

# 1904

## Start Volume VIII

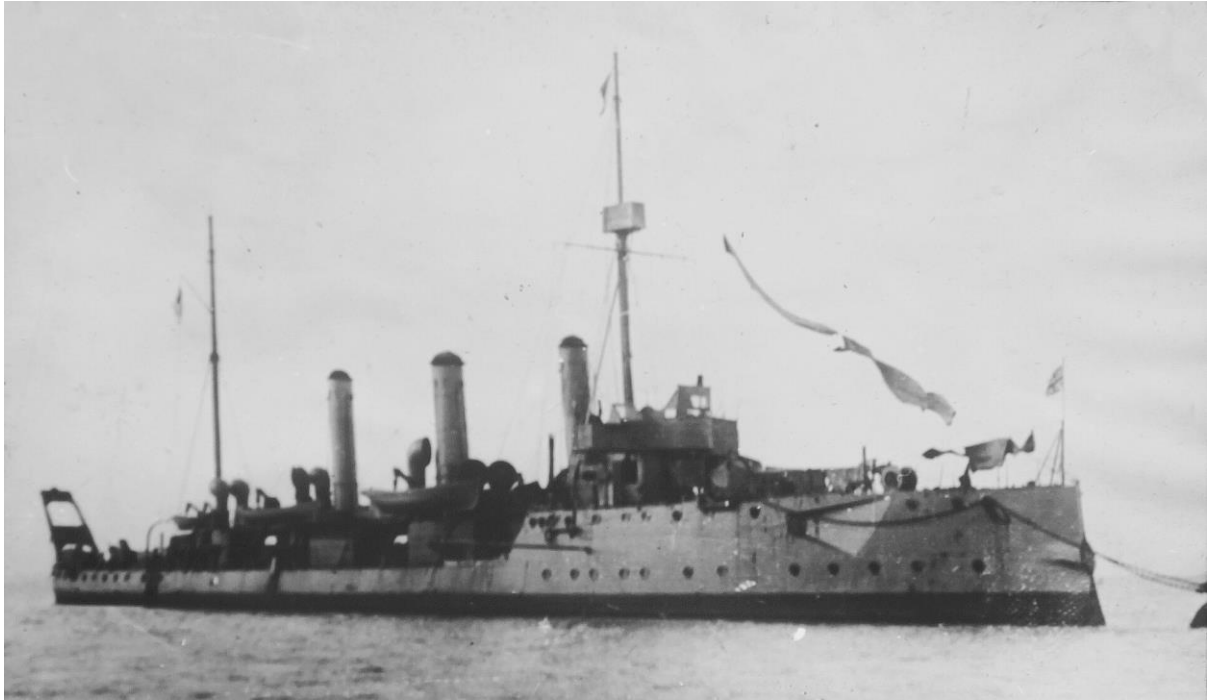
### January 1st

**Leave.** The beginning of the 19th year of my journal, which I began in '86, when in my second year in the Britannia [*note – CST's transcription of the Journals begins in March 1893, sadly the earlier Journals seem to have been lost*]. With the close of Volume VII, I was on half pay and it appears that I am likely to remain so for some time. There are no billets that would suit me at my seniority and so I shall have to wait for something to turn up in common with several others. It is rather tiring doing nothing and I find Warwick is not very lively just now. The new year has come in as quietly as the old one went out.

### January 10th

**Appointment.** To my great astonishment, on opening an official letter which I thought of no importance, I found that it contained my appointment to the 'Sappho' for the 'Leda' in Command. I was very much surprised for there did not seem any prospect of my getting a ship for months, and I had no idea that she was to commission. It was rather annoying to find that she was to hoist the pennant next Tuesday [*note - 2 days later*] at Chatham, which gives me just one day's notice to quit. This is characteristic of the Admiralty, which is no respecter of persons. However, I was mightily pleased with my appointment, which ought to prove a good one.

## HMS Leda



*HMS Speedy, Leda's sister ship*

### January 12th

**Commission to HMS Leda.** Into the yard after breakfast where I found my new ship, 'Leda', lying under the large crane. The Leda is a torpedo gunboat of 810 tons, 5700HP, twin screws. The armament consists of 2 x 4.7 inch QF, 4 x 3 pounder QF, two sets of double torpedo tubes and one maxim gun. The compliment is 94. At 9:00 AM the pennant was hoisted and the men arrived in the forenoon, and the discomfort, chaos and worry of commissioning a ship began.

### January 20th

**To Sheerness**

### January 26th to 30th

**Passage to Greenock**

### February 9th

**Russo-Japanese War.** The war between Russian and Japan broke out today after a long period of negotiations in which the Russians behaved very badly. The sympathies in this country are entirely with the Japanese, and it is thought that they will make things very unpleasant for Russia. News came today of their torpedo attack on Port Arthur and the disablement of several Russian ships.

*[note - The Russo-Japanese War, fought between 1904 and 1905, was a conflict between the Russian Empire and the Empire of Japan over control of Manchuria and Korea. The war began with this surprise attack by the Japanese on the Russian Pacific Fleet and a siege of Port Arthur (Lüshunkou, China). Japan ultimately won the war, securing dominance in Korea and gaining significant influence in Manchuria.]*

## February 12th

**Trainees.** Today we embarked 40 RNR men from the Battery where they go for training. This we shall do fortnightly. They came out in the ship for firing and each man is allowed some aiming rifle practise and one round of 4.7 inch.

## February 13th to 23rd

**Cruise to Hebrides.**

## February 24th

**Smallpox.** During our absence smallpox has broken out badly in Greenock, which has rather scared the inhabitants. It is chiefly confined to the low quarter of the town and there have been a few deaths. Consequently, the doctors are busy vaccinating.

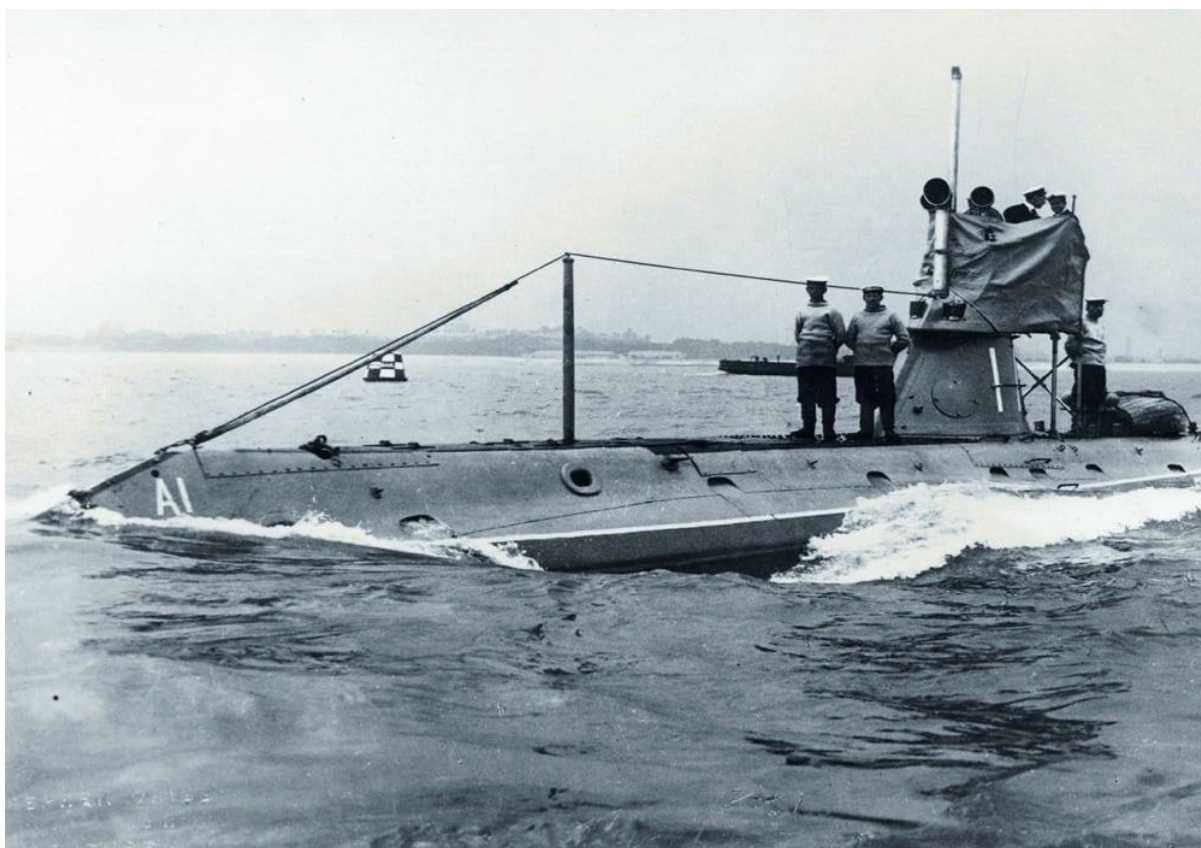
## February 29th

**Leap year.** Leap Year Day the first for 8 years.

*[note - 1900 was not a leap year because it was a century year (divisible by 100) but not divisible by 400. According to the Gregorian calendar rules, only century years divisible by 400 are considered leap years. Since 1900 is divisible by 100 but not by 400, it was a non-leap year.]*

## March 18th

**Loss of Submarine A1.** We received the news of the terrible disaster to Submarine A1 which, whilst exercising off the Nab Tower Light Vessel at Spithead, was run into by the SS Berwick Castle and sunk. Lieutenant Mansergh (with whom I was in the Britannia) Sub Lt Churchill and 9 men were drowned or suffocated. It is difficult to realise the horrible nature of this disaster, for there was not the remotest chance of escape for anyone, and it may have been some time before they died. Salvage operations were at once started and her whereabouts located during the night.



*A1 was actually sunk twice: first in 1904 when she became the first submarine casualty, with the loss of all hands; however, she was recovered, but sank again in 1911, this time when she was unmanned.*

## March 29th to April 6th

### Easter leave at Warwick

## April 10th

**Clyde weather.** For the last 10 days, gale has succeeded gale here and today blew harder than ever. I don't think I have ever been in a worse place for weather. When it is not blowing, it is pelting down with rain. All day long it blew a full gale from the westward and two ships dragged their anchors on to the 'Tail' of the bank where one of them, a sailing ship remains hard and fast aground.

## May 6th

**Merchant of Venice.** After dinner we went to the Theatre Royal (Glasgow) to see 'The Merchant of Venice', in which the celebrated actor Sir Henry Irving was taking the part of Shylock. I must confess that I was disappointed in him. His articulation was bad and at times it was almost impossible to hear what he said. He also, I thought, very much overdid his part. He is now getting on for 70 years old, and it seems to me that his day is gone and that it is a pity that he does not give it up.

May 10th

**Sir Henry Irving.** I thought I would go to see Sir Henry Irving again in case I may have been mistaken in my judgement. He was playing in two short pieces called 'Waterloo' and 'The Bells'. In Waterloo, I thought him distinctly good in the part of the old veteran soldier, but in The Bells he bored me to death, so much so that I came out before it was over and returned by the 10:40 train feeling very disappointed. *[note – Irving died in 1905]*



*Sir Henry Irving as Shylock in 'The Merchant of Venice', 1879*

## May 30th to June 1st

### Passage to Shetland

## May 31st

**Mother.** My dear mother's 69th birthday.

## June 1st to July 5th

### At Shetland

## June 19th

**Birthday.** Passed my 32nd milestone on the road of life today.

## July 5th

**Orders.** I was very much startled at receiving a telegram from the Admiralty “Proceed at once to search for the missing boats of SS Norge, wrecked on Rockall Wednesday last, area of search should be between Rockall and Hebrides. Your orders to be a Liverpool [note - for duty escorting HM the King] holds good”. This was a great surprise, and I found Rockall to be an isolated pinnacle of rock about 160 miles West of the Hebrides.

## July 6th to 9th

**Search for SS Norge.** The SS Norge was an emigrant ship from Denmark bound for America. She struck Rockall last Wednesday and foundered in about 30 minutes. It was said that five boats got away, one of these was picked up and the survivors taken to

Grimsby by a steam drifter, where they arrived about four days after the disaster. It is feared that about 800 emigrants must have lost their lives. There appears to be little chance of the other boats being picked up, especially after the bad weather we have had. *[note – this was the worst peace time maritime disaster until the sinking of the Titanic 8 years later. Approximately 650 people lost their lives and 160 survived.]*



July 11th to 17th

**At Greenock**

July 17th to 18th

**Passage to Liverpool**

July 19th

**The King and Queen.** At 1:00 PM I landed with Captain Perise ('Dido') and de Salis('Juno'). Although everyone was expectant and crowds lining the streets, the weather fortunately being brilliant. At 1:30 PM the King and Queen arrived at Lime Street Station and ships fired Royal Salutes. The Yacht had been put alongside the landing stage and was elaborately decorated. After hearing the address (at the Lord Mayor's reception), the King replied. He spoke excellently, I thought, and I noticed no foreign accent which I've heard he's got *[note - Edward VII was born in Buckingham Palace but was said to have had a slight German accent picked up from his father, Prince Albert]*. Both the King and Queen were looking wonderfully well, the latter is a marvel of good looks considering her age (born in 1844). The Lord Mayor was called forth at the conclusion, bade kneel, and the King took the sword of an equerry, touched his



shoulder and told him to “rise Sir A Hampson”. This was the first time I had seen the ceremony of my knighthood performed.

## July 19th to 20th

### Passage to Swansea

## July 20th

**Dinner on board the Royal Yacht.** The weather throughout the day was splendid but the sun very hot and this, with two nights of practically no rest and all the bustle and anxiety of the last two days made me feel a bit done up on my arrival on board and I was looking forward to retiring to roost early. This was not to be however for I found a ‘royal command’ waiting for me to dine onboard the Yacht and there was nothing for it but to shift into mess dress and get away. Just before dinner an equerry gave me a mysterious parcel telling me to open it at once and pin on the contents to my mess jacket. I found it to be the cross of the Membership of the Royal Victorian Order (MVO) (4th class). This was indeed a pleasant surprise and I had no sooner fixed it up than I was presented to HM who shook hands and congratulated me upon receiving the decoration. He also passed some complimentary remarks about the escort. His manner was most genial, and I felt quite at ease in talking to him. Soon afterwards Queen Alexandra appeared, and the King introduced me to her, and we exchanged some remarks about the success of their trip. She was most charming, and I was astonished with her youthful appearance which seemed to me to be quite natural. At dinner, the King and Queen sat opposite one another. The dinner was of course excellent and the wine perfection. It was a most interesting experience to me, although I was quite ‘dog tired’. Dinner over, the King and Queen played bridge whilst we who had not been asked, remained outside ‘smoking’, and I afterwards went to the boardroom and had a yarn. About 11:00 PM the King finished, and having said goodnight to him, I returned on board and was very glad to get to bed. The duty that I have had, terminating so successful successfully, has been a great stroke of luck for me, and I may say that today has been a red-letter day of my life.





*The Royal Yacht entering Swansea harbour, 20 July 1904*

*[note - the Royal Yacht 'Victoria and Albert', accompanied by the Royal Navy cruisers 'Dido' and 'Juno' and the torpedo boat 'Leda', arrived in Swansea Bay on the 20<sup>th</sup> July 1904. On board were King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra who had made the journey to Swansea where the King was to perform the ceremony of 'cutting the first sod' of the new Kings Dock.]*

## July 21st to August 16th

**To sea for manoeuvres**

## August 16th

**Returned to Greenock**

## September 17th to 26th

**On leave at Warwick**

## September 18th

**Mother.** In the afternoon I saw my dear mother again. It is chiefly to see her that I go home. I received quite a shock, for I found that she was wasted away, and having been bedridden for over three months, she seems to have ceased to take any interest in life and is really longing for the end, which is very sad and pitiable. Nevertheless, she was very pleased to see me again and seemed to brighten up a little. It is evident that she is not long for this world, for her old complaint, diabetes, is undermining her strength and there are other complications.

## September 26th

**Farewell.** I took a tender farewell of my mother whom I never expect to see alive again.

## September 27th

**Sailed for cruise with Home Fleet.** Arrived Lamlash [*note – Isle of Arran*] about 2:30 PM where we found the Home Fleet anchored. The Fleet consists of the following battleships - 'Exmouth', 'Royal Oak', 'Russell', 'Royal Sovereign', 'Swiftsure', 'Triumph', 'Empress of India' and 'Revenge'. Cruisers - 'Essex', 'Bedford', 'Juno', and 'Dido'. Altogether a most formidable fleet.

## October 1st to 11th

**At Ullapool**

## October 12th to 15th

**At Stornoway**

## October 13th

**Death of Mother.** Upon my arrival on board, I received the sad intelligence by telegram of the death of my dear mother last night at about 10:00 PM, after a long and painful illness. Towards the end she was in great suffering brought about by the diabetes, to which she was for years a martyr, and also by dropsy [*note – oedema*]. It was a very sad blow, although long expected, and it is more so to me as I can not be present to the funeral, which takes place on Saturday next. My mother was born in London in 1835, and was the second daughter of George and Mary Ann Bird, who built and subsequently lived at Pinner Hall, Middlesex. In 1858 she married my father, John Tibbits, MD, of Warwick, who died May '91, to whom she bore ten sons and three daughters. Of these, three sons died in infancy and these are now living:

Frank (clerk in the Holy Orders), born 1860, married 1899 Miss M Jaques of Dorridge, Knowle (at present curate of All Saints, Bromsgrove)

John (Jack), born 1862 (solicitor practising in Warwick) married 1900. Miss H Harman, Emily, born 1866. Married 1896 to Edward Morley, son of Reverend Morley (late Master of Lord Leicester's Hospital), who is at present tea planting in Assam [*note - died in 1905 of dysentery in Calcutta*],

Hubert, born 1868, surgeon, practising in Warwick, married in 1902, Miss L Harman.

Walter, born 1870, surgeon, now Captain in the RAMC and serving in India.

Charles, born 1872. Lieutenant Commander, RN (and writer of these journals), Married Miss Elsie Eastman, 28th of October 1909.

Oliver, born 1874, Electrical engineer, managing engineer of Messrs Nelson Dale and Co, works Warwick, married Miss M Corbett.

Ida Jane, born 1876, married Reverend R Howes

Lucy born 1877

My mother led a stressful life full of good works and noble precepts. She was a great reader, had a prodigious memory, and was a good musician and organiser. She was closely connected with public affairs in Warwick, where her loss will be much felt. Her unselfishness and devotion to duty is a pattern to us all.

## October 15th

**Mother's funeral.** The remains of my dear mother were buried this afternoon in Warwick cemetery in the same grave as my late father.

## October 17th to 20th

**At Kirkwall, Orkney**

## October 22nd

Returned to Greenock

## October 24th

**Russian battlefleet - Rumours of war.** Just before going on board in the morning, I heard the news, which has startled the whole British nation of the dastardly outrage committed by the Russian Baltic Fleet upon defenceless fishermen employed in their labours on the night of Friday last. This fleet left the Baltic a few days ago for the war. They had considerable difficulty getting away owing to the lack of men, defects in their ship, etc, and during this time, the scant news they had received of disaster following disaster had apparently put the personnel into a highly nervous state. Upon arriving off the Dogger Bank last Friday, they were evidently in a high state of nervous tension, for they imagined that the peaceful fishermen were enemies in torpedo boats and immediately opened fire, killing two men and sinking one vessel and wounding others. It is allayed by the fishermen that they kept search lights on for them for some time, and so after first mistake there would seem to be no justification for them not having remained behind to ascertain the damage done. They, however, steamed away and the first news of this disgraceful proceedings was received at Hull, when the disabled trawlers and the bodies of the dead arrived. The occurrence has caused the most intense indignation, and the nation demands compensation and the punishment of those responsible. Up to present, these months have been received with silence by Russia, owing perhaps to the difficulty of communicating with the Russian Admiral, but this delay only aggravates the people who are on the verge of clamouring for war.



*Funeral of George Smith and William Leggott, 27 October 1904, the two fishermen killed in the 'Dogger Bank Incident'*

## October 27th

**War scare.** The situation with Russia this morning in consequence of the outrage in the North Sea is very critical. War appears imminent. The Home Fleet has been ordered to Portland and part of the Mediterranean fleet is to join the Channel fleet at Gibraltar. The explanation of the Russian Admiral is not considered satisfactory. He said that they were undoubtedly attacked by torpedo boats in the North Sea, which he says were Japanese, harboured by Great Britain, a palpable absurdity.

## October 28th

**War averted.** News arrived tonight that the tension of the last few days with Russia has been removed and war averted. They have agreed to make due reparations, to detain the responsible officers at Vigo and to submit the inquiry into the affair to an International Commission.

## October 29th to November 9th

**Leave**

## December 17th to 28th

**Christmas leave**

## December 24th

**Emily's party.** Emily gave a Christmas party at her house in the afternoon with a tree for the little nephews and nieces. Those present were John and Harriet and their three children, Emily and her four children, Bert and Lucy and child, Arthur, Oliver and myself. It was a striking to note the regular colony of the family at present domiciled in Warwick.

Oliver impersonated Santa Claus to the huge delight of the children and it was very refreshing to see how they enjoyed the Christmas Tree which was well stocked with toys etc.

## December 25th

**Christmas Day.** Attended services at St Mary's in the forenoon. We dined at midday, the party consists of Arthur, Oliver and myself. How very different to times gone by. This will probably be our last Christmas in the old house.