

1917

HMS Cyclops

January 25th

Submarine warfare. The news of the submarine war by the Germans is getting most distressing. They are creating great havoc amongst our merchant ship.

February 4th

Lyness Naval Cemetery. We visited the Naval Cemetery at Lyness where are buried men from the 'Hampshire' and those who died from wounds after the Jutland Battle *[note – the HMS Hampshire sunk after hitting a German mine on 5th June 1916 with the loss of 737 – only 12 survived. On board was Lord Kitchener who was on a diplomatic mission to Russia]*. A very wild spot. "Wave may not foam, nor wild wind sweep, where rest not England's dead." *[note - from "England's Dead" by Felicia Dorothea Hemans, published in 1822]*

February 12th

Film of the Somme. Films of the Somme battlefields a most wonderful exhibition and so realistic as to make one understand our fearful difficulties on the Western Front and the heroism of our men. The bursting shells, exploding mines, attacks and men falling wounded etc were all clearly shown, and the everlasting mud pervading everything. It made me sad indeed that such things should have had to be.

February 26th

War news. Fall of Kut announced *[note – the Second Battle of Kut, Iraq]*. Also, news of retreat on the Western Front, bombardment of Margate and many ships still being sunk by German submarines and mines. Altogether depressing.

March 10th

War news. Dardanelles disclosures and depressing speeches by Carson and others in regard to the war, very disquieting. There seemed to a feeling that we are 'not getting on with things'. Blowing as usual.

March 11th

Baghdad. Our entry into Baghdad announced and confirmed which is a cheerful item of news and the first we have had for some time.

March 12th

Depression. A plethora of funerals, no doubt due to the trying weather. There seems an excessive mortality lately. I have so much to keep me occupied that I have no time to be really dull, but the depressing weather, the lack of cheerful news and the constant anxiety of the war, as also the monotonous surroundings and continued separation from one's kin have all a wearying effect.

March 16th

German Raider. A raider reported sunk by the armed boarding steamer 'Dundee', helped by the armoured cruiser 'Achilles', no survivors and so it is not known what ship she was.

March 17th

More cheery news. The fall of Bapaume announced and big German retreat on the Somme.

March 20th

Russian Revolution. Paper accounts of the revolution in Russia and the abdication of Czar Nicholas on the 15th. One does not quite know what to make of it, some say it is a good thing, but I am doubtful if it can be.

March 27th

War scares. Stories buzzing about the invasion of the East Coast by the enemy and I hear from Hayling that there was a scare on Sunday and much shifting of troops but there seems little truth in the yarns, although I am anxious as to what is moving.

April 5th

The United States. The United States are at war with Germany and most momentous events which will shake the Germans, I imagine.

April 18th to May 5th

On leave to Hayling Island

April 20th

Submarine menace. Rationing in full force and not too much food for anyone. Things seem to be very serious in the matters of supplies owing to the heavy loss of ships by submarine action. The number seems to increase every week, but the correct figures

are unknown, neither do we know how our anti submarine measures are progressing. There is some cause therefore for uneasiness.

April 21st

A day out. Terrence and Nigel to the garage and for a run about South Hayling in the sidecar. Elsie and I to Lee on the Solent to see Granny Leggett in the afternoon. She kept wonderfully well and active.

May 26th

Nigel's 4th birthday

June 19th

My 45th birthday

June 24th

King George V. HM King George V was to have visited Longhope [*note – Orkney*], in which case we should have been busy, but owing to the miserable weather the arrangements were cancelled to everyone's relief.

July 3rd

War news. Russia attacking again and reports to many prisoners taken.

July 9th

Loss of HMS Vanguard. I was just on the point of turning in about 11:30 when I heard the most extraordinary sound. It was like a submarine explosion, a volley of rifles, and a salvo of guns all at once. I rushed on deck to see what was the matter and found the men on the bridge a stir. It was not yet dark and in the direction of the Flow I saw a huge column of thick smoke with flames some hundreds of feet in the air. I was told that there had been an explosion in some ship, it was thought a light cruiser. All our available small craft and drifters were hurried out to Scapa Flow and soon we heard that it was the battleship 'Vanguard' that had been blown up and there were only three survivors. The appalling nature of the disaster was too much to grasp at the time; some seven or eight hundred officers and men were blown into eternity in less than a second, including Captain Dick a contemporary of mine in the Britannia. Luckily, some men were away on advance leave and a good number of officers were attending a theatrical performance alongside the 'Emperor of India'. They were just returning to 'Vanguard' when the disaster occurred. A skipper of a drifter told me that he happened to be looking at the 'Vanguard' and could hardly believe his eyes when he saw three huge flames issue from her and then an enormous column of smoke, and when this had

cleared, there was nothing to be seen of the ship whatever! *[note – the Vanguard sank due to an explosion of faulty cordite that ignited virtually all of the explosive material on board. The ship sank almost immediately killing all but two of the 845 crew.]*

July 10th

Tasks. The shipwrights shop busily employed on the melancholy task of making coffins for the body of people picked up from the Flow belonging to the ill-fated 'Vanguard'. It is sad that so recently as the 14th of April, the men of the 'Vanguard' gave us a performance of their theatricals 'Double Salvoes'. The Fleet at short notice for steam, perhaps to divert attention from the disaster.

July 12th

Bickering. Nothing to relate for the next few days except having a very busy time and trying to keep people happy. There are constant bickerings amongst various factions and it is difficult to get people to cooperate.

July 24th

Russia. Ugly reports from Russia, many regiments said to be in a state of mutiny.

August 15th to 30th

On leave to Hayling Island

August 25th

Party. Took the children in side car to Havant and back in the forenoon. In the afternoon we all went to a children's party at the Seaton's where they had races, tug of war, etc. Terence bitterly disappointed and tearful at not getting a prize!

September 4th

War News. The war news bad. Germans have captured Riga and Russia is in a state of chaos and practically out of the war. An aeroplane raid on the RM Barracks at Chatham. A bomb dropped in the drill shed and killed a large number of men and wounded many.

September 17th

Terrence is 7th birthday

September 21st

Ypres. We attacked at Ypres yesterday with success and the news a little better generally. *[note – this was the Battle of Menin Road Ridge, part of the Third Battle of Ypres also known as The Battle of Passchendaele which lasted from 20-25/9/1917.]*

October 7th

War news - photo. War news encouraging British offensives at Passchendaele Ridge which was successful after bitter fighting [*note – ultimately the British failed to break through the German lines and so the Battle of Passchendaele is considered to have been unsuccessful*]. My photo taken in cabin on the 3rd.

October 17th

German raid. Some German cruisers raided one of our Norwegian convoys and sank the destroyers 'Mary Rose' and 'Strongbow' with great loss of life.

October 28th

War news. 8th anniversary of our wedding which I had no opportunity of celebrating. Very hard work just now. Depressing war news except from France where the French have made an advanced near Soiffous [*note – this is possibly referring to the Battle of Malmaison and the Laffaux Salient (23-27/10/1917)*], but the Italians are having a very poor time [*note – during the Battle of Caporetto (24/10 - 19/11/1917) the Italians were pushed back almost 100 miles and lost almost half their fighting strength*]. The Austro German troops capturing thousands of prisoners and much material and making a great advance. Fearful weather all week.

November 2nd to 10th

On leave to Hayling Island

November 6th

Nigel. A great tussle with Nigel this morning. He has a very strong will of his own and is absolutely fearless. He will not do as he is told!

November 17th

Heligoland Bight. The Fleet to sea at 11:30 today. An action in the Heligoland Bight with light cruisers. Everyone anxious for news and wondering whether a general action is imminent.

November 20th

Cambrai. British advance at Cambrai.

November 22nd

Cambrai. In the Cambrai battle we have advanced 5 miles.

December 1st

Cambrai. The Germans vigorously attacked around Cambrai and drove us back again, which is depressing.

December 22nd

Admiral Sturdee. Dined on board 'Australia'. Admiral Sturdee was the guest of the evening and was in a very agitated state, as he had been offered the command at the Nore [*note – the Nore Station encompassed Chatham and Sheerness Naval Dockyards*], which he appears to think is not good enough for him. He was very pessimistic about the war and generally most rude and aggressive! But he told us some interesting things about the Falkland's battle [*note – 8/12/1914, the South Atlantic Squadron, under the command of Sturdee defeated a German Naval Fleet in retaliation for the Battle of Coronel*], very egotistical, and also about the Admiralty methods under Admiral Fisher, whom he much deprecates. It was amusing but ill advised, I thought.

December 25th

Christmas Day. Church and carols, which nobody knew, the chaplain having picked out the most obscure to be found. Round the mess decks before dinner, some of the messes were decorated, and an effort made to be gay. To Wardroom afterwards for cocktails. Xmas, however, does not appeal to me much in these sad times.

31st December

New Year's Eve. At midnight all the small craft and merchantmen set up their hideous wails and noises on siren, whistle and bell from about a quarter of an hour, when the din ceased. We joined hands and sang Auld Lang Syne and wondered whether the war would last yet another year. God grant not.

[Note - this is the end of Charles Tibbits' Journals.]