

# 1906

## HMS Hood

### January 11th

**Appointing.** Went to the Admiralty in the forenoon and saw Admiral C Drury's secretary, who informed me that Commander Gordon Smith was going to the 'Russell' *[note – which was to relieve the 'Hood']* as Captain Lowry had asked for him and so I have to take a back seat. He said, however, that if I liked I could have command of a division of destroyers. I have never wished to go to the 'Russell' and Commander of a battleship, especially in these strenuous times, is anything but a catch so I jumped at the offer, which is just the very thing I wanted, and so came away rejoicing, which is not usually the case when one visits the Admiralty.

### January 15th

**General Election.** The countries in a great stir about the General Election which is proceeding apace. There is a most extraordinary radicalism judging by the returns for they will return to Parliament with an overwhelming majority with a great number of Labour candidates, which would seem to be bad for the general welfare of the country.

*[The 1906 United Kingdom general election was held from 12 January to 8 February 1906. It is dubbed the "Liberal landslide": the opposition Liberals under Henry Campbell-Bannerman won a landslide victory against a bewildered Conservative Party, in which its leader, Arthur Balfour, lost his seat; the party won the lowest number of seats it ever had in its history, a feat unsurpassed until 2024.]*

### January 17th

**Appointment.** In the evening paper my appointment was announced to the destroyer 'Blackwater'. The 'Blackwater' is at present in reserve with nucleus crew, but nevertheless I am very pleased about it.

# HMS Blackwater



January 23rd

**Left HMS Hood - joined HMS Blackwater**

January 24th

**Mobilisation.** The crews of the nucleus destroyers are to be filled up to full complement tomorrow and we are to go for a cruise shortly. The destroyers at all the home ports are to do the same and this mobilisation is presumably taking place as a test of efficiency and also, it said, because of the awkward attitude Germany is assuming with regard to the settlement of the Morocco problem, a conference upon which is now sitting at Algeciras [*note – southern Spain*].

January 25th

**Flotilla.** At 10:15 AM the whole flotilla proceeded into Mount Batten Bay (Plymouth) and anchored. It consists of about 20 destroyers.

January 29th to February 2nd

**Exercising off Devonport**

February 5th to 9th

**Flotilla exercising off Torbay**

February 26th

**Levee.** Attended the Levee of HM King Edward VII at Buckingham Palace in the forenoon. I thought HM was looking rather ill, but he has had a very strenuous time lately and a thing of this sort must be very boring for him. I was last at one of these

functions in '96. *[note – Edward VII smoked 20 cigarettes and 12 cigars a day, so he probaby was quite ill. In 1907 he was diagnosed suffering with bronchitis.]*

## April 10th

**Rude letter from the Admiralty.** The Commodore of the Barracks sent for me this morning and I received a nasty jar from him. He was directed by the Admiralty to read to me the following letter:

“My Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty have had under their consideration the minutes of proceedings at a Court of Inquiry held on board the ‘Royalist’ receiving hulk on 9th February to investigate the circumstances connected with the indifferent results obtained by HM torpedo gunboat ‘Leda’ in the gunlayers competition for 1905 and they are of the opinion that these results are due to the neglect of training on the part of the officers and for this neglect the late Commanding Officer now in command of HM tbd Blackwater must be held responsible. My Lords, desire that you will cause an expression of the severe displeasure at receiving this unsatisfactory report, to be conveyed to this officer. I have the honour, etc, etc.”

This was a rude shock to me and I feel that I have been unjustly treated. In the first place, the gunlayer’s competition took place sometime after I left the ship and secondly, the C of inquiry was held without my knowledge and without my presence which, according to the King’s regulations is not legal, for it states that the person to be held responsible is always to be present unless he wishes to be absent. I can only conclude that those people in the ship now made it as unpleasant for me as possible in order to save themselves, and as I had no opportunity of defending myself, I have been condemned unheard. This is a proceeding that the Admiralty have been adopting of late that has given rise to much comment.

## April 12th to 22th

**On leave at Warwick**

## May 2nd to 8th

**Flotilla cruise to Dartmouth and Torbay**

## May 15th

**Appointment HMS Challenger.** In the evening paper was announced my appointment to HMS Challenger.

## May 16 to 31st

**On leave at Warwick and London**

## May 31st

**Packing.** As I have been ordered to join HMS Argonaut on 9th June at Plymouth before passage to HMS Challenger, I left Warwick today for Devonport to pack up my gear so as to be all ready and also to turn over the 'Blackwater' to my successor.

## June 1st

**Presentation.** I was much surprised today to find that the 'Blackwater' ship's company had subscribed to give me a keepsake on leaving. This being contrary to regulations, they had put it into my cabin for me to 'find' and I found there a very handsome silver mounted walking stick inscribed. I felt bound to accept it under the circumstances, and in saying goodbye I addressed them and alluded to it. I was very much impressed with their kind thought and considering the short time I have been in the ship, it is difficult for me to understand why they have given it to me.

## June 2nd

**Left HMS Blackwater**

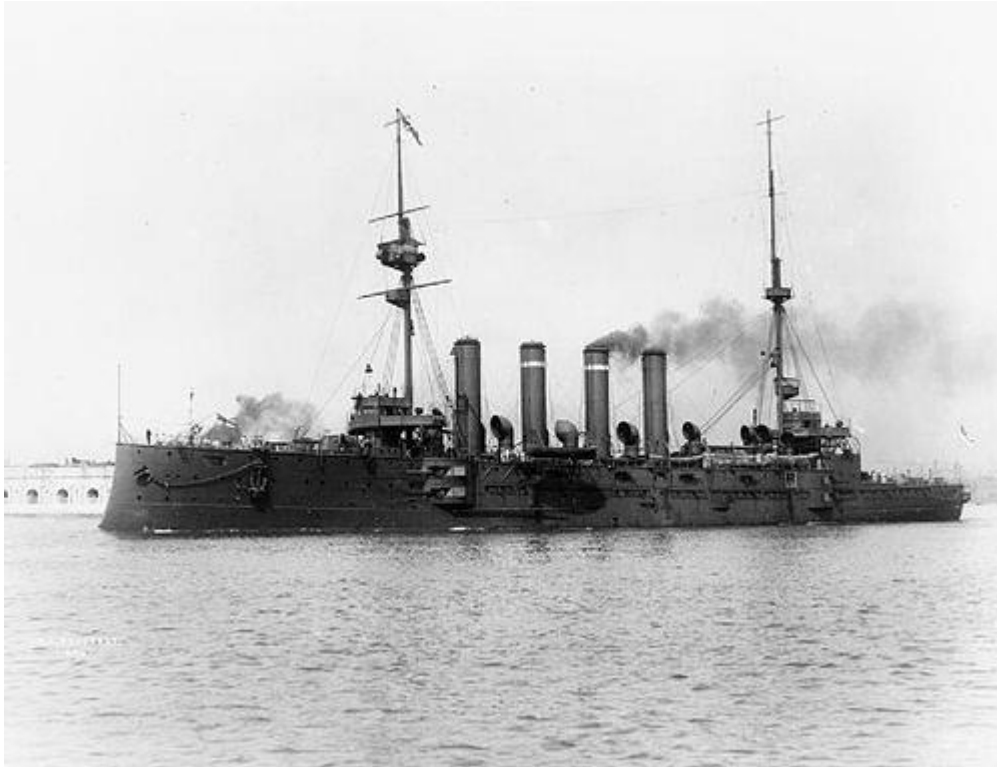
## June 2nd to 7th

**Short leave in Warwick**

## June 7th

**Farewells.** It was a great wrench to have much to tear myself away from my dear sisters and steal away without saying goodbye but it was for the best and it was with a heavy heart that I left this beautiful scene, on my bicycle for the station. I thought too, that Warwick was never looking prettier.

# HMS Argonaut



June 8th

**Joined HMS Argonaut for passage to Singapore**

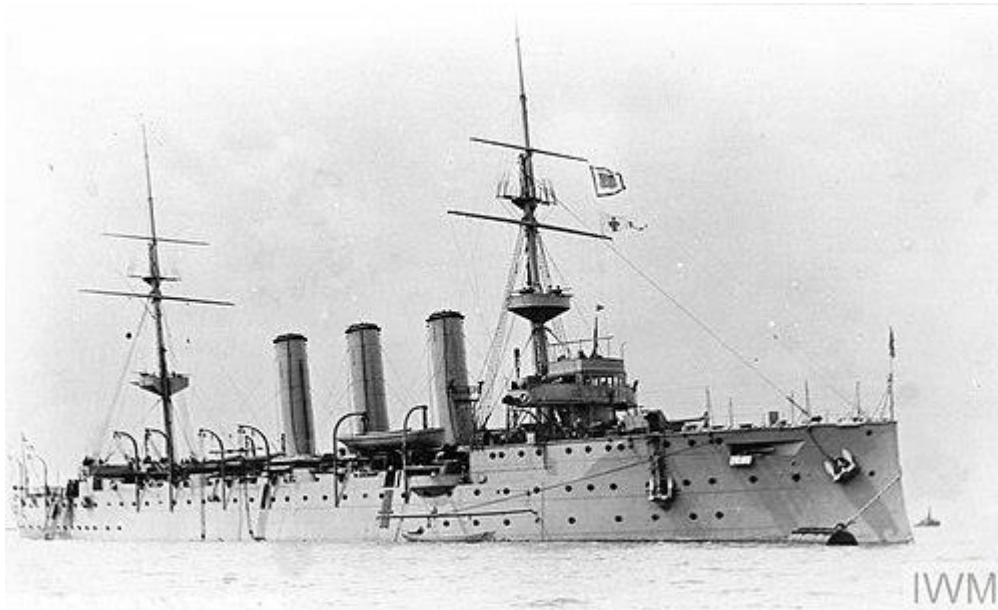
June 9th to July 17th

**Passage to Singapore** *[note - The ship passed through Gibraltar (13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> of June) Malta (17<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> June), Suez Canal (23rd June), Perrin Island (30th - 1st July) and Colombo (8th - 12th July) before arriving in Singapore on the 17th of July.]*

July 19th

**Left HMS Argonaut**

# HMS Challenger



## July 20th

**Joined HMS Challenger.** Captain Bridson seemed very pleased to see me and he is such a good sort that I feel confident that we shall get on all right together. The ship is very different to others as she has 2/3 of the ship's company Australians and New Zealanders who are entered for five years under an agreement between Great Britain and those colonies. From what I can judge they are very good workers and soon become amenable to discipline, but they require humouring. The Admiralty appears to attach much importance to this scheme, but at present it is in embryo but it will be interesting to see how it develops. The Australians are a very sporty crowd and they have a brass band to which about 30 men belong and which seems a very popular institution, although at times the music is rather excruciating.

## July 2nd to 30th

### Passage to Fremantle

## August 2nd

### At Fremantle

## August 2nd to 3rd

### Passage to Albany, WA

## August 3rd to 8th

### At Albany

## August 5th

**Uncle Francis Bird.** in the year 1870 my mother's brother, Francis Bird, left England to seek his fortune in Australia. At that time he evidently expected to return home after a few years, but having married and a large family, he has, after many vicissitudes, settled down in Albany. And so has now been 36 years in W Australia. I heard before leaving England of his being here but having never seen him or him us, we have long lost touch with one another as families, although some of the Birds at the home have occasionally had letters. He is well known locally through being the Government Director of Public Works. I found that Uncle Frank lived about a mile outside the town at an old farm at Strawberry Hill called 'The Old Farm'. It was about 7:00 PM when I reach the house and so they were reasonably surprised at receiving a visitor at this hour but when I announced myself they were overwhelmed with curiosity for I am the first representative of the family who has visited Australia. I met my aunt Maud for the first time. Two sons were at home, Eric and Marmaduke (who is about 12 and the youngest) There are several others of whom Walter is on his way to England at present. Uncle Frank is small in stature and something like my mother in appearance and manners. He seems to have had an uphill life. For some time they lived at Claremont, but were ill advised to leave for Albany, which at that time was expected to boom. Instead of this the contrary has taken place. Their property at Clement was sold for very little, and the following year realised a high price, and is now worth a great deal whilst Albany has steadily declined since his arrival.

## August 8th to 13th

### Passage to Adelaide

## August 13th September 4th

**At Adelaide.** Adelaide is a fine city with several public parks and buildings, the most notable being the PO and the new Cathedral. It still has horse trams which surprised me as most comical as they pride themselves on being so up to date!





*Unley Road, Adelaide 1906*

## August 22nd

**Mayoral Reception.** Attended the Mayoral Reception in the forenoon. It was rather a painful business. We were regaled with beer and biscuits, followed by long speeches of a very socialistic nature and some very embarrassing and not too complimentary remarks about Great Britain's treatment of Australia etc. so that we were very much bored and glad when it was over.

## September 4th to 11th

**Passage to Wellington, NZ**

## September 11th to October 5th

**At Wellington**

## September 12<sup>th</sup>

**Wellington.** Landed in the afternoon for a bicycle ride and took a look around the city which is the capital and by reason of this situation in Cook Strait, the great centre of trade of New Zealand. Most of the houses are built of wood as earthquake shocks are fairly frequent. It is very hilly and somewhat uninteresting town and has an unenviable reputation for wind and weather.





difficult to get together a good haka amongst the natives now as they are too civilised, and so we were fortunate in seeing this. The monument is an obelisk of Aberdeen granite close to the shore. After much speechifying, of which the New Zealand people seem especially fond, it was unveiled by Mr Carroll, native minister. After the National Anthem, cheers etc, went to the Gisborne Club where the members kindly gave us lunch.

## October 9th to 10th

### Passage to Auckland

## October 10th to 24th

### At Auckland

## October 18th

**Ida's wedding.** My sister Ida should be married today at Saint Mary's, Warwick, to the Reverend R Howes, son of the rector of Cold Higham, Northamptonshire and at present curate of the Parish Church, Bedford.

## October 24th to 27th

### Passage to Lyttleton, (Christchurch)

## October 27th to November 10th

### At Lyttleton

## October 27th

**Christchurch.** Lyttelton is about 7 miles from Christchurch and is its port. A railway connects the two places, and this passes under a tunnel of nearly a mile in length, was cut straight through the mountains, at the base of which Lyttleton stands. Christchurch is next to Wellington, the largest city in New Zealand (57,000). It is situated on the River Avon and it's very well laid out, but the regular parallels in which the streets are made make them monotonous. They're mostly named after the various bishoprics of Great Britain and the colonies. The Cathedral is a handsome structure in the centre of the city. The Spire has been shaken down several times through earthquakes, which are sometimes both frequent and violent. The upper part is now built of wood covered with copper.

*[note – the Cathedral was consecrated in 1881 and that same year the stone spire was damaged in an earthquake. The spire was again damaged in 1888 and 1901 when it was replaced with the copper covered wooden spire that CT saw. Despite strengthening in 1998, the tower collapsed in the devastating earthquake in February 2011 which killed 185 and caused an estimated \$50 billions of damage]*

## November 1st

**Opening of Grand International Exhibition.** Today being the opening of the Grand International Exhibition at Christchurch for which the ship has been sent here, as many officers as possible left the ship for the ceremony. We also sent a party of 100 seaman with our band and field gun's crew. The exhibition is a handsome wooden structure with two central towers and dome built parallel with the River Avon. HE The Governor (Lord Plunkett) in a very neat diplomatic speech, announced the exhibition open, and the flags of all nations were hoisted amidst much enthusiasm. A telegram was also sent to HM The King. Our men lined the hall and room during the opening, and the field gun's crew gave a demonstration outside. The exhibition struck me as being a wonderful achievement for a young colony like New Zealand which has also a disadvantage of being so far away from everywhere. The exhibitions were numerous and representation of the industries of the countries they came from. There seemed to be very little from foreign countries and it might more appropriately have been called an Intercolonial exhibition.



November 11th to 12th

**Passage to Auckland**

November 12th to 13th

**At Auckland**

November 13th to 21st

**Passage to Sydney**



November 21st to 26th

At Sydney

November 21st

**Sydney.** The glory of Sydney is its harbour, and it certainly is very beautiful. It possesses numerous bays, islands and islets, and the shores are dotted with picturesque houses, and the shipping and ferry steamers give it a very animated appearance. It is completely land locked, with deep water everywhere, close to the beach and the favourite amusement of the inhabitants seems to be boat sailing, at which they are very apt.



*Sydney Cove and Circular Quay, 1906*

November 23rd

**Cockatoo Island.** Cockatoo Island is in the Parramatta River and was formerly a penal settlement for transported victim convicts and the older dock was built by prisoners. Some of the remains of the old cells can still be seen rough hewn out of the rock, which must have been a terrible places in their time. There are also a few old century boxes where the warders used to stand. I met a man who well remembered the prisoners on the island, and who told me of the awful suffering of these unfortunates, some of whom were transported for trivial offences. He said that, as a rule, they were worse treated when they were assigned to owners of land, etc, who treated them worse than slaves and starved and work them to death so that the stories one reads on the subject would not seem to be overdone. Some of the old 'lags' are still alive I understand, but the

subject of convicts is naturally taboo in Sydney, and rightly so, for the colonists owe to the British government no thanks for sending their riff raff out here.

*[note – transportation of convicts ended in 1868]*

## December 11th

**Captain's At Home.** In the afternoon, Captain and Mrs Bridson gave an 'at home' on board, and all the officers lent a hand in decorating the upper deck and entertaining their guests. The people struck us all as being very blase and uninteresting, so that in spite of our efforts it was rather a dull affair.

## December 25th

**Christmas Day.** After Divine service, Captain and Mrs Bridson invited the officers aft where we drank to absent friends, etc in 'fizz'. We then proceeded in a procession headed by the band round the mess deck, where everyone met with very enthusiastic welcome from the men. The messages were tastefully decorated with flags, green stuff, etc, and their little knickknacks and photos laid out on the tables. They took a great deal of trouble in making everything look as gay as possible. After we had returned from the rounds, I was gently seized on the aft deck and told that they wished to carry me round the ship. A stretcher had been provided on which I was requested to lie down and in this manner was born around the mess deck with the band playing etc. I received a great ovation, which was peculiarly gratifying, as it showed me that the men were happy and satisfied with the way they have been dealt by. I heard afterwards that everyone had spent a really happy Christmas, with which I was very pleased, as this day of all others in a man of war is generally undesired, the men sometimes committing excesses and becoming troublesome. I can safely say that I never saw a ship's company behaving in more exemplary manner.

## December 26th to January 2nd

### Passage to Fremantle

## December 31st

**New Year's Eve.** I stayed up with a few officers until midnight, when the ship's steward's boy, a lad of about 16, and the youngest in the ship, struck 16 bells. And so ends 1906, in which I had one bad stroke of luck\* at any rate, but not an unhappy year on the whole. *[note - added by the author on 7th of September 1911 - “\*my proposal and rejection, the best bit of luck that ever happened to me as subsequent events proved, vide my marriage”. Who did he propose to?]*