of kamikaze attacks on the carriers. Some of them would come in along the water very low and then go up in the air and

33:30 then crash down on the carrier. Others came form great heights straight down. I have seen, well I saw a kamikaze one day that finished up running into the aft part of the KG 5

34:00 which was the battle ship and the aft part of it from the main mast aft was a mass of smaller type guns, anti-aircraft type armament. And that plane it was on fire, it had pieces

34:30 shot off it one after another after another but it still came on and hit the ship. It killed about fifty fellows, in one bang like that. You would, the aft part of those big ships was a mass of pom poms and Oerlikons and all of

35:00 smaller type anti-aircraft guns that were available on ships at that time. I have seen others come down onto the carriers. Some of which exploded on the decks, but numbers of which

35:30 hit the decks of the carriers and skidded off into the sea. I can remember one instance when the Indomitable was hit. It came sort of straight down onto it and about midday or thereabouts, exploded, and it blew a dent in the four inch

36:00 armament on the flight deck about twenty feet across and sort of six or seven feet deep. And off the bottom of the flight deck there was splinters went through the boilers and the boilers lost pressure of course. She lost way, and she could only proceed at eighteen knots then.

36:30 They put the fire out, I think they had a fire below as well as on deck. When they hit the carriers on deck, if there were aircraft on deck they would burn, but she was flying aircraft on by the afternoon. They filled the hollow with cement and she just carried on flying aircraft.

37:00 All of the carriers were damaged to some degree. Most of the British carriers were not mortally wounded shall I say. The American carriers were very much more liable to be sunk by kamikazes because they had wooden decks.

37:30 And it was only the later carriers that came out, Americans, that had steel decks. Another factor with the carriers, our job running behind them was to offer fire support and if they lost anybody overboard to try and pick them up.

38:00 If you imagine this aircraft deck travelling on at a minimum of twenty knots with a breeze over the deck probably at fifteen or more knots, so that's thirty five knots of wind that coming along the deck for them to land into. If they don't pick up the trip wire soon enough, they run into a crash

38:30 barrier which stops them dead. And probably does damage to the plane. Then they would drop the barrier, take it past the barrier and put it up for the next one. I can remember one aircraft coming in, I don't know whether it had a crew of two or three, I think three, and as it came in

39:00 a gust of wind caught it and just turned it over, off the deck and it went down beside, into the drink. One of the crew got out on the deck, one got out on a gun platform half way down and we picked the pilot up out of the drink. I was reading something earlier where

39:30 a similar aircraft had gone over the side. I wasn't aware of this one, and they fished three people out of the drink. Two of them were crew, and the other was one of the sailors off the deck of the carrier that had been knocked over by the aircraft blowing over the side.

40:00 We have at times picked up blokes who have come in damaged and instead of landing on the carrier they landed in the water. Picked them up. In fact there is one bloke that still keeps in touch with some of the crew that was fished out of the water like that.

Tape 8

00:31 **Can you just talk about the kamikaze? What effect they had on the fellows and what they thought of it?**

Well I think they generally prayed that we did not finish up with one on board.

01:00 We found it very hard to understand how these people would be so indoctrinated, committed, whatever you might call it, that they would be prepared to do that. To commit suicide shall we say,

01:30 on the off chance that they are going to do damage that will cause difficulty to the enemy. I guess that's what they were aiming to do. And for it to be a

02:00 very highly respected way of killing yourself. Seemed crazy to us. We worried about them, I must admit. More on the basis, well I hope to God none of them ever comes on board us.

02:30 Because if they had they probably would have sunk the destroyer. See, they carried usually a five hundred pound bomb strapped to the fuselage. They weren't necessarily bombing planes that they used. They

03:00 carried bombs. Could be anything that flew really. It didn't matter whether it was slow, fast, whatever as long as it would get there and they could point it at something and do what was intended. Once they were in their dive it was almost impossible

03:30 to divert them unless you blew the thing up in the air. It usually, the wings could be shot off it, fuselage torn to bits but the bits would still keep coming. The bits that counted as far as they were concerned, kept coming. It must have been hair raising on the big ships, because they knew they were the targets.

04:00 One day one went down, as you know the bridge on those big aircraft carriers is set out away from the flight deck and one left his wing tip on the bridge as he went down beside the ship. Thank goodness he missed it. If he had been half a wing width in, he would

04:30 have caught enough to throw him into the ship. It was hairy stuff. But at the age that we were, we were indestructible anyway.

Can you tell us about the ship's captain who played radio over the ship?

Yes, captain used to play radio over the ship.

05:00 Well all of the ships had a PA [Public Address] system. And a capacity to play records or pipe the wireless that was being received, into the various areas of the ship. Usually if he wanted to say anything to the ships' company, it was said over that.

05:30 Particularly if you were at sea because you couldn't clear lower deck and assemble the crew to talk to them, you had to talk to them where they were. I don't remember a particular captain who used to play particular music over the radio but he could have done. Whatever was played over the

06:00 radio that was what we had to deal with, whether it came from, you know the fleet might have, well it wouldn't have been broadcasting would it? All of the ships at sea were under radio silence and they wouldn't have broken radio silence unless they were under direct attack.

06:30 It would have been programs beamed out from Guam or somewhere like that. Short wave from somewhere. Might have even been Japan, some of it.

Speaking of which, can you tell us about Tokyo Rose [Japanese radio propagandist]?

07:00 I only know what I have read and heard, I can, I think I can remember hearing on odd occasions the broadcast. It was a joke as far as we were concerned. I think they sunk the equivalent of the British Pacific Fleet three times but

07:30 the information that came over it was garbage. Whether it affected people who were not involved and there like us, I don't know. It could have had an affect further back along the line if they thought we were all sunk and in bits,

08:00 spread around the sea somewhere. It was a joke as far as we were concerned.

Can you tell us how ammunition was stored on the ship?

Very carefully. There were magazines and they were

08:30 on the deck below the lower mess deck. The hatch to the magazine under our mess deck was right where we used to walk over it all of the time. I didn't know this until the other day but apparently

09:00 the shell cases with their cordite load were on one side of the ship and the shells of the various types were on the other side of the ship. All placed in racks and secured so that they wouldn't move as the ship moved. Now the four sevens used cartridge cases

09:30 so long and the shells were about that big. And they could be either armour piecing or high explosive or star shells or whatever. And the shell went in first and then the cartridge case went in behind it and then it was all locked in. and then they were either controlled under local firing or they were

10:00 controlled by the director who gave them all of the settings, be it range and elevation they were either fired by director or under local control. Don't know much more about them than that.

No that's what I was after. Can you tell us about sharing the mess deck with the torpedo men?

10:30 Well the ship was thirty two feet wide. Which would be probably almost this width. And there was a hatch and a ladder that used to come down in the middle of it, and we had two tables on that side and they had two tables on this side.

11:00 They slept in that half, we slept in that half. There was no physical division, that was your bit and this

was our bit. We had our hammock bin in that corner, they had one down in that corner.

11:30 It used to be quite an amicable sort of arrangement. There was a refrigeration area under part of their mess deck that the meat used to come out of and anything else that was frozen to be distributed. It gave

12:00 us an opportunity that when beer was on issue to chill our beer in that little refrigerated area along the pipes and so long in there. Generally it was a happy association. Their responsibility was torpedoes and electrics, they were the electricians and the

12:30 torpedo firing fellows. We were not inclined to argue with them about anything. We had different responsibilities.

We have heard different nicknames for different guys on the ship. Did you guys have a nickname that you know of?

13:00 I don't think I had.

The signallers in general?

Well we were bunting tossers.

Were did that come from?

Well the flags are bunting so signalmen are bunting tossers. That's was about it,

13:30 I suppose. We had Old Ted in the mess he was about ten years older than the rest of us and he was Dad to the lot of us. Only died last year too Old Ted. No that was, I can't think of any particular. We had a leading signalman his name was Sammy Grant, he was called Sam.

14:00 I was usually George, another signalman Jim Turner he didn't have another handle. Jim and Norm Turner they were. Col Kirkwood, I don't think he had another name.

What about, you just thinking of the older gentleman on board, what about sea daddies on board the ship?

14:30 Well he was, you mean sea daddies like fellows misbehaving.

Well we have just heard the terms and I think there are a few different interpretations, some not so bad as the others?

Well I never

15:00 I can't remember any occasion of suspicion on board. I know there were old seamen that the young fellows were warned to keep out of their way.

15:30 But on the same subject I can remember as a fresh faced you fellow from Flinders I can remember being accosted by some old bloke in Flinders Street Station in Melbourne. Frightened the daylights out of me. You had heard all of these stories but you never thought it happened in practice. Frightened the daylights out of me.

16:00 **What happened in that situation?**

I just took off.

Can you tell us about the coders and cipherists and telegraphers that worked with you guys?

Well the telegraphists kept watches. They listened out on whatever

16:30 frequencies they were directed to. And any of the signals that came in were usually in some form of numerical code. Now I never ever did find out how the coders decoded signals. But from what I have learned since, they had various

17:00 coding systems and it was as the signals came in. There was a continuous traffic, telegraphic traffic. It went on continuously and there were signals coming in all of the time. Now they would be decoded and given to the officer of the watch, the signal officer who would attend

17:30 to their distribution. It may have been alterations to signals books. It could have been anything. Could be advice as to what you were to do the next time you went into harbour, all of these things. All of the administration that could be

18:00 handled in that way was I think done. Most of the communication was by signal whether it be visual or telegraphic signal. Sometimes the telegraphists would be asked if there

18:30 had been a submarine heard transmitting somewhere. See they would listen out on foreign frequencies sometimes. And sometimes they would be asked to get a bearing on a signal and they had equipment there that they could go to and train on it and

19:00 produce a bearing on that signal. Or if they could get the same thing from another ship fifty miles away in another direction, they would get a point where that signal was being transmitted. Well okay they can send an aircraft or if there was a ship handy to it, to deal with it. That was part of the tel's [telegraphist's] responsibility too.

19:30 I wouldn't have liked their job at all because it was always in a little room full of wireless gear and the aerials were up on the…from the foremast to the main mast, they usually had about four aerials.

20:00 I don't know that there is much more I can tell you about them.

Can you talk about the feeling among the fellows hearing the ping of the ASDIC?

Yeah. Well if we were on the bridge we were very interested in it because the ASDIC

20:30 was a little cubby hole just sitting down on the deck, just a little bit below the platform of the bridge. And they could relay that ping to the speaker on the bridge, and we could hear, it is hard to identify sometimes what it is. Whether it is a solid

21:00 submarine or a whale or fish.

What happens when you first hear that sound? Does it make you?

Well everyone is wide awake straight away. It has an amazing power to wake people up, and then the bearing is the next important thing I suppose.

21:30 And then what is it? And the most experienced asdic operator is rushed up to the listening post to identify what it is, you have got to try and follow it. So you sweep and you strike it, sweep on and go back and see if it is still

22:00 there. We wiped off two or three asdic domes on whales at sea. But it's you know, if they think it is genuine, well the next thing is action stations. And then they are setting, trying to work out depth and so on for

22:30 charges and they're putting the settings on the charges before they are sent over. And it tends to shake the ship about when they put a pattern of depth charges overboard. But it doesn't often happen

23:00 that you find a submarine. If you do, they get away. It is very hard to keep in touch with them. It is their job to get away as quick as they can of course. Whether it is going deep or staying still or going off on an unexpected sort of bearing.

23:30 It is your job to try and out think him, put yourself in his shoes and try and work out where, which way he will go next. Can't tell you much more than that.

Can you talk about the procedure, you talked about planes ditching earlier, how they would be picked up?

Usually a boat goes over.

24:00 If they're very handy, if a person is able to climb the scrambling net and able to swim. See if the pilot gets out of the plane he has got a life vest on, so he is going to float all right for a while. So if you can manoeuvre the boat close enough to him and he can

24:30 swim, he can probably get himself to the scrambling net and climb up on board. If he is hurt in some way, he might have a broken leg or arm or something, you have got to get over and get him into the boat and get him onto some sort of stretcher that you can then hoist him on board. That was the procedure.

25:00 **Did you know of navy blokes that couldn't swim?**

Yeah we were all supposed to be able to swim. Well whether you can really swim or just swim is the difference. We were supposed to be able to swim the length of the baths in Flinders in our uniforms. Once you completed that, your swimming training was finished.

25:30 If you did no more swimming after that, that was all right, nobody worried. We all had life vests. They were strange things. Just things that you put around your middle, dropped over your shoulders and tied on and blown up. They weren't like the flash ones with automatic

26:00 pumpers and so on. I did know of some that didn't swim, didn't participate in the swimming activities over the side anyhow.

Is it true you heard about the atomic bombs going off in Japan before it was made public?

May have been.

26:30 See we had no contact with Australia for the whole period we were up there. What people knew in Australia we had no idea. It's a bit like the bombing of Darwin, people in Australia didn't know much about it and with the

27:00 atomic bomb, we heard about it by signal in the fleet. Now whether that was before or after it was public knowledge, I don't know, can't answer that.

Was there any other news of the war you were kept up to date with? What was the situation there?

27:30 Well there wasn't, no. We didn't know much about what was going on anywhere else. See I don't think there we would have got much Australian news. It would have had to be short wave if

28:00 we got any. We probably got BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation] news. I am sure we did.

Was that put over the PA?

Yes it was.

To what degree were you told where you were and what you were doing and that sort of thing?

28:30 It was all on a need to know basis. You were never told anymore than you needed to know.

Do you feel as a signaller you were probably privy to a bit more information?

We were I think. We knew a little bit more about what was going on than most. Although we didn't know much about the operations orders before they were functional,

29:00 we would know perhaps a little bit more about it than most of the crew would. They always seemed to think we should have known a lot about it.

You were hounded, were you?

Oh to some extent we were milked for information. Whatever we could we were able to tell, but it wasn't always a lot, there wasn't a lot

29:30 of information we could give because we didn't know much more than they did.

What about being a perfectionist, was that an important part of what you had to do?

Yes. You had to be precise, accurate.

30:00 No other way for it. If you slipped up for instance when flags are being hoisted and you lost the flag hoist, well the first one up the mast after the flag hoist was you.

30:30 And you had to either forget about that hoist and do it on the other side and get it up so that the hoist was answered and then be ready to execute it, stow all of the flags and so on. If you imagine what it is like going up to

31:00 retrieve a signal that has got away like that. You go up a little wire rope ladder about that wide, up the front of the mast, as far as the crows nest. You clamber around the crows nest to another one of these things going up the front of the mast to the top yard.

31:30 And then you have got to get yourself onto the yard, and there is a wire that comes down from the mast to the end of the yard, and the yard itself. That's it. Nothing else to hold on to. And you have got to work your way out on the yard until you can reach down under the yard and grab the halyard from the inside, and go and hook onto the one outside

32:00 so that they can haul them down with the inside halyard. It is an interesting exercise at sea I can tell you. Because you are way above deck, that means that one minute you are looking down into the water, and the next minute you're probably looking down the funnel or even

32:30 further over. It as an interesting experience. You are very careful when you get up there.

Can you recall any occasion of fellows just freaking out when they got up there?

We didn't let fellows go up there that couldn't cope. I can remember doing trips up the mast for other fellows that were just not able to do it. No point in sending someone up there that couldn't do it.

33:00 **Going back before the war, how aware were you that something was brewing? Did you have any idea that there was a war on the horizon?**

Oh yes.

How was that?

Well the noise out of Germany. First of all it was Sudenland and then Austria,

33:30 Czechoslovakia, he just walked into and took over them. Then it got to the stage where Britain said well alright, no more. They were threatening then to attack Poland and immediately they did and Britain declared war.

34:00 **So at that time what are you thinking?**

Well at that time I am about sixteen years of age and wondering whether I will be involved, I guess. I can remember listening to the announcement of the outbreak of war, just by radio, there wasn't any television then.

34:30 And the communication of war news was briefly by radio and then dated to some extent by the newspapers. And the newspapers used to publish casualties and all of those sorts of things.

When you first heard the news of declaration war, what did you think then?

35:00 Well it has happened. That's a long time ago now.

Can you remember what the, a lot of fellows we have spoken to became quite excited when they heard that news?

Yeah well I suppose there would have been a certain amount of excitement about it. Something that we had been expecting,

35:30 I wonder will I get to it, that sort of attitude. I don't know that I had any, I wasn't sort of on tenterhooks about it or anything like that.

Can you recall about hearing about the Japanese attacking Pearl Harbour [United States Naval Base]?

Yes.

36:00 I remember hearing about it.

Do you know where you were or how you heard about that?

Well that was December '41 wasn't it? I would have been waiting for call up. I can remember it happening.

36:30 I can't quite remember where I was. It would have been wireless news that we would have got first, and of course it was horrendous as far as we were concerned. America at that time was supporting the war effort by providing

37:00 the wherewithal and shipping. But it wasn't involved, the services weren't involved except that there were a numbers of small ships in the Atlantic involved with convoys I think at that stage.

37:30 But that made a very big difference to the Americans and I think before I left Brisbane, the first American ships had arrived. And I think the first place they marched into was Eagle Farm race course. Because it was handy to Hamilton wharf. They marched in there and took over.

38:00 Brisbane became a little America after that, it was over run with Yanks. All of the blacks were kept on the south side of the river and the rest were on the north side of the river and ne'er the two shall meet sort of thing.

Were you aware of the implications of Japan entering the war?

38:30 Oh yes. The Americans were immediately, they declared war on Japan and they became involved, Japan was part of the axis so they became involved in the war with the Germans, Italians and

39:00 the Japanese. War was not a new experience to the Japanese because they had been trying to overrun China for ten years or more before the war started.

At the end of the war when you heard peace was declared, can you remember how you felt or how the fellows on the ship felt?

39:30 Relieved I guess, gratefully relieved. Whacko, we would be home soon. That would be the main consideration, we will be home soon. There is no doubt about that.

And when you first set foot back in Australia, what were your first feelings?

Oh I don't remember. At

40:00 least I am here you know. I can't, I don't know what it is but I can't recollect everything. I can remember being on leave,

40:30 whether I went to Melbourne or Brisbane I am not sure. I think my mother, she must have been in Brisbane so I must have gone to Brisbane. She was in Melbourne during part of the war, and by the time the war ended she must have been back in Brisbane and I must have come to Brisbane. And then

41:00 I went back to Sydney to Balmoral and then I made contact with my wife who wasn't my wife at the time in Perth and she was getting discharged in December so we organised that I would get Christmas leave when she could get over

41:30 and then when she came over and we decided to get married, by then one of the old captains of the Quiberon was in charge of Balmoral so I felt I had a fair chance if I asked him for an extra week's leave that I might get it which I did.

INTERVIEW ENDS