

1897

HMS Blake



January 2nd

First motor car. Adjourned to The King's Head (Coventry) where Arthur gave us an excellent lunch. Here I saw a motor car for the first time. Since the repealing of the Act of Parliament prohibiting the speed of more than 4 miles an hour last, a great many of these cars have been built and according to some people, will eventually supersede horse traction. There are no doubt many advantages, viz speed, less expense to maintain, less noise and space etc but this change will take time, as at present there is much prejudice against them. The majority are made in Coventry which city seems flourishing in labour and trade. I am told it is hard to get workmen, the demand being so great in the cycle trade.



[note – the car was possibly the Daimler Wagonette one of the first cars to be built in Coventry]

January 5th

Coroner of the Borough. I had dinner with Bert at his house, Jack also came. Today he is virtually elected Coroner of the Borough of Warwick by the Town Council. Lloyd Chadwick and two others oppose him, but he was elected unanimously. He received 17 votes whilst they only received 2 each. It is the cause of much satisfaction to us all. He will be finally confirmed in the appointment at the next meeting.

January 9th

Returned to HMS Blake. Arrived at Devonport about 6:00 PM and rode down in pouring rain to North Corner where I caught the ship's boat and arrived on board in time for dinner.

January 19th

Sailed to join the fleet. We weighed anchor at 6:30 AM and proceeded for Portland to join the fleet, arriving about 3:00 PM. Several of the ships had not yet arrived but subsequently assembled. Another addition has been made, viz the 'Prince George' battleship of the Majestic class, and making a squadron of seven of the finest ships afloat forming the Battle Division.

January 22nd

Emily departs for Assam. Today my sister Emily, recently married, leaves England with her husband for Assam, where she goes for some years. This departure will cause great consternation at home, especially as she has been factotum for many years. She will therefore be greatly missed.

January 28th

Dorset Hunt ball. The officers of the of the Fleet received an invitation to the Dorset Hunt Ball, and I resolved to go. After supper we got ready for the ball (Balldress) Miss Collared [*note - sister of Lieutenant Collared also of Blake*] also coming. The dance began at 10:00 PM and was a very brilliant affair. It is given by the Blackmore Vale, Cattistock, South Dorset and Lord Portsman's hunts. The Corn Exchange was prepared for dancing, being well decorated, and a special floor laid. The Bournemouth Band supplied the music, which was excellent. The supper was laid in the Town Hall (adjoining), which was well rigged up with evergreens forming small arbours for the tables. The supper was very well done. The dance was most enjoyable. I had plenty of partners. I was rather disappointed that there were not more officers from the fleet. We left about 4:30 AM and when we got in found that Miss C had not yet arrived, having gone with her chaperone, so we waited for her. She turned up about 5:00 AM, when we we retired to roost.

February 14th and 15th

At sea. Wait with the fleet at 8/30 8:30 AM and preceded down channel with them. About 5:30 PM, a signal was made to us and the Prince George to proceed in execution of previous orders. These were to carry out our monthly firing. And then proceed and then returned to Portland in having been decided that we should not go with the fleet owing to the mumps. Prince George has had several cases. Also steam slowly up past the start until we arrived in the morning in Lyme Bay, where, having expended monthly ammunitions and run torpedoes, we returned to Portland and anchored about 4:00 PM.



Drawing by CT

February 21st

Two fatal accidents. At 3:50 AM in my middle watch I was suddenly startled by a great noise of steam in the Engine Room, at the same time the Quartermaster, wildly excited, told me that something was wrong below. I at once went down and found that a stop valve and collector had burst and had terribly scalded two men and two others slightly. They had already gone to the sick Bay. I immediately woke the Captain and the Doctor had also been called. I went with the Captain where I saw the poor men who were hurt. Unfortunately, owing to the steam now being shut off, the dynamo was stopped and all lights were out, so it was difficult to see anything there. We soon got candles, however, and the doctor set to work to address the wounds, which were fearful. One man, an ERA [note - Engine Room Artificer] called Holman was terribly burnt about the face, arms, neck and back, and the others about the arms. Their jerseys had to be cut off and in some cases the skin came off with it. They were given sleeping draughts to ease the pain. I turned in about 5:00 AM. We got underweigh at 8:45 AM according to orders, our destination being Spithead. The Naval Sick Quarters at Portland having been filled up with the cases of mumps we are sent there so as to be near Haslar hospital. We had no sooner anchored at Spithead (3:30 PM), when another terrible accident occurred. The lower booms were being got out and the order had been given to 'haul forward' when a man named Patrick Ryan (Leading Seaman) in some extraordinary manner got himself into the coil of the starboard after guy, the bight of which was coiled up inboard so as to be clear for running. There were about 70 men hauling on the foreguy and he was whipped overboard, the rope tightening round him until the boom was brought up, he spinning round with the coil around his waist. Having been brought inboard and taken to the sick bay, it was found that he was suffering terribly from the internal injuries but was

not unconscious, the doctors being of the opinion that he will not recover. The other men hurt this morning were landed that at Hasler. Upon the arrival of the Captain from seeing the Admiral, we received the unwelcome news that we were to be placed in strict quarantine, pending orders from the Admiralty.

[note - the following, which refers to the accident in the Engine Room above is added to show the detail that is included within the journals.]

The accident in the engine room. Orders were received for steam to be raised by 8:00 AM and at 4:00 PM the valves were being opened up to admit steam to the engines for warming through. The artificer was in the act of opening the self acting stop valve (see figure) and had, according to directions, given the opening handle half a turn, when he noticed that the valve was not following. He therefore started to screw up again, when there was a sudden crash, the cast iron bridge was snapped (the dotted red line) and the steam being thus admitted (the valve having opened) passed to the collector (made of copper), the result being that it burst (marked red) and the steam at 120 lbs pressure rushed out and scalded Holman (the man opening up) and the men below the platform. The cause of the bridge snapping was as follows: when the opening handle is moved it communicates by the thread of the guide (see fig) which is moved down, leaving the valve spindle free to follow it. In this case, the valve jammed and did not follow and a space occurred between the shoulder of the valve spindle and the guide. This being noticed, the opening spindle was being screwed back up again, but in the meantime the valve suddenly released itself, the shoulder came with great force upon the guide and opening spindle and the sudden strain being thus brought, snapped the bridge. The valve now had nothing to hold it, and the full boiler pressure of 120 lbs passed into the collector, which burst. Fortunately the valve cover held, although it was much bulged. If this had gone, the chances are that all men in the engine room would have been killed. Had the bridge being made of brass instead of cast iron, the accident in the opinion of the engineers would not have happened.

February 22nd

Death of LS Ryan. When I arrived on deck at 4:00 AM for my morning watch, I received the sad news that Ryan died in 3:50, curiously enough, at the same time that the accident happened the previous morning. I superintended the removal of the body from the sick bay to one of the casemates. After discussion, the body was taken ashore and at Prayers part of the burial service was read.

February 23rd

Postmortem of Ryan. I was rather curious to see what a PM was like and so I obtained permission to see it from the Fleet Surgeon. Howell *[note - Surgeon of HMS Blake]* performed the practical part. It was rather a ghastly sight to me who was not used to it,

but nonetheless interesting. They found the cause of death to be haemorrhage from rupture of the spleen, gastric artery and part of the intestine. He also had three costal cartilages broken. There was therefore absolutely no hope of recovery from the very first.

February 25th

Funeral. The funeral Ryan took place this afternoon and has lost cemetery.

March 2nd

Death of ERA Holman. Today, Holman, the ERA was so badly scalded in the accident of the 21st died and Haslar Hospital. His condition was very critical after the first few days.

March 8th

Abandoned ship drill. Morning evolution 'Abandoned Ship'. In this evolution, every man in the ship is told off for a particular boat to which he goes when they are lowered. It would only be necessary in the event of the ship being sunk or having to be left in case of fire, etc. Today being calm, the operation was simple enough and everyone left the ship except for about 8 men who formed the watch of stokers tending the fires. If this had to be carried out at sea however, the case would be very different. As it was, the boats were as full as they could possibly hold (I had 63 in my cutter) and it was easy to disembark, but at sea with both boats and ship knocking about, some of the boats would most certainly have capsized, even if they got clear of the ship they would probably have been swamped as they were so low in the water. It is, however, a very necessary evolution to perform in order that every man (about 650 in the ship's company) may know his station.

March 12th

Visit to Titchfield. After the afterwards wrote Titchfield, where there is a ruin of an old mansion, in which Charles the First took shelter on his way to the Isle of Wight after his escape from Hampton Court, 1647. *[note – in CT bought Titchfield Abbey Cottage]*

March 18th

Hydrographic Service. I got an idea into my head that I would like to go into the Surveying Service and with this in mind I landed in the afternoon to call on 'Rotch', a lieutenant in the 'Research'. He was out and so I went to the Dockyard and had a look at the ship and picked up some information about the work. I came to the conclusion that it was 'not good enough', very long hours of tedious work taking soundings etc, long commission, small ships with bad combination, outlandish places to visit and slow

promotion were disadvantages hardly overbalanced by extra pay and so I decided 'no' definitively.

April 12th

A day at sea. Weighed at 7:00 AM and proceeded to fire monthly ammunition. On return, ran torpedoes in the Solent anchoring about 5:00 PM *[note - this was the first day at sea after arriving at Spithead on the 21st of Feb.]*

April 14th

Escort day. We received news today that in all probability we should have to escort, by way of Madeira, a dredger and tug to Bermuda. This was anything but cheerful news as it is a worrying kind of work, towing in bad weather, and besides it would necessitate us being away from England when the rest of the channel fleet would be giving leave.

April 15th to 18th

48 hour leave. Decided to take the first leave. Uncle Arthur and family crossed to Ventnor yesterday. Found out Penny was in, the others being out for a walk. They turned up for lunch (except Horace and Gerald, who have not yet arrived). In the afternoon I walked with Uncle and Lawrence to Saint Lawrence. Returned by the road to the hotel where we found Horace and Gerald had arrived (George not coming at all).

April 20th

Sailed. About 4:00 PM. The dredger 'St Alban' anchored close to us and the captain was ordered to inspect her to see that she was in sound condition and go to sea with us. Weighed at 5:30 PM. She used her own steam and we kept with her steaming at about 6 knots.



HM Tug Firm, Robust-class paddle tug – is this similar to 'Bustler' that CT escorted across the Atlantic?!

April 21st to 23rd

At Plymouth. Here we found the tug 'Bustler' which forms the rest of the convoy. She is a wretched looking craft, a paddler and has, ever since the Admiralty brought her

(second hand), been constant trouble. We got away at 1:00 PM, the dredger and tug following us out. It was blowing hard from the eastward with a heavy following sea, which caused the dredger to knock about considerably and take in a deal of water. The 'Bustler' seems to make much better weather of it. We kept with them staying at about 6 knots.

April 24th to 30th

Passage to Madeira

May 2nd to 14th

Passage to Bermuda

May 14th to 20th

At Bermuda. St David's Lighthouse Bermuda was sighted soon after 7:00 AM and we arrived in 'Five Fathom Hole' about 9:30 AM. The 'St Alban' and 'Bustler' at once went up through the Narrows, pilots having come out to meet them. Unfortunately our pilot did not turn up. At 5:00 PM we weighed and proceeded up through the Narrows. The ship, being so large and drawing so much water was always a difficult one to take up and today we stirred up the bottom of the Inner Narrows. Much to our annoyance, directly we had secured to our buoys in Grassy Bay, the 'Crescent' signalled us to 'prepare for coaling tomorrow'. *[note – Blake held approximately 650 tons of coal which would have taken about 3 hours to load]*

May 19th

Bluebeard. It was decided that tonight we should give the long expected entertainment. It was a case of 'now or never' as there would be no opportunity of doing it when we returned to England. The afternoon was devoted to rigging stage and raising the quarterdeck awning. Invitations were issued during the forenoon to the ships in the harbour, dockyard officials, Admiral and Governor and staff, the military messes and commissioner's house and civilians. The show was to begin at 8:00 PM and by 7:00 PM most of us were ready in the 'Green Room', a space behind the stage, waiting to be made-up. By 8:00 PM most of the other audience was assembled - a total of 1010. The curtain was rather late going up, but when once well underway the first act went off swimmingly. The 'Old Court House', a quintet with a dance by Sandford, Davies, Beyer, Kerr and myself, went down very well and received an encore. The second act seemed to go down much better. My song 'Lady Tom' also won down well, especially amongst the bluejackets as the verses were topical and I got encored for three verses *[note - the bluejackets are the non-rated sailors especially when deployed as infantry]*. Altogether the show went off splendidly and without a hitch. No one seemed the least nervous. The performance did not finish till 11:45 PM. In the Wardroom afterwards supper was

provided for the guests and we received numerous congratulations. People seemed unanimous in agreeing that it was the best show they had ever seen on board ship.

May 31st

Arrived in Portsmouth. We discharged the officers and men from the dredger and tug and thought that we should receive immediate orders to go round to Plymouth to give leave (the Channel fleet having returned from their cruise on the 17th). Owing to some mismanagement at the Admiralty however an answer was not received to the telegram announcing our arrival until the evening, and so we did not get our orders till 5:00 PM. Left soon afterwards for Plymouth.

June 1st to 7th

Arrive Plymouth - Leave. Arrived in Plymouth Sound in the early morning, I got ashore in time to catch the 4:15 train from North Road, taking my bicycle with me. I was met at the station by Jack. Mother seemed fairly well but has been very much worried by Frank who has had to give up living him. Woken Barry as he found the work too much for him. I'm worried himself into a state of nervous fever. He seems 1000 pities. The income was sufficient to keep him comfortably. He had a beautiful house. Until any ordinary individual not a cleric, the work would have been considered easy.

June 3rd

Moore and Tibbits. I visited Jack at his new office in the High Street in the forenoon. He is lately entered into a partnership with Mr Frank Moore of Myton. It seems a more satisfactory billet for him than formerly, when he was with Campbell and Littleton.

June 13th

Departed Plymouth. During the afternoon. A great many ships went into the Sound preparatory to leaving for a review at Spithead. We left at 3:30 PM and received orders to proceed straight to Portsmouth.

June 14th

Arrived at Spithead. Came up through the Needles and took up our billet (see plans) [note - Line B, #13] for the Naval Review. We were one of the first arrivals but later on a great many ships arrived including the old 'Minotaur' from Portland.

June 19th

25th birthday. Ships continue to arrive, giving the roadstead quite a busy appearance whether very unpropitious. Rain and high wind.

20th of June

60th Jubilee. Today is the 60th anniversary of the accession of HM Queen Victoria. She has established a record reign in the annals of English history, not only account of its long duration, but for peace and prosperity of the country generally, extension of empire, progress in science etc. inventions and numerous other things which marked the Victorian era as the most glorious ever known. The event, called the 'Diamond Jubilee' is to be celebrated more specially by observing the 22nd as a general holiday, reviewing the Navy on the 26th and the Army on the 1st of July, besides individual celebrations in towns and villages and minor events.

June 22nd

Jubilee Day. Proclaimed a national holiday. General rejoicings took place throughout the country and the colonies, whilst the English communities in foreign countries also celebrated the event of the Queen's 'Diamond Jubilee' in some way or another. The centre of festivities, however, was London, where the Queen appeared in person, driving from Buckingham Palace to Saint Paul's for a thanksgiving service and returning by a circuitous route. The procession took the form more or less of a grand military pageant in which were representative bodies of troops from all the colonies.

The Navy contingent consisted of a battery of 12pds field guns. Millions of people flocked to London from all parts of the world to witness this great event and every possible stay space, even roofs and chimneys of houses were occupied. Tremendous cheers greeted her during the progress through the streets and after the service [*note - at Saint Paul's*] three vociferous cheers were given spontaneously. In spite of her great age, people remarked that she looked well and younger than expected. By this morning, nearly all the ships ordered to assemble for the review were present at Spithead. Ships were dressed at 8:00 PM and at noon a salute was fired from every ship of 60 guns, one for each of Her Majesty's reign. At night, bonfires were ignited throughout the country. They were lighted punctually at 10:00 PM and in most cases took the signal from the fire in the next elevated position of the district. From the ship, we counted about 10 fires on Portsdown Hill and the Isle of Wight.

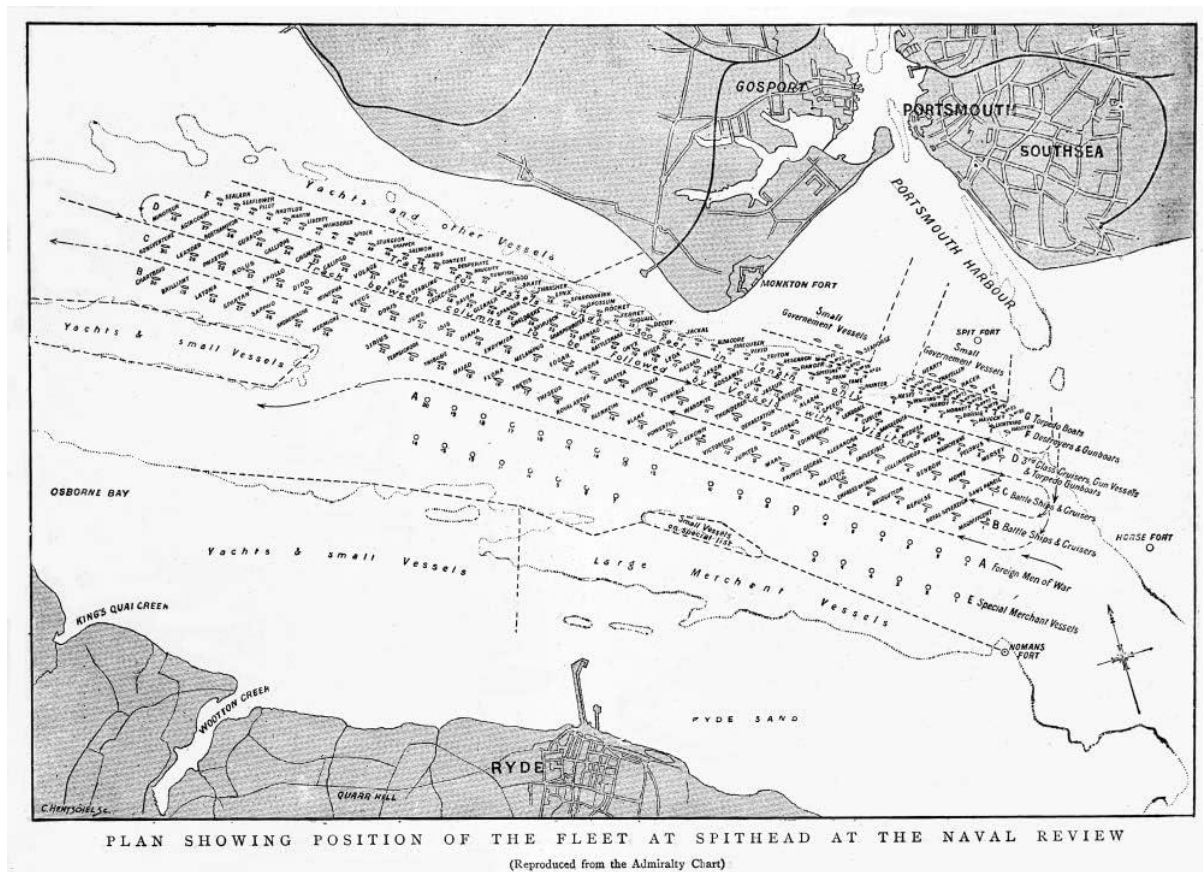
June 24th

Hanging at Botley. Received news that Mother with Ida and Lucy would arrive today and spend a few days at Southsea for the review. Landed at 2:00 PM intending to meet them at Bishopstoke Station and I stopped for tea at the Dolphin Hotel, Botley. There is curious though true and tragic yarn about this village, the inhabitants of which do not like to be reminded about. Just below the Dolphin Hotel is an inn called the Catherine Wheel. In this house, some years ago were assembled party, a party of men who, by way of a little diversion, hit upon the practise of 'playing at hanging'. They singled out a man who they prepared by the process and placing the stool under his feet triced him

up to the bean by the neck. It happened just at this moment that a band passed the window and this being an unusual sight in Botley, the occupants of the inn became so excited that they rushed out to see the fun, leaving the victim still hanging. In the meantime, he, in his struggles to free himself, kicked away the stool, with the tragic result that he was properly hanged and when the men returned, he was found stone dead.

June 25th

The sight of the fleet. In the afternoon they [*note - Ida and Lucy*] with Mother and myself took a trip round the Fleet in the paddle steamer 'Oriole'. The afternoon was beautifully clear and we had a fine view. The display was magnificent, especially between the lines. I was able to explain the different ships were made which made it more most interested to them.



HMS Blake is in Number 13 in Row B

June 26th

The Great Naval Review at Spithead. In the early morning it was very misty, but later it cleared and turned out to be a perfectly lovely day. Dressed ship at 8:00 AM. I asked Mother, Ida and Lucy to come on board to see the review of the ships. About 11:30 the guests arrived. According to the programme, they were to be kept out of sight during the

procession. At the suggestion of the P of W, however, this order was cancelled, which gave great satisfaction. At 12:30 the guests were taken into the wardrobe where a big lunch was provided. By the time it was over, it was time for us to change into full dress and for them to go on deck to witness in proceedings. At 2:00 PM, the 'Victoria and Albert' appeared coming out of harbour. She was preceded by the Trinity House yacht 'Irene' and following her were the 'Alberta', 'Osborne' and 'Alfin', the 'Enchantress' and 'Wildfire' with the Lords of the Admiralty, 'Eldorado' with ambassadors, 'Danube' with House of Lords, 'Campania' with the House of Commons and the 'Fire Queen'. This formed the procession. A signal was made from the yacht to 'man ship and fire royal salute'. The salute was fired by divisions as the procession came down the line. Cheers were given by each ship as she passed. It was a fine sight from the ship, perhaps the most striking feature was the passing of the huge Cunard liner 'Campania', besides which even the battleships look dwarfed. When the Yacht finally anchored opposite the 'Renown', the signal was made for a general chair. The Prince then received the British and foreign admirals. This gave us an interval for tea and also the men a 'stand easy' after manning ship. In about half an hour the Yacht weighed again upon which we manned ship again and kept so until she proceeded up harbour. The magnificent array of ships, with the number of pleasure boats, merchant, steamers, yachts, etc, in the anchorage was a most impressive sight. The assemblage of such a fine fleet without any addition from any foreign stations is convincing proof of the strength of the Navy and an eye opener to the British public who until lately were to the to my mind notoriously ignorant of naval matters. It was a sight never to be forgotten. Up to the point of the departure of the Royal Yacht up harbour, the weather had been beautiful. No sooner had she left than a terrific storm broke, accompanied by heavy rain, thunder, and lightning. The general appearance was so unfavourable that we thought it wise to land the visitors when we had a chance, and so they all went ashore at the first lull. This was much to be regretted as I was particularly anxious that Mother, Ida and Lucy should see the illuminations from the ship. It was still more annoying when the evening turned out fine, so there was no occasion for them to have gone. The ships were lighted up about 9:15 PM by signals from the Dockyard semaphore tower. The effect was marvellously beautiful and exceeded all expectations. Each ship was outlined by hundreds of incandescent lamps, the masts, funnels, bridges, etc showing up splendidly. Looking between the lines, the fleet looked like a vast assemblage of phantom ships. The P of W came out of harbour at 9:30 and proceeded around the fleet again. On his return, a royal salute was fired again which added much to the effect. No fireworks or searchlights were exhibited from our ships, but the foreigners fired a few rockets and burnt coloured lights. The cheering, both from the men-of-war and the 'hurrah' boats was very great. The bluejackets appeared to cheer with great gusto, perhaps due to the signal made from the Admiralty at the request of the Prince to 'splice the mainbrace'. The contrast at midnight was very striking after lights were switched off, darkness appearing intensified and the bright scene so suddenly at an

end. The events of the day passed off without accident and nothing could have been more successful. Only one thing wanted and that was the Queen herself might have been present to inspect her magnificent fleet.



The Royal Yacht 'Victoria and Albert No2' approaching the Fleet during the Diamond Jubilee Review. The Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII, was on board and took the salute on behalf of Queen Victoria

June 28th

Queen's Coronation. Dressed ship at 8:00 AM in honour of the anniversary of the Queen's Coronation. About 9:00 PM the lights were switched on and again the lovely sight of Saturday night was presented. We had the band on deck to entertain us and they played the overture of our burlesque 'Bluebeard' which interested Ida and Lucy immensely. To give them a better view of the ships, we took them away in the pocket boat and steamed round the head of B Line and past the foreigners. The night turned out to be very favourable, as it was pitch dark and calm, so the reflection showed up well.

July 1st

Depart from Spithead. The great military review at Aldershot before the Queen took place today. Although we were supposed to leave at 2:00 PM, we did not get underway much before 3:00 PM. About that time all the ships of B Line began weighing, having previously unmoored and proceeded down Spithead in one long line. When outside, we took up proper positions. The battle squadron forming three lines with the cruises on either side of the columns.

July 2nd to 14th

Passage. Manoeuvres off Blacksod Bay (Northern Ireland) and returned to Portland.

July 14th

Arrived at Portland. In my middle watch we sighted Wolf Rock, 7 Stones and round Island lights and passed through the channel between Scilly isles and Cornwall. Proceeded up channel, arriving at Portland about 3:30 PM. Here the First Division were already moored so that the Roads are full up. The Japanese battleship 'Fuji' is also in.

July 22nd

Portland/Plymouth. Left Portland at 10:00 AM under orders for Plymouth (to be docked), arrived at 5:45 PM.

July 25th to August 7th

On leaving Warwick

July 31st

Miss Mary Tibbits. Mother went off to Chester to see Miss Mary Tibbits (a cousin of Father's) who is very ill. She lives at Hawarden on Mr Gladstone estate.

August 1st

Photograph. In the afternoon we were photographed by Oliver, who is now a great hand at taking pictures, most of his attempts proving successful.

August 4th

Appointment to HMS Bat. I heard the family whistle and looking round, to my surprise saw Jack who was looking very hot with his bicycle. He bought me news for which I am quite unprepared, and which filled me with astonishment and delight. It was that a telegram had arrived home from Sandford, congratulating me on my appointment to the command of the torpedo boat destroyer 'Bat'. I was truly pleased at this, for it was quite unexpected. I had asked Captain Bromley, before he left the 'Blake', if he would apply for me, but never expected for a moment that my hopes would ever be realised. When I got home everyone was very pleased to see that I liked the appointment, especially as they were rather puzzled as to what the telegram meant.

July 6th

Business matters. Spent the forenoon settling my small business affairs with Jack, to whom I am giving 'Power of Attorney'. I heard that the destination the 'Bat' was to be China and not the Mediterranean as I had expected.

July 7th

Departing home. It was a great wrench parting later as I do not know how long I am likely to be away from home. I got over it as soon as possible, but it was nevertheless rather painful

HMS Bat



July 9th

Left HMS Blake - joined and left HMS Bat. Left HMS Blake to catch the 8:45 AM train to Portsmouth. I cannot say that I very much regret leaving her, although I have spent some very pleasant days in her. However there was too much friction in various ways to be a happy one. Arrived Portsmouth about 2:30 PM and bicycle down to her ('Bat'). To my surprise and acute disappointment, I found that she was not going to commission. She was in dock with her steering gear all smashed up, which was done on the contractor's trials. I saw her engineer who told me the news and thereupon went to the Admiral's office to get information. Return to the Admiral's office where I found I was appointed to the 'Shark' and that I was to take round to Devonport the men told off for the 'Bat'. Upon hearing this news, which relieved me considerably (for I thought I had

lost my command) I rode out to Southsea and called on Captain Bromley and thanked him.

HMS Shark



August 10th

Commission HMS Shark at Devonport. The journey to Plymouth was without incident with the exception of two, left behind Salisbury. It was raining when we arrived and I found, to my great annoyance, that we were to go inboard instead of to the barracks. We marched down to Keyham in the rain, expecting to find the 'Shark' there. To my disgust, I was told that she was about a mile up harbour. We did not discover this till we had been wandering about in the rain for quite half an hour looking for the ship. We eventually arrived on board, wet through, bedding etc also, to find an empty ship and only two stokers on board. I was very hungry, having had nothing but a snack at Salisbury, and after rummaging around for some time, the Coxswain found some tea, which had unluckily got mixed with pepper and out of this a concoction was made which was helped down with some ship's biscuit. Our treatment was, I consider most disgraceful, more especially as I had been as I had to make signals for breakfast to be sent off for the men in the morning from the Naval Barracks.

August 14th

Stores. In the afternoon our stores for the voyage arrived from the Army and Navy Stores. I was horrified to see the quantity there was. There were 15 cases altogether. There was no hope but to unpack and stow them away. It was most annoying too to find that half the things sent were absolutely useless to us and there was enough to last for a three-year Commission at least.

August 16th

Sailed and Death of ERA Parks. About 12:30 PM we shoved off from the Wall and steamed into the Sound. We went straight outside and began working up engines to full speed. The trial was not satisfactory as they failed to get the horsepower and we only got about 23 knots out of her. During the trial the ERA Parks was taken very ill and I was called upon to see him. I found him in a bad state. Apparently insensible and quite

insane. He kept clutching at himself and was a terrible sight. Immediately we got up harbour I saw signalled to the 'Thunderer' for a medical aid and very soon two doctors came on board. Parks being now on deck, he was taken worse and worse and soon afterwards died. It was a fearful thing and cast a great gloom over everyone. The doctor said death was due to a broken blood vessel, probably brought on by excessive drinking, and I have no doubt that when I saw him he had 'DTs', no doubt helped along by the heat of the engine room.

August 18th

Serious defect. We started out for another steam trial heading again to the Dodman *[note – a point to the south of St Austell, Cornwall]*. A short time after working up to full pressure, the engineers said they wanted to ease down to repair a joint in the port main engine. This, they soon discovered, was something more than a leaky joint. It was a large crack in the high pressure cylinder cover. There was therefore nothing to be done but to shut off steam from the port engine and struggled back to Plymouth with the starboard engine. In the afternoon, the Chief Inspector of Machinery came on board in a great state of mind to examine it and it was agreed that the ship would take at least a month to be ready for sea again. Upon this report being made, we received a signal that the ship would be paid off. I was terribly disappointed, this being the second ship I have been unfortunate with through no fault of my own.

August 19th

Appointment to HMS Fame. Landed about 6:00 PM and road to the Admirals office where I received news that I was appointed to the 'Fame' in command and that the Officers and crew were to turn over to her as soon as possible at Chatham. I was glad in a way to find that I had another ship in place of the 'Shark', but it was very annoying to find that I should have to go through all the business of commissioning over again.

August 23rd

Pay off HMS Shark. Preparing to pay off. Everything in state of confusion. About 10:00 AM I had them fallen in and we marched to Devonport station to go by train to Chatham to commission the 'Fame'. Eventually we arrived at 8:30, supper was ready for the men and we were asked into the Wardroom *[note – of the battleship HMS Jupiter]* for supper. Very different from our treatment on arrival at Devonport!

HMS Fame



Just 30th

To Sheerness. At 7:00 AM the ship was transported to the South Loch, ready to go down to Sheerness. At 10:30 AM the lock was opened and we steamed down the Medway. I found the navigation easy enough, the river being well buoyed. Made fast to a buoy off the 'town pier'.

August 31st

Steam trial. The trial lasted one and three quarter hours. We steamed up and down the measured mile beacons. The weather was not up to much and I was soaked through in spite of oilskins by the rain and the water we took in owing to the high speed we were travelling. The greatest speed realised was about 27 knots. Landed about 6:00 PM and had a look at the Blue Town. The whole of Sheerness is a ghastly place consisting of nothing but a place built on mud.

September 3rd

Depart for Gibraltar. Slipped at 5:30 AM. Upon nearing 'Jupiter', I received written orders to proceed independently to Dover and see if I could get the daily papers there. He wanted them chiefly to see what the weather forecasts were like. The morning was perfect and I enjoyed the run down very much. Anchored close to the Admiralty pier, sending in the gig for the papers. I also sent a farewell telegram home to announce our departure.

September 4th

Biscay. Our fears were soon realised, for it came on to blow hard, and as we entered the 'Bay' the sea increased, and we began to kick about in a most unpleasant manner. The sea was almost broadside on, causing us to roll tremendously. The peculiar construction of this type of destroyer (Thornycroft's) makes them particularly uncomfortable at sea.

September 8th

Gibraltar. Arrived off the mole about 7:30 AM. A man was sent on board to take us alongside. He told us that the 'Foam' and 'Whiting' destroyers commissioned on 10th of August were in the harbour. It appears that they had made one attempt to get to Malta but experienced such bad weather that they had to run back 250 miles to Gib again and were waiting for us to go with them. I was very much annoyed by this as I knew that we should be hustled away as soon as possible instead of having a few quiet days and then going on by ourselves.

September 11th

Departed Gibraltar. Proceeded outside where we picked up the 'Foam' and 'Whiting'. Steaming at 15 knots along the south coast of Spain in fine weather.

September 12th to 13th

At Algiers

September 15th

Arrive at Malta. Gozo and Malta Island were sighted in fine weather in the forenoon. About 2:00 PM we were off the entrance of Valetta or Grand Harbour and proceeded through the narrow entrance in single file. Eventually we made fast to buoys ahead and astern about 30 yards from the shore of Singlea. Called on the Admiral Superintendent, Rear Admiral Rodney Lloyd, who told me we should have to paint the ship white. This is an excellent thing as it makes a great difference to the temperature of the ship.

September 17th

Bells! The Maltese are a peculiarly religious people and are continually celebrating 'festas' in honour of departed saints with fireworks, processions and ringing of bells. These bells are a terrible nuisance in the place. It appears that when the English occupied the islands after the French in 1798, the Maltese were allowed all their religious rites, etc, and this bell ringing was one of them. It would not be so bad if the bells were in tune and running peals, but this is not so. They are slung in open towers and rung by means of ropes attached to the clappers. Some of them are of excellent

tone and very heavy, but others veritable tin pots. They are sounded indiscriminately, and the result is a frightful noise. Each church seems to vie with the other as to who can make the most noise. This nuisance would be bad enough once in a while, but the worst of it is that every day is the same, and sometimes nights made hideous, by their efforts to keep the devil away.

October 11th

Appointment to HMS Archer. In the forenoon, I received a signal from the 'Ramilees' (flagship) to go on board at once. On arriving on board, I saw the Admiral who told me he had received a telegram from the Admiralty asking whether I would like to go first lieutenant to the 'Archer' on arrival in China. Being a Commander's command at my seniority, this is a very good appointment and I could not refuse as the 'Fame' is to pay off on our arrival on the station. It was rather a jar however, for I had rather set my mind on coming home at the end of the trip and this means a commission of at least three years. I must though consider myself very lucky as it is no doubt a billet that will be much sought after.

October 12th

Freemasonry. Consequent upon the yarn I had with Hall last Monday, tonight I was initiated into the craft of Freemasonry at the lodge of St John and St Paul (Malta), an emergency meeting being called on my behalf. The ceremony was very impressive. There was a convivial gathering afterwards during which many speeches were made and I had to speak after my health had been drunk on my entry as an 'apprentice'

November 2nd

Irish Freemasonry. Attended the Irish Lodge 'Lemister' Number 387 (Singlea) where I saw the 1st and 2nd degree worked. It was slightly different to the English Constitution method of working and was I thought more thorough. The lodge is chiefly composed of bluejackets and soldiers, a great many of whom are masons. The Maltese are very adverse to Freemasonry, being evidently filled with superstitious ideas by the priests. They call this lodge the 'Devil House', and have a great dread of going near it!

November 11th

Arrival of 'Edgar'. The cruiser 'Edgar' arrived in the afternoon. We had to proceed with her for China.

November 14th

Depart Malta. About 10:00 AM we slipped from our buoys and steamed out of harbour. The 'Whiting' followed us shortly afterwards. We had a tedious time waiting outside for

the 'Edgar', which did not come out for about an hour after us. We were all on the whole, very sorry to leave Malta.

November 15th

Torpedo attack. In the evening we received orders to attack the 'Edgar'. We were to put up our lights out and steam up close to her within torpedo range without being discovered by her searchlights. I managed to get within distance once, but the flames from the funnel betrayed our position on the other attempts to reach her. It was rather anxious work, being very difficult to see anything with the searchlights playing on us but no doubt excellent experience.

November 17th

Arrived Port Said

November 18th to 19th

Passage of the Suez Canal. We entered the canal, followed some distance astern by the 'Whiting' and 'Edgar'. We were ordered to go straight through to Suez. 'Edgar' remained at Ismailia for the night. I was very much interested in the canal. It is no doubt a marvellous piece of engineering, and one can hardly imagine how such a work could have been completed when the sandy nature of the material is considered. It seems very hard on the late M de Lessups, that he should have had such a worrying time in his old age. Upon arrival at Ismailia we exchange pilots and the new man was most anxious to get to Suez as soon as possible, so he put on speed and steamed through the 'Bitter Lakes' at a little over 20 knots. For the remainder of the way down we kept up a speed of about 15 knots. The result of the 'scorching' was that we beat the record, having covered the entire distance of 86 miles in seven hours and 5 minutes.

November 19th

Depart Suez for Aden

November 26th to 30th

Aden

December 3rd to 8th

Passage to Colombo. Today we were taken in tow, the 'Whiting' also towing as well. One of us on each quarter of the 'Edgar'. Just after I relieved Mr Maxwell (Gunner) in the morning watch (on the 4th) the hawser parted and we had great difficulty in getting it on board as it carried away close to the Edgar and we therefore had all the large hemp to get up. The eye of this would not come through the fairlead in the bows, and we had to hang it and unshackled, bringing the bight to the capstan, a long job in the dark.

However, we were able to start about 6 and picked the 'Edgar' up and were taken in tow again in the forenoon, speed about 14 knots.

December 8th to 13th

Columbo

December 20th

Arrive Singapore. In the morning I went on board to see Captain King-Hall. He was anxious that we should leave in two or three days and was taken aback when I told him we should want at least 10 to clean the boilers. According to Admiralty orders, they should be cleaned every three weeks when the ship has much steaming and as there was no way of evading the order, he ordered a court of inquiry to be held which resulted in the boilers being taken in hand at once and 14 days given to the work.

December 21st

War scare. The news came that she [*note - 'Grafton', see November 1894*] was ordered to Hong Kong at once and that a startling telegram was received that Russia had seized Port Arthur and war was imminent. These scares being more or less frequent in the east most people took it 'cum gratis' but the 'Grafton's' hurried departure made it look a suspicious.

December 25th

Christmas Day. The men decorated the ship yesterday evening and hoisted a wreath of evergreens fore and aft on the masthead, which was very effective. All the messes were decorated up with flags, photos, etc, and they had a fine supply of geese, plum duff, etc, which has been busy preparing for the last few days. In the evening we had a grand 'beano' on board the 'Plover'. They gave us a tremendous feed, and we afterwards sang songs and kept up a din till close on midnight, a happy termination of the day.

HMS Edgar

December 30th

Depart HMS Fame, join HMS Edgar, depart Singapore. In the morning after breakfast, I was much startled with a signal from 'Edgar' "Captain wishes to see you. Intend taking you and Mr Manning to Hong Kong" or something to that effect. We immediately went on board and I saw Captain King-Hall; who told me that I was to join her today as he had decided that I must be required to recommission the 'Archer' in view of her being required, owing to the war scare prevalent. I was very much disgusted and reason with him arguing that if she was urgently required, they would take her with the old crew in preference to the new. However, to no avail. We both returned to the 'Fame' very sick of

life to make a hurried packing of our kits. Eventually, about 5:00 PM after seeing the men paid, we left. I have never felt so miserable before at leaving a ship and it was a great trial saying goodbye to the men. As we left they gave us each three cheers to the heartiest and I confess I was much touched at the kind send off. The cheers were spontaneous and ringing and I felt very satisfied at the men thus demonstrating their contentment. We called alongside 'Whiting' and here again they cheered us. On arrival in 'Edgar' I felt wretched at being so suddenly shunted out of a happy ship. We left Singapore about 7:00 PM for Hong Kong.