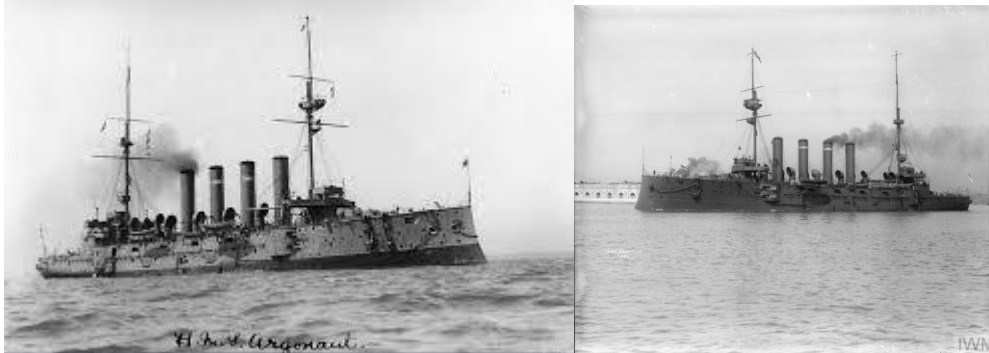


1913

## HMS Argonaut



### January 1st

**Promotions.** The promotions published and myself passed over. There were many iniquities perpetrated, if anything in fact a worse election than the last time! It is very disheartening, but there are many more hard cases than mine. It now looks very questionable whether I shall ever get this step.

### February 10th

**Fate of Captain Scott.** News received today of the terribly sad fate of Captain Scott and his party. They reached the South Pole but were overwhelmed by bad weather when within a few miles of their supply base and perished miserably of starvation and cold. This happened about a year ago. Their heroism was most remarkable. *[note – Scott and 5 others reached the South Pole on 17/1/1912, a little over a month after Amundsen. On their 862-mile journey back to their base they were caught in a blizzard 12.5 miles away from their depot.]*



*Scott and his party at the South Pole on 17/1/1912*

## February 19th

**Houdini.** To the King's Theatre [*note – Southsea?*], where we saw celebrated Houdini perform his box trick. He is immersed in an iron tank of water with a glass front, his feet in stocks and himself upside down. In about a minute he's free - a truly extraordinary feat. His efforts to extricate himself take place under a screen so it is impossible to discover the trick, for trick there must be.

# **HOUDINI**

*PRESENTS HIS OWN ORIGINAL INVENTION  
THE GREATEST SENSATIONAL MYSTERY  
EVER ATTEMPTED IN THIS OR ANY OTHER AGE!!!*



gettyimages

Credit: Apic

DANGERFIELD  
LONDON

**\$200 REWARD TO ANY ONE PROVING THAT IT  
IS POSSIBLE TO OBTAIN AIR IN THE UP-SIDE-DOWN  
POSITION IN WHICH HOUDINI RELEASES HIMSELF  
FROM THIS WATER-FILLED TORTURE CELL.**

112072533



*Poster from 1913 and photo of Houdini performing 'The Chinese Water Torture Cell' in 1912.*

## March 27th

**Motor bicycle.** In the afternoon, having nothing to do, Elsie and I thought we would like to see some motor bicycles and sidecars with a view of getting one. I have long felt that my days of bicycling long distances are over. After going into the matter at Rox's Garage, it became almost an accomplished fact. We had tea at the Mikado to talk it over and then decided definitely and I placed an order with Rose for a 4.5 horsepower Singer motor bicycle, said to be the best of this year, and a Mills Fulford side car.

## April 22nd

**Motor bicycle.** My motor bicycle and sidecar arrived at last. I went for a trial trip round the front etc and I am very pleased with it.

## April 24th to 30th

Trip to Warwick

## April 25th

Visit to eldest brother Frank

## April 26th

**Brother Oliver.**

## May 25th to 26<sup>th</sup>

**Nigel.** Elsie complained of feeling pains about 10:00 PM. Towards midnight they got worse and we both thought it was a chill. As things did not improve, I went for Doctor South who came about 2:30 AM and to our surprise announced that the baby would arrive shortly. As we did not expect the event for another 18 days we were taken unawares but luckily, I was able to get a temporary nurse. A little boy appeared about 4:30 and poor Elsie was fortunate in having come through the ordeal so quickly. Such a relief to that all the anxiety is passed and the dreaded event over, especially as the little fellow seems none the worse for his early arrival. *[note – death in childbirth was second only to tuberculosis as the cause of death in women in 1913]*

## May 28th

**Terence.** In the afternoon took Lily and Terence in the side car to Belmont for tea. Terence went on the pond with me in the punt and much enjoyed his first boating experience. He is greatly pleased with his 'baby brother'.

## June 19th

**Birthday.** My 41st birthday.

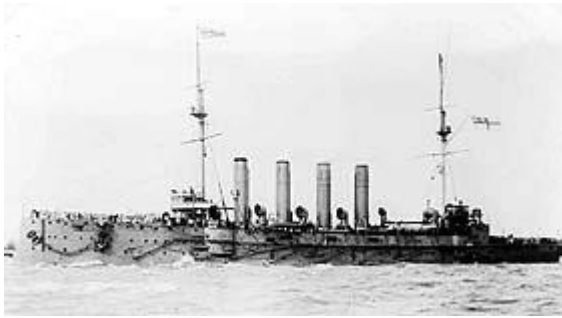
## June 22<sup>nd</sup>

**Nigel Circumcision.** Baby circumcised today by Doctor South, who performed the operation satisfactorily. The poor little mite had chloroform and we could not help being anxious, but it is a good thing done. He has ophthalmia in his left eye too, which is a nuisance and is most persistent but Doctor South is confident that it will clear away with care and treatment. *[note - this took about six weeks to get well as noted on 24/1/1914]*

## July 1st

**Promotions.** I bought a paper and received a knock out blow when I found that 20 Commanders had been promoted to Captain and I have been left out. I cannot say that I was surprised as I have no one to 'push me' which seems to be all that counts nowadays, but it is nevertheless very hard for I have done good work and given my best to the service. My chances are now practically nil, and I seem doomed to the shelf. It is a relief to know the worst but a terrible shock to me which will last all my lifetime.

# HMS Spartiate



## July 3rd

**Left HMS Argonaught - joined HMS Spartiate.** I was today appointed to HMS Spartiate to turn over to help with the stoker's training and do not go to manoeuvres after all, for which I am thankful. Commander Somerville of the 'Spartiate' takes over 'Argonaught' instead and is not very pleased.

## July 13th

**Nigel's Christening.** Baby christened today, Thomas Nigel Bethune at Saint Jude's Church, Southsea. Godfathers are his Grandfather Thomas Eastman and Elsie's cousins lieutenant Claud Leggatt RN of 'Hazard' and lieutenant Arthur Robinson of Middlesex Regiment and Godmother Elsie's aunt Ethel Leggatt. I found at the registry office that, although Terence is christened Bethune, he was not registered in that name and is therefore legally not entitled to use it. A small tea party after the christening and lieutenant and Mrs Kennedy came to supper.

## July 15th

**Nigel.** The Third Fleet ships left on manoeuvres, and I was glad to have escaped. Nurse Thomas left today. She has been splendid, and baby has done well under her supervision. Elsie has unfortunately to give up nursing him, consequent upon the promotion worry, but he is progressing favourably and the ophthalmia completely gone.

## September 17th

**Terrence's birthday.** Little Terence three years old today and a sweet child. He was delighted at receiving many toys.

## November 28th

**Appointment.** I was appointed to the 'Ariadne' today. She is to take over duty as stoker's training ship soon as 'Spartiate's' boilers are practically finished and she will no longer be efficient. My appointment being updated, I shall join when 'Spartiate' is ordered to be paid off. 4th anniversary of our happy wedding.

## December 10th

**Chances of promotion.** To London and to the Admiralty to see if I could do anything final with regard to my promotion. The list appears on 1st of January and this is my very last chance. I therefore did not want to leave a stone unturned as the result means either early retirement or obscurity on the one hand, or a continuance of my naval career on the other, the issue is of tremendous importance to me. I was received by Rear Admiral Clair, Secretary to the First Lord (Mr Winston Churchill), who reassured me considerably when he told me that my name was being 'very thoroughly considered'. I then saw the Second Sea Lord Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, who was equally kind and said he would do all he could to help me although I have never met him before, neither had I served with him. Altogether I was very pleased with my visit and it has given me some hope, whereas I had practically none. Elsie very pleased with what I had to tell her about my interviews.

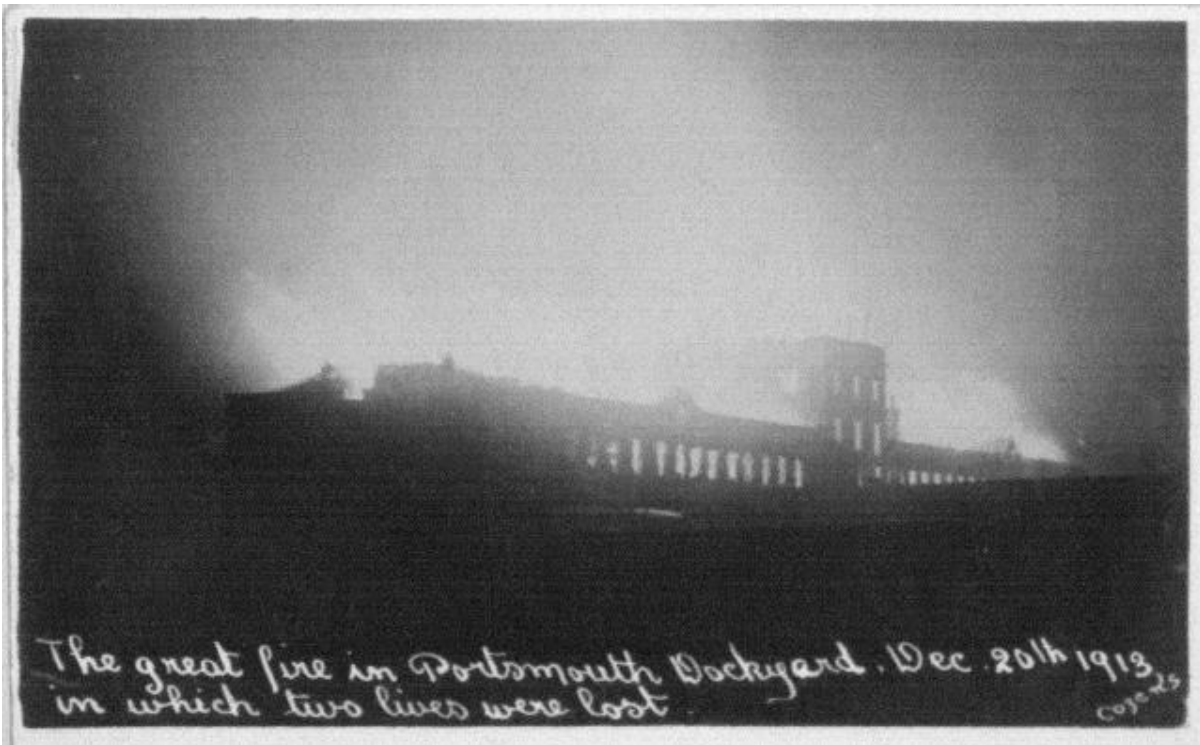
## December 22nd

**Dockyard Fire.** In the evening, I heard by telephone that the fire was raging in the dockyard and the glare in the sky showed that it must be extensive. I flew home to tell Elsie and bicycled to the yard where I found a terrific blaze. The historic old semaphore tower was gone and the whole of the storehouse to the right and left of it was ablaze. The new battleship cruiser 'Queen Mary' was laying alongside the South Railway Jetty and looked in danger, but about 10:00 PM she was towed clear. Fortunately there was little wind and that from the eastward or the whole dockyard might have been in jeopardy. The heat was terrific and the efforts of the firemen seemed rather futile, but they were able to stop it spreading to the oil store and were also able to save the lower storey and part of the middle story of the eastern wing. It was an awful sight, and I hope never to see another like it and it subsequently transpired that two men who were on duty in the Semaphore Tower were burned to death, having been overcome by the smoke before they were able to get out. The damage is estimated that about £150,000. I returned home to tell Elsie about it and she returned with me on her bicycle to see it, but she could not be admitted into the yard. I understand, perhaps because of suspicion of suffragettes who had been concerned in so many fires of late. We saw it very well from the Hard, however, and towards midnight it was more or less under command.





THE SEMAPHORE TOWER PORTSMOUTH DOCKYARD (BEFORE THE FIRE)  
Hampshire County Library ©



## December 31st

**Left HMS Spartiate - joined HMS Ariadne - Depression about promotion.** 'Spartiate' paid off. Busy turning over to 'Ariadne'. A day of suspense for me on account of the promotion list which should appear tonight. On this hangs my future life for if I don't obtain it, I have nothing but the Coast Guard to look forward to and afterwards retirement. Being now over 8 and a half years seniority my chances have considerably



diminished and having no influence in the Service I can get no 'push' which is so essential in the selection process. My services are such that I have quite enough qualifications, but the difficulty is in not having anyone to bring my full name forward. In the evening, our excitement and suspense was intense. I telephoned as late as 10:30 PM but up to that time, there was no news, and so I returned home, resigned to my fate as I thought that, had I been in the list, I should have heard by then. We therefore went to bed and slept soundly, having accepted what we thought to be the inevitable, and so ends another happy year with my beloved wife and two dear little boys, whom God bless and preserve and grant that they may do well in the world.