

File No. 20.2A.8.

H.M.A.S. SYDNEY,
At HONG KONG.

4th January, 1954.

The Flag Officer Second in Command,
Far East Station.

(Copy: The Flag Officer Commanding,
H.M. Australian Fleet.)

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS - DECEMBER, 1953.

Sir,

I have the honour to report the proceedings for H.M.A. Ship under my command for the month of December, 1953.

2. Times throughout are Zone minus nine.

OPERATIONAL AREA TO SASEBO 2ND TO 3RD.

3. On leaving the Operational Area at 0500 on the 2nd, the screening destroyers U.S.S. STRIBLING and WREN carried out a dawn encounter on SYDNEY reforming on completion.

4. Task Unit 95.1.7., consisting of CANCOMDESE in H.M.C.S. IROQUOIS, H.M.C.S. CRUSADER, H.M.A.S. TOBRUK and H.M.S. COMUS was exercising to the Southeast of area George and had requested a full scale air strike in the afternoon. When within 120 miles two Fireflies were flown off to search and shadow. There was an active cold front in the vicinity and weather conditions were anything but good. However, the target was located and the decision made to launch the strike. It was unfortunate that unserviceability forced the relieving Fireflies to return to the ship and as a result the strike of 18 Sea Furies and 7 Fireflies took off, lacking up to date information. As however the visibility was down to a few hundred yards this made little difference, and all strike aircraft returned to the ship without sight of the target. Though abortive, this strike was of excellent training value and gave pilots experience in formation flying in cloud and confidence in their ability to return to the carrier in low visibility.

5. In the evening, when 30 miles east of Quelpart Island WREN gained sonar contact which was classified "Submarine" and held for 20 minutes before contact was lost. I withdrew to the Southeast and left both destroyers to a hunt that lasted over 24 hours. C.T.F. 95 finally classified the contact as non submarine.

6. Flying on the 3rd was carried out with the Helicopter only as Planeguard. 66 sorties were achieved before the ship entered Sasebo Harbour and secured to No. 21 buoy at 1800.

AT SASEBO - 4TH AND 5TH.

7. I waited on you in H.M.S. TYNE during the forenoon of the 4th.

8. U.S.S. SAIPAN, who relieved POINT CRUZ as the second carrier on the West Coast, entered harbour at 1200 on the 4th, and her heads of departments were entertained to luncheon on board on the 5th. There was much exchange of information and a good liaison was established between the ships.

SASEBO TO KURE 6TH.

9. I slipped at 0900 on Sunday the 6th and made a night /passage

passage through Shimonoseki Strait to anchor off Kure at daylight on the 7th.

AT KURE 7TH TO 10TH.

10. After topping up with AVGAS and Oil Fuel from the R.F.A. WAVE SOVEREIGN I proceeded alongside the pontoon wharf at 1545. H.M.S. NEWCASTLE flying your flag was secured on the other side of the pontoon.

KURE TO THE OPERATIONAL AREA 10TH TO 11TH.

11. I proceeded at 0900 on the 10th and while in the swept channel eight aircraft were flown off to Iwakuni for Compass Swinging.

12. Shimonoseki Strait was again traversed at night and at 0700 on the 11th the U.S. Destroyer WEDDERBURN joined as planeguard in time to take part in a close range firing at a sleeve target in Area George.

13. There was a strong gusty northerly wind blowing as the eight aircraft from Iwakuni were landed on, although the pilots handled the conditions without apparent trouble I had no hesitation in deferring further flying and finally in cancelling it when no improvement was evident.

14. At 2040 a signal was received that U.S.S. CHATTERER, 90 miles to the eastward, was making water and in need of immediate assistance. WEDDERBURN was detached to assist and departed at a speed that showed keen regard for the fact that CHATTERER was carrying her mail.

15. SYDNEY entered the Operational Area at 2230 and proceedings until the 23rd have been reported separately in my letter O20/2E/5 of 24th December.

OPERATIONAL AREA TO KURE 23RD TO 24TH.

16. On the morning of the 23rd a sleeve target firing was carried out and on completion it had been planned to carry out strikes on Japanese Airfields. However, repeated requests to the Japanese Airfield Defence Force for a clearance for these strikes were not replied to and finally one large serial was flown in a strike against the Unit defended by a C.A.P. of Sea Furies.

17. The Commanding Officer of the U.S.S. TINGEY, Commander W. Westhoff was transferred by Helicopter and witnessed the day's flying at close quarters.

18. At 1630 the destroyers McDERMUTT and TINGEY were detached for Sasebo. SYDNEY made a night passage of the Shimonoseki Straits and secured alongside No. 4 berth, Kure at 0810 on the 24th. H.M.S. CONCORD, H.M.S. KANIERE and FUKAKI and H.M.A.S. MURCHISON were in harbour.

AT KURE 24TH TO 27TH.

19. An excellent Christmas spirit prevailed among the ships at Kure. My Gunnery Officer was "requested" by the Ship's Company to relieve the jetty sentry. He appeared with a Sergeant Major's moustache and a Bandsman's Cap and to the great delight of the Ship's Companies of all ships, gave an exhibition of rifle drill and marching which did much, subsequently, to improve the smartness and efficiency of the jetty sentries.

/20. The Blue Jacket Band....

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20. The Blue Jacket Band which has made great progress over the past few weeks, gave a recital at the Naval Base Hospital on Christmas Day.

KURE TO HONG KONG 27TH TO 31ST.

21. With H.M.S. CONCORD in company I sailed at 0700 on 27th for HONG KONG via Bungo Suido.

22. U.S.S. SAIPAN assumed the title and duties of C.T.U. 95.1.1. at 2359I on the 27th.

23. Flying operations were carried out on passage and it is with great regret that I have to report that on the morning of the 29th a Sea Fury piloted by Acting Sub Lieutenant M.J. BEARDSALL, R.N. crashed into the sea about 8 miles ahead of the ship shortly after take off. Other aircraft were on the scene of the accident within two minutes but only small pieces of wreckage were recovered and the pilot must be presumed killed.

24. A commemoration to pay tribute to this Officer was held on the Flight Deck at 1630 and this was followed by a Church Service. I was much impressed with the general atmosphere and complete sincerity of the Ship's Company on this occasion.

25. CONCORD was detached at 1530 for Sasebo.

26. High gusty wind conditions in the Formosa Straits made flying inadvisable on the 30th and after taking off 12 aircraft to Kaitak on the 31st the ship anchored in the Eastern Dangerous Goods anchorage, Hong Kong at 1010.

AT HONG KONG 31ST.

27. After embarking AVGAS and MOGAS I weighed and proceeded to No. 2 Buoy securing at 1730.

MACHINERY.

28. Main and Auxiliary Machinery have performed satisfactorily.

X 29. The Catapult main reevings were renewed on 18th December due to normal wear and tear. The Catapult had carried out 1470 heavy and 67 light shots since last renewal of acceleration and retardation wires in August, 1953. Main Engine Revolution Indicators, Maker Chadburn Patent Hord Mechanical Mk.1 have not been giving satisfactory service and repeated adjustments and repairs have not produced reliability above 30%. Consequently "Manoeuvring revolutions" have necessarily been a matter of guesswork under some conditions. I was not prepared to accept a potentially dangerous situation of this nature and gave instructions for the transfer of the Electric revolution indicators from D.C.H.Q.2 to the Engine Rooms.

WELFARE, DISCIPLINE AND HEALTH.

30. The conduct of the Ship's Company is generally satisfactory. I consider, however, that proven offences of improperly leaving the ship, should have been prevented in many cases, and the lack of vigilance thus revealed suggests that similar cases may have gone undetected.

31. I have indicated my concern ...

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31. I have indicated my concern at the number of cases of this nature to the Chief Petty Officers and Petty Officers and that they share with me and other Officers, the responsibility of preventing such offences and thus obviating the necessity to impose consequential penalties on ratings who are misguided enough to indulge in such actions.

32. Aircraft Carriers are notoriously difficult ships in which to exercise complete control in such matters, but with a view to an improvement in this regard a roster of Duty Petty Officers has been instituted so that the Officer of the Watch may be assisted and the gangway and duty regulating staffs supervised in their measures to prevent irregularities of this nature.

HEALTH.

33. The problem of large numbers of ratings contracting Venereal Disease in the Far East appears insoluble. Propaganda Films, addresses by the Senior Medical Officer, warnings of a more practical nature by myself, easy access to Prophylactic treatment and the liberal use of Condoms does not appear to have had much influence on the incidence of these diseases. The total number of cases since 3rd November, 1953 is now 145.

34. I am in agreement with my Medical Officer who is of the opinion that the only method of controlling Venereal Disease is to be in a position to control the source of infection, i.e., the control of the Prostitutes

RECREATION.

35. During the month no opportunities occurred for deck games at sea, but physical training was carried out as a matter of routine. Tombola has proved very popular during the evenings.

36. In harbour games of rugby, soccer, hockey and Australian Rules football were played. Soccer and Hockey teams met with mixed success, while the ship's Rugby team has won all of its games in this area.

I have the honour to be

Sir,

Your obedient servant,



(G.C. Oldham)
CAPTAIN.