

17/52/3

CONFIDENTIAL

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1/10/04

H.M.A.S. STUART,
at sea.

5th March, 1968.

The Flag Officer Commanding,
H.M. AUSTRALIAN FLEET.(Copies to: The Commander, FAR EAST FLEET,
The Flag Officer, SECOND-IN-COMMAND,
FAR EAST FLEET,
The Commodore, HONG KONG,
The Captain (P), FIRST FRIGATE SQUADRON.)

Sir,

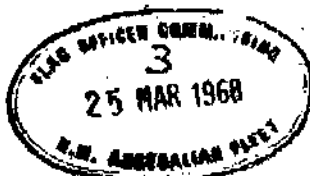
I have the honour to report the proceedings of H.M.A. Ship under my command during the month of February, 1968. Times are Zone (-8) until 071800, then Zone (-7½) until 162330, then Zone (-8).

2. At the beginning of the month STUART was escorting H.M.A.S SYDNEY in the Gulf of Thailand. The previous day troops and equipment had been off-loaded from SYDNEY at Battahip and the ships were proceeding to Vung Tau in South Vietnam.

3. At 0830, Thursday 1st February, STUART replenished from SYDNEY and at the same time soldiers were transferred by jackstay to spend the day in an escort. QMG sailors were exchanged to enable them to be instructed in equipment they will be examined on in their Branch Technical Tests but on which they normally cannot gain any practical experience. O.O.W. manoeuvres were carried out on completion of the replenishment. A jackstay transfer at 1330 soon had everyone back in their own ships.

4. The ships came to Condition Three at 1600 the next day as we approached Vung Tau and at 0650 Saturday, 3rd February STUART anchored off Ganh Rai Point. Chinook and Sky Hook helicopters had commenced unloading SYDNEY even before she anchored nearby. The whole operation was accomplished in a remarkably short time. The performance of the Sky Hooks in moving three tons one mile each minute for about three hours was quite staggering. Awkward condition two was assumed on arrival and before departure a bottom search was carried out by the divers.

5. The Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Sir Alan McNicoll K.B.E., C.B., G.M.* flew his flag in SYDNEY from 0830 until 1400.



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6. SYDNEY shifted berth to a position just clear of the harbour entrance at 1140 and STUART followed shortly afterwards. At 1300 a departure screen was formed by STUART with two helicopters and at 1430 the screen escorted SYDNEY to sea for passage to the Singapore area. The passage was uneventful. As R.P.A. GOLD RANGER (which has a slow pumping rate) was to supply fuel to both ships, it was decided that SYDNEY would anchor in the vicinity of Johore Shoal Buoy and secure GOLD RANGER alongside. STUART would proceed to the Naval Base for fuel.

7. STUART secured at No.1 berth at 0840 and departed at 1130 when fuel had been embarked. The ship proceeded to the practice area for gunnery exercises and rejoined SYDNEY at 1830 for the passage south. When the ships reached the Carimata Strait STUART was detached at 2000 Tuesday 6th February to return to Singapore.

8. Two Seacat firing serials had been arranged for the forenoon and afternoon of Thursday 8th February. Just prior to the first serial a Russian Oceanographic Vessel AKAMEDIK SMILNSHOV was sighted and so the serial was cancelled. When the aircraft took off for the afternoon serial it transpired that there was confusion with the Air Traffic Centre regarding safety clearance and this serial was also aborted. STUART then proceeded to the Naval Base and secured alongside No.3 berth Stores Basin at 1900.

9. During the weekend the interpart competition for the Brennan Trophy was completed with four games in each of Australian Rules football and Basketball. The trophy was donated by Mr. Brennan when STUART commissioned and it generates considerable interest over a long period because it entails four teams competing in practically every outdoor and shipboard game that exists, including "Upper deck Olympics". The seamen came out clear winners and it seems they will have to be made into two teams for the next series of competitions.

10. STUART cast off and proceeded for Hong Kong at 0810 Tuesday 13th February. Whilst passing through the Singapore Exercise Area a seacat missile was fired successfully at a Rushton Target. The passage was made to the west of the Puncels and the ship was at condition three for two days. STUART entered Hong Kong harbour at 1000 and secured alongside South Wall at 1030, Saturday 17th February.

11. An extensive sporting programme had been arranged with opponents the ship had met on our previous visit. The Welsh Regiment provided the venue and the opposition for many games and the happy association between the Regiment and STUART over the past two years has now ended as the Regiment returns to the United Kingdom this year. The annual Officers versus Chief Petty Officers cricket match produced 380 runs in four hours and resulted in a win for the latter and some very weary and sore bodies the next day. The Stonecutters Range saw a shooting competition between STUART and TAMAR and also an annual range course for all sailors who missed the opportunity during our last visit.

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12. At 1145 Wednesday 21st February I called on the Captain, H.M.S. PHOEBE, Captain F.E.C. Berger, M.V.O., D.S.G., Royal Navy.

13. H.M.A.S. YARRA arrived alongside at 0800 Thursday, 22nd February and I accompanied the Captain (P), First Frigate Squadron on his call on the Australian High Commissioner, Mr. P.R. Searcy.

14. There was little organised entertainment and none really needed as most of the ship's company were well occupied each day in finalising their purchases. The Australian Customs regulations, which were finally clarified just before our arrival, have been widely publicised and everyone has been conscious of the allowances for which they qualify.

15. At 0950, Monday 26th February the ship cast off, proceeded out of the basin and waited until YARRA had completed her "acting" for the Commonwealth Film Unit who wished to film her coming to and slipping from a buoy. Both ships proceeded out of harbour in company and when clear a helicopter brought out a cameraman for more photographs. Both ships then set course for the Philippines where a visit was to be paid to Cebu City.

16. The passage was uneventful and as many exercises as possible were carried out consistent with the need to maintain our speed of advance. Every opportunity was taken to steam close to the land so that the ship's company could gain a clear impression of the islands.

17. At 0630, Thursday 29th February, the ship was off Louis Ledge Light and the pilot boarded. YARRA preceded me into harbour and went alongside the allocated wharf and reported a strong set running past the jetty. By the time STUART arrived to berth on YARRA the set had increased and I found it impossible to get alongside with safety. I decided to anchor until the next slack water at midday. It was most disappointing as an enthusiastic welcome was arranged for both ships on the wharf. There were bands, welcome songs and recitations and hundreds of people awaiting us.

18. After anchoring I proceeded to YARRA by boat to accompany the Captain (P), First Frigate Squadron on his calls. We called on the Australian Ambassador to the Philippines, Francis H. Stuart Esq., at 0850 and he then accompanied us on the next calls. These were on the Mayor Cebu City, Hon Eulogio E. Borres, the Vice Governor, Hon. Osmond G. Rama, the Third Military Area Commander, represented by Colonel F.D. Bermejo. I was unable to accompany them on the last call on General Raval of the Philippine Constabulary as it was necessary to return to the ship.

19. At 1200 the anchor was weighed and I had no difficulty in berthing on YARRA at 1220 in slack water. I was to be host at a luncheon party at 1230, but it transpired that only one guest arrived and I hurriedly invited ship's officers to fill the remaining places. Apparently such occurrences are common in this country, but there was little further evidence of it. The two ships gave a combined cocktail party that evening and nearly all the guests invited were present. They seemed to enjoy themselves and T.V. and radio representatives present exhibited a desire to have the ship's band perform on their stations. The warm welcome extended to the ships indicated a very enjoyable visit and it was to prove so.

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20. The ship remains clean and smart internally and externally. Jenny and her side party painted the ship's side in Hong Kong. A programme to bring weather deck surfaces back to bare metal has been commenced and this is the beginning of a programme which will continue through the refit.

21. Main and auxiliary machinery has functioned well throughout the month. During the period in Hong Kong a great deal of maintenance both planned and cautionary was completed in preparation for the next five weeks of fairly extensive steaming. Contract labour in Hong Kong has completed preserving all ballast tanks, forward trim tank and H015, Diesel Compartment and Main Machinery Space Bilges. This leaves only Feed and Fresh Water Tanks to be done by ship's staff during the coming refit and thus will free Engineering Mechanics to assist in semi-skilled maintenance work.

22. The weapons electrical equipment has continued its high serviceability rate although the Variable Depth Sonar is still not serviceable as the transformer flown from Sydney was found to be shorted between primary and secondary windings on arrival. Much of the work of the department has been devoted to pre-refit trials. The need for meticulous care and accuracy by ship's staff has been made more essential than ever as the Trials unit will not be available to assist and STUART is to be the trial ship for the three year cycle.

23. The Ship's Company has been spoken to on security. Their morale remains high and is, of course, bolstered by the rapid approach of the ship's home-coming. The conduct of the Ship's Company has been satisfactory and their health good.

I have the honour to be

Sir,

Your obedient servant.



(R. G. Loosli)
Commander R.A.N.
CAPTAIN

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