

LETTERS FROM A FISH TO HIS ADMIRAL

BEING BRITANNIA NEWSLETTERS 1-20

17th November 1953 – 9th April 1954

**from Acting Captain J S Dalglish, Royal Navy
to Rear Admiral Connoly Abel Smith, Royal Navy
(temporarily absent with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on
board the S.S. GOTHIC for the Commonwealth tour of 1953/4)**

COMMISSIONING BRITANNIA

The following notes and letters were written by Acting Captain J S Dalglish, the Officer in charge of Commissioning BRITANNIA, and getting her ready for Royal service, between November 1953 and April 1954. They were written to Rear Admiral Conolly Abel Smith who was on SS Gothic, in temporary use as a Royal Yacht, for The Queen's Commonwealth Tour 53/54. Upon his return to the UK, Admiral Abel Smith would then become in charge of BRITANNIA, as the first Flag Officer Royal Yachts (FORY).

Throughout his career Captain Dalglish was known as FISH. We have a copy of his autobiography – Life Story of a Fish.

Prologue

SOME RANDOM THOUGHTS ON “BRITANNIA” AT THE BEGINNING.

Selection

Officers were nominated by Flag Officer Royal Yachts after personal interviews, after which approval was formally given from the Palace.

Royal Yachtsmen (who were ranked as ‘Riggers’ in V&A, but with us they became just ‘Yachtsmen’), were all volunteers in response to an AFO in 1953. About 1,000 names came up and we began, of course, with examination of Service Certificates from which any who were not VG Superior were eliminated (although I seem to remember some of our Stokers were VG Satisfactory because of numbers). We Commanders – self, (E), (L), (S) and Surgeon – interviewed the rest at the three Home Ports and made our selection. You can imagine our problems in choosing between Chief Writers, CERAs, and others, but everyone was a volunteer and everyone personally selected. It was quite a job!

Uniform

Yachtsmen have always worn an odd uniform where there is a silk bow at the back of the trousers and the jumper or top part is tucked in. Their badges of rank are white and they have the ‘Royal Yacht’ flash on their shoulders. These we had to negotiate with the appropriate authorities and then we had to invent a “working dress” and for this we chose a Royal Yacht flash in the middle front of the flannel. I can't remember what they wore when it was cold! When they were on deck they all wore gym shoes.

Silence

Everything in the Yacht is done in complete silence. We used no SRE or other broadcasting device for getting orders round the vessel, but instead the telephone etc below decks, and signs and signals above. One of our early tasks was to train our yachtsmen in this. I shall always remember in RNB Portsmouth where our crew were just assembled for a talk from me and Number One got them all to rise in perfect silence with the first of many signals. I introduced several gimmicks in the signalling orders. Wood hand-held pads, painted red one side for STOP and green the other for HOIST or GO or whatever. I made all Officers become proficient in hand semaphore like signalmen do. We used a “G” flag on a small staff

to replace the normal “G” on a bugle for dress ship, lower gangways, and so on. Perhaps the craftiest idea was the Red Hot Notice Boards, three in number to carry the urgent order like “Away boat at...”, Enter Harbour and fall in at...” attention to which was drawn by a coloured disc in various strategic points (by Heads, Galley etc) which indicated “Go at once to Red Hot notice board for orders. One forgets how much noise goes on in a ship until one has to stop it all!

The Yacht herself

She was never open to visitors in our time. She was open to The Press in the Pool of London – the Royal public rooms but not anything private. Casual Wardroom guests always wanted to see round but NO, SORRY.

The after ladders, for the Royal party, were most difficult to handle and I sincerely hope they are easier now. After a visit to Gozo after leaving Malta we had to ask Her Majesty to return by a forward ladder because we were off to sea and did not want to hang around while getting the ruddy thing in and closing the large door.

There are no scuppers above the waterline and no pipes whatever which discharge above water. This meant no gash chute of course and instead a device called a Triturator by the galley which was supposed to crush and mangle up tins, boxes and all. But it didn’t and we had to hold gash until after dark and then have a chute after all!

There are centralised arrangements for sewage disposal, one for the Royal apartments and one for the rest. This crafty device was a kind of cess-pit amidships above the keel which discharged when full or allowed to.

We had an excellent laundry, the crew of which did training in the Palace White Heather one. I was always so impressed with the devices for stiff shirts and collars.

We had problems with “singing propellers” which at certain speeds were very noisy and I forget how John Brown’s cured them. I well remember the Bandmaster with his violin in the tiller flat helping decide what was the key note!

Talking of propellers, I must admit to a mishap. During the work-up I found a convenient mooring buoy in an inlet down the Clyde which I could use for our very first securing to a single buoy. I approached it too fast – being used to a Destroyer’s astern power – and hit it. Then it scraped right down our starboard side and appeared (sighs of relief) astern. Months later in the Med when we were stopped (perhaps for hands to Bathe) either General Boy Browning (PP’s Comptroller) or Mark Milbank (Master of the Household) looking over the side remarked on a slightly bent starboard propeller – I never let on!

Work Up

I might mention the fun we had in planning how to Dress Ship, which was of course something that had to be done as a matter of routine on securing in harbour and coincidental with lowering boats, getting out booms and all. How to hoist using the Royal Deck above HM’s Cabin without her hearing. How to have flags out of sight beforehand. The funnel is covered with some sort of device for removing smuts from the smoke and we would place the unfortunate Yeoman up at the top of the funnel with the hoist for the Fore

to Main which would emerge as if by magic when the "G" flag was lowered. It worked well even if the Yeoman was almost asphyxiated!

Royal Duty

Milk was important for the Royal Children and I remember before we set out on our first spell of Royal Duty that I met the farmer's wife who brought the stock for thirty days to go in our Cool Room. She told me that they had put a similar amount into storage at the farm and intended to drink a pint every day that it was drunk aboard, just to confirm that it was all right.

Lifeguards. When I went to see General Boy Browning at the Palace I always remember him saying he thought the responsibility I was going to have when the Royal children embarked was too much for a chap of my rank! I assured him that I would take good care of them as for the Yacht that was my responsibility anyway. I detailed four 'Lifeguards', two seamen and two stokers, of whom one was to be with each child when on deck during daylight.

(the reason for selecting two stokers was that when entering and leaving harbour all seamen were needed).

Final Thoughts

While building Britannia we were anxious to have a Stage, with curtains and all, for erection on the forecastle because we had been led to believe that the Royal Family enjoyed ship's company concerts.

There is no Chaplain among the complement of Officers. I took services as a Captain does, and the Admiral likewise when he assumed command including, of course, when Her Majesty was embarked – and attended.

HM brings her Naval Doctor with her, and I think he is a surgeon, so the Yacht doctor is an anaesthetist among other things.

We had no Saluting Guns. I remember a discussion on this with Mr Harrison, the Constructor. I think it was a question of top-weight when it was decided to fit a wooden bridge above the compass platform for HM when entering and leaving harbour. The Royal Bridge, below the compass platform, and the deck forward of it, where a baffle was fitted to guard HM's skirts, thus became less important. (Note to Britannia staff – in the early years a temporary wooden structure was erected on top of the Bridge roof when entering and leaving harbour to make HM more visible).

Excerpts from

LETTERS FROM A FISH TO HIS ADMIRAL

BEING BRITANNIA NEWSLETTERS 1-20

17 NOVEMBER 1953 – 9 APRIL 1954

From Acting Captain J S Dalglish (known as Fish), Royal Navy, to Rear Admiral Conolly Abel Smith, Royal Navy (temporarily absent with Her Majesty The Queen on board SS Gothic for the Commonwealth tour of 1953/54.

BRITANNIA NEWS LETTER No. 1 (Clydebank 17 Nov 1953)

Here is the first of your weekly letters I will be writing while you are away from us. I hope to include items from all departments.

2. Captain J S Dalglish was “unveiled” at a frivolous little ceremony just after midnight on the day you left us. The Tuesday that followed saw a number of turning trials, the results of which we have not yet seen. There was a high wind again so they may not have been as accurate as we had hoped.

Main Engines

3. Apart from the starboard propeller ‘singing’ the main engines and their associated auxiliaries worked remarkably well. There were very few leaks and these were of a very minor nature. Cdr (E) says this is a good point because worse had been expected in view of the rush to complete the various ranges of piping.

Evaporators

4. These were disappointing and a lot of difficulty was experienced in making the required amount of pure water. Cdr (E) is however confident that the cause of the trouble is known and that it will be put right before we go to sea again (22 Dec). It is unfortunate that the Evaporators cannot be tried in the Fitting Out Basin owing to the water being so foul.

Air Conditioning Plant

5. Owing to units and trunking not being complete in the after end of the ship, the air conditioning was not given a trial during Sea Trial. We hope to try it at sea on 22 Dec. We are not worried about its ability to do its job.

Laundry

6. On our return to Clydebank, we ran another Laundry Trial. The first had not been successful owing to the rush to complete piping the night before which prevented some machinery being tried before the Admiralty Party arrived. The second Trial was satisfactory and showed up one or two defects which are being rectified.

Refrigerators

7. These have not been tried out because the Ice Cabinet has not been completed. This Cabinet is a very poor job which is badly finished: the Inspecting Officer has refused to proceed with the trials until it is put in order. We anticipate running a full trial just before going on Christmas leave. The Cold and Cool Rooms have been tested for their insulation and are satisfactory.

General remarks on Sea Trials

8. The trials as a whole showed up in the machinery:
(a) fifty small design defects about which Engineer in Charge (E in C) has written to the firm. We think these will be put right without trouble.
(b) one hundred and thirty other defects which are being dealt with.

Opening up Machinery

9. The opening up machinery is well underway and the starboard Main Turbines are to be examined by a Turbine expert from E in C's Dept on 18 Nov. This is the turbine where bad workmanship on the astern diaphragm was complained of earlier in its life in the workshops.

Inspecting Officer for the opening up

10. Rear Admiral (E) Portsmouth is nominating John Mott as the Inspecting Officer. He will thus be in a much stronger position with the firm than before. The Engineer Overseer and Lloyds will, of course, assist and advise where necessary.

My position as Captain

11. You will be pleased to hear that I was formally congratulated on my temporary rank by the Board of Directors and invited by them to join them in the Model Room for the daily pre-lunch session.

Film and photographs

12. An excellent colour film was taken of BRITANNIA leaving Clydebank, at the Tail of the Bank and under way down the Firth, and this was shown to us last week.

Sports equipment

13. I am delighted to see that C in C P has made a grant of £60 to BRITANNIA towards curtains and electrical equipment for our stage and gramophone records. We asked for £100, so I think £60 is jolly good. For Sports gear of course we ask for a grant from the RN & RM Sports Control Board.

Notepaper

14. Dinwiddies have supplied our notepaper and we are very pleased with it and writing to all our friends!

WUP rehash

15. As you will have seen from Admiralty's signal we have to adjust our WUP a bit and do our exercises in company with a destroyer off PORTLAND instead of ROSYTH.

Signalman

16. I wrote to Captain Dawnay to make my number and to ask who he was nominating to assist us. He rang while I was away yesterday to say they haven't decided yet. In the Senior I had a long session with Cdr Seymour-Hayden of the Signal Division and heard the full story of how the (C) Officer came to be "omitted". In my opinion it was unacceptable to have a (C) Officer appointed 'for ocean cruises' only because the only accommodation for him is in the Royal Staff cabin sharing a bathroom with the Chef, and Sergeant Footman. I think it is quite wrong for a Commissioned Officer to have to do that. For that reason I think we should either have a full-time (C) Officer (perhaps instead of the 3rd Lt Cdr for the 'season' only) or not at all.

Chaplain of the Fleet

17. Having had a good run round Admiralty Whitehall yesterday, I called on the Chaplain of the Fleet and we have fixed that he will come and conduct our Dedication Service on Sunday 24 January 1954.

That is all the news that I have for you this week. We think of you often and hope you are having a nice crossing and we are longing to hear about it.

Yours sincerely,

P.S Chalked on the road outside the Yard here today :-

"Tory Government

For the poor 4/- increase in rent.

For the rich £400,000 for the Queen's Yacht.

Kick the Tories out.

C.P Meeting today 1200."

BRITANNIA NEWS LETTER No.2

Clydebank, 24th November 1953

Dear

I am leaving a large margin to these letters as I know how you love scribbling comments there! John Cryer is up here with us for a couple of days and it is nice to have him for counsel on the spot. He came down to Helensburgh to dine with Eve and me last night and we listened to the broadcast of Her Majesty's departure from London Airport. It was beautifully done by Richard Dimbleby and we were especially conscious of the occasion, with our silent thoughts very much on the next time he will describe the Queen's movements somewhere near Tower Bridge.

2. Eve and I were fortunate to be asked to the RNVR Division Christmas Dance at their HQ on Friday. We went with Captain Benson. Tony Dunhill was also there in another party. During the evening, I was shown an attractive watercolour of the 4th BRITANNIA which the RNVRs want to give to the Ward Room. It is one of a series they have in their mess and they feel that there is only one proper place for that particular one. I am frightfully pleased with it as it is the first attractive picture we have for the mess. It measures (in its frame) about 18

ins by 1 foot and I understand that we shall have to go down one drill evening for an official presentation to be made.

Dry Provision Capacity

3. Bland tells me that our capacity for dry provisions is 45 days at the very most and it looks as if we shall have to store ship every month. This sounds easy until one gets away from a Victualling Yard, the customary source of food, e.g Invergordon – where of course we plan to go in our 6th week, has no Victualling Yard.

Mess Traps

4. All the Admiral's and Ward Room mess traps are being hand-picked. Bland inspected examples on the 17th and was well pleased; he reports nice glass, fluted china for you, and blue-badged china for the WR.

Store rooms and offices

5. Bland says these are generally progressing well. We began storing ship last Thursday (19th) even though the Navel Store, which we are filling first, was not completed. We got permission to do so and yesterday the Store was inspected and accepted. Bland is concerned about lack of Victualling Office space. This is meant to be in the Issue Room which is very small so it seems that the Stores CPO (v) will have to operate in the Clothing Store which is most unsatisfactory because it troglodytises him. It is also bad from the security of slops angle. It seems to me that DGS – who has done a lovely job of work in planning the galleys and all that – has let the Pusser down on this matter.

Opening up machinery

6. Mott tells me that all goes well in this line. You will be amused to hear that the Firm have renewed the astern diaphragm. Mott is delighted as it justifies him.

Electrical wiring

7. Mr Hoggan, the charming Warship Electrical Superintendent Scottish Area, told me the other day that he was pressing the Firm hand over the shocking workmanship put into the wiring of the ship. Briefly, there is little that can be done because the electricians were not allowed by other departments to get cracking as soon as they had planned; as a result they were pressed for time all along and chargemen did not have the time to plan their cable runs properly. Thus one sees a lot of crossing which is unsightly and inefficient.

8. Hoggan said today that the radio wiring is well behind time. There was a "buffer period" between main completion of shop (18th Dec) and acceptance (7th Jan) but now even that is being eaten into for Testing and Tuning and what not. Today we have one week between programme date of completion of radio wiring and the ship being delayed. Our fingers are crossed.

Your cabin

9. Dunhill reports the lighting plot for your cabin is taking shape and the indirect lighting in the Day Cabin is being installed. Rowans are making two standard lamps also for the day cabin. Mr Wood in J.B's Electrical Drawing Office says you said you would provide the shades for these two lamps. Dunhill regards this statement with suspicion and asks would you please confirm it?

Sewage Plant

10. Alternative electrical starters for the Sewage Plant pump motors have been approved. This removes a considerable source of anxiety because the plant worked during C.S.T at such a pace that had we retained only one starter there would have been no time for maintenance between the tank emptying and filling again.

Radio in barges

11. Michael Parker sent me a letter to say HRH had approved that idea that our barges should be fitted with Pye Radio/Telephone. He recommends the addressee, Lt Cdr Foster of Messrs Pye Ltd, to contact Mr Harrison. I have heard no more than this.

Letter to P.L.A

12. I directed Knollys to reply to Cdr Coleman at the P.L.A concerning some queries Coleman had about freeboard of the Royal Barge etc. He had done so and has sent a copy to Madden, so that you can see what was said.

(C) officer

13. Captain Dawnay has lent us Lt Cdr JBD Miller from 1st Jan for about two months. I have put Knollys in touch with Miller and will be in a position to tell CSS later when exactly we want Miller on board.

Radio Trials

14. I have been let down nicely by that b---- Mace. He has just remembered a letter dated August saying we needed 5 days for Radio Trials before Acceptance. And this after he had told me many times our Acceptance would occupy one day only. Now we have to rehash the programme to suit – and it is with Their Lordships for approval too. It is very annoying, but rather typical of the efficiency and co-operation of the Admiralty's overseer here.

Completion Programme

15. A meeting has been held today to produce a third shot at the completion programme. J.B & Co get so steadily behind programmes that such re-hashing becomes necessary every two weeks or so. In case I have not told you before, my present plan is to commission with the Advance Party (about 14 offices and 60 ratings) p.m on Thursday 7th Jan and to take the Main Body (about 7 and 170) a.m. next day. Our official commissioning day would be 7th Jan though the White Ensign would not be hoisted until the 11th (subject to successful Acceptance Trials – excluding Radio ones.)

Equipment for the stage

16. Referring to para 13 of my last letter we have had a stroke of good luck over the Curtain of our stage. We asked Rowan & Boden's to make us one for £30 but Major Rowan is giving us one costing £100 but charging us our £30 only. I reckon we shall always have to have on our programmes "Curtain by R&B" don't you?!

Miscellaneous

17. I showed the Captain and Commander & Abbotsinch and their wives round last night.

18. I have the Messman's Contract before me for scrutiny and it looks a good one. I shall be seeing him when I am in V&A on the 30th for our final interviews.

That seems to be all for this week – and judging from your programme all until New Zealand. We all wish you a successful and happy embarkation of Her Majesty on the 27th and a smooth passage across the Pacific. We shall be thinking of you in the terms of our signal 1009217.

Yours sincerely,

BRITANNIA NEWS LETTER No. 3

Clydebank, 1st December 1953

Dear

I heard from John Cryer that the last mail to catch you in Fiji will close at the Palace on the 8th and also that my letters sent last week and B N L No 2 are unlikely to have left UK yet. What a pity, but I continue with the latest news of this week and you will get B N L No 4 by the same mail as this.

Progress

2. The lower booms were rigged in place last week but the after ladders have still not yet appeared. The pitch is being scraped off the decks and a wood planer is taking 1/32 inch off the Sun and Royal Decks. They look lovely where it has been and later it will be followed up with a grinder to finish off the surface. The riveters are back onboard; they are riveting the metal casing inside the Sun Lounge and sundry stiffeners to counter vibration noted during C.S.T. The radio tops to the trucks of the masts are in place and look smart in the golden gleaminess. The centreline window of the Royal Charthouse is in place. Telephones are positioned all around the ship.

3. Our Storing Party are working hard. No 1 Provision Room (mainly flour) is full and sealed. The All Blacks were playing in Glasgow last Wednesday and we gave leave to a number of the sailors who wanted to go – on the understanding that they finished their task for the day before noon. They finished at 0945!!

Boats badges

4. We are delighted with the boats' badges which have been supplied from Chatham Dockyard. They are cast metal and beautifully finished and painted and altogether so much nicer than the flat tin things on the boats of V & A.

Royal Staff

5. Milbank sent me for a comment a letter he will be sending to Sir Michael Adeane concerning people who will be coming out in BRITANNIA, transferring from GOTHIC and returning in BRITANNIA. I was very pleased of the opportunity of looking at it and I have sent my comments off today after consultation with John Cryer and Mr Parry in V & A yesterday. I expect you will see the finished product when it reaches the Private Secretary.

Rolls Royce

6. The Crown Equerry has also written me. I thought at first it was about horses!! He had not heard that we had a Garage and was enquiring what steps needed to be taken to embark the Rolls. I have explained the situation and asked whether it is in fact envisaged that we should take a car out to the Med. If so there is a bit to be cleared up such as a crane ashore and a suitable landing craft, also accommodation for the chauffeur. I have offered to go and see him on 18th Dec after I have seen Milbank at 1430 and General Browning at 1500.

Ward Room

7. I have asked Milbank to clarify for me just who of the Royal Staff and Household Officials will expect to mess in the Ward Room. It is a tricky point which I consider needs a firm solution at the beginning of the life of this new Royal Yacht. We can now seat 28 only. With you and Mr Parry away when Royalty are onboard that leaves 8 spaces. Lt Cdr D-H and his two WRNS cypherenes take 3 automatically. I have suggested that to ask us to feed in two sittings at such a time is wrong and anyway it seems wrong to me if certain people of the Royal Staff class themselves as equal to the Officers of the Royal Yacht, - it lowers the whole status. For the same reason I personally think it is wrong for Lt Cdr D-H to occupy a staff cabin alongside the Head Chef and the Sergeant Footman. We must naturally do whatever is directed from above but if you agree with my sentiments perhaps an opportunity might arise for you to help draw the line at a suitable level. Why, for instance, (as I hear rumoured) should the Queen's Hairdresser mess with us? Or the Court Postmaster?

Type 45 radar

8. Cowburn rang and told me that DNE was probably going to oppose the fitting of the Type 45 on the grounds that 974 was perfectly adequate, already wired and working and tried at sea by the RN.

C in the C Med

9. The COS to C in C Med wrote to enquire on what date and from what port we should sail for Malta. Doubtless we shall be asked to bring something out. I hope it's not horses! (Or have I got horses on the brain?)

Last Interview Board

10. Talking of horses reminds me we had our Final Interview Board yesterday. We have accepted a Ldg Sig who is or was a member of the RNPA; it seemed he did not play polo but rides a lot. We saw about 15 ratings and ranks and accepted about 70%. Many were the last "VS"s to get back from abroad and we were pleased. Now the Ship's Company is complete except for one AB who Chatham (inefficient to the last) forgot to send for interview. He is due up at Clydebank shortly. Although I miss my connection at Waterloo I arrived just in time to say goodbye to Corporal Rogers as he left. The Marines we accepted yesterday were on the whole good.

Patricia

11. I forgot to say that when I saw DOD at the Admiralty the other day he mentioned PATRICIA escorting us up the Thames and I saw a letter last week giving the Admiralty's ruling – that she must go in front. DOD had not heard of the incident when PATRICIA nearly fouled SURPRISE at the Review. As I wasn't there either I could only give it third hand.

The 3rd Lt Cdr

12. By the time you get this you will most likely have had a signal from me or NA2SL concerning Cunningham. If he becomes available for BRITANNIA – as at present seems likely- you will be told the names of the alternatives and I will signal the one I recommend so that you can get the necessary approval for the appointment to be made. Would you please signal that when the time comes.

Electrical Progress

13. As an example of what I mentioned last week about electrics going slowly, today's Preliminary Radio Inspection has had to be put back to 15th December and the Final one to 14th January (i.e after we commission and a few days before we are due to start the Radio Sea Trials). I have better news however about the Radio Sea Trials; thanks to a timely arrival of Knollys at a meeting at ASRE he was able to persuade the technicians to accept us doing the trials concurrently with the Measured Mile runs. So we'll do them in the week of 18th Jan (WE HOPE).

I was thrilled to hear at lunch today (in John Brown News Bulleting) that Her Majesty had paid a visit at sea to SHEFFIELD. What a great pleasure that will have given to the Ship's Company. Also it means you must be having good weather so far and that too is good news. What astonishing scenes there seem to have been in the Canal Zone and what a marvellous reception for Her Majesty.

Yours sincerely,

Dear

I write this week on a Friday so as to be sure to catch you at Fiji. I am sending in a separate envelope to you our Christmas card for Her Majesty – sending it that way to avoid the possibility of it being intercepted at the Palace and not forwarded. Would you please deliver for us if you approve of it.

2. This has been a most hectic week and I find myself almost glued to my desk, answering the telephone, writing, talking and so on. No 1 has of course taken over my detailed job of Commander so that all the Tests and Inspections are done by him. He keeps me well in the picture – facilitated greatly of course by him being in the same office as me. John Cryer arrives for good on Tuesday, the day after we expect the office to move onboard. In the baggage coming with the office will be the Ward Room silver and the pictures for the Ward Room and outside your cabin. I hope you won't forget my request for the two Racing Yacht BRITANNIA photographs. They remain in V & A until I hear from you.

The Big Rabbit

3. You know of my plans for a good stage on the FX don't you. Mr Martin's drawings have laid for some time on Mr Rannie's desk but recently he gave the approval for the stage to be made as a 'rabbit' because it was obvious that we were keen on it. So a beauty has been made for us – out of the kindness of J.B & Co's heart and I am extremely pleased. You already know of the Curtain (B N L No 2 para 16). We are hoping to be able to have a reasonable Concert Party in case Her Majesty would care to see it. Anyway the stage and its equipment should look good even if the quality of the actors does not come up to their surroundings.

Presentation

4. Those of us standing by here have decided to make a small presentation to J.B & Co for the luncheon room. We are looking into a modern gas-operated cigarette lighter and will pay for it on a Stripe cum Time Here basis being computed by Cdr (L).

Lay Apart Store

5. We are having trouble over the Lay Apart Store. Perhaps you are being told about it by John Cryer. The last move was a recommendation by A.S. that FORY should ask COMBRAX to remove his Navy Week Gear from the old Royal Yacht Store and give the space back to us. Commodore Stirling-Hamilton rang me on Monday and as a result J Cryer and Sawdy met the Navy Day chap on the spot. Agreement was not reached and poor old John is having to do a lot of negotiation on the telephone on my behalf. Combrax is trying to wheedle us into the position of finding alternatives for our gear. At one time John and I were thinking of a signal to you for help but we want to avoid this if we can as it savours of going behind Commodore's back and anyway you'll have your own bothers on the other side of the globe. You may find however that we think we have to ask you to take a strong line and say "The Royal Yacht has always needed a private Lay Apart Store. The existing one "belongs" to the Royal Yacht (so A.S admits) and we need it back." The trouble is that we don't want to injure Navy Days in any way. The impasse is quite friendly (so far.)

Strike

6. There was a 24 hour strike here on Wednesday. The men are all back now and I think everyone who was here on Wednesday rather enjoyed the opportunity of getting round to things they might not otherwise have done. Mr Rannie for instance had a big blitz with his Foremen onboard.

7. A bit of gossip – Mr Rannie sacked ten men recently for being absent from place of work at 1655. They were sheet-iron workers. He is being sued for not giving a Warning which the Labour Exchange (or maybe the Union) says should have been done. You can imagine what Mr Rannie has to say about it. I like him.

Radar

8. Although I said in B N L No 3 para 8 that we seem to be losing out on the Type 45 set, I hear now from Cdr(L) that it is likely to be approved as an A & A and perhaps fitted in March.

Chamois

9. DNE is however enjoying himself disapproving of other ideas also. Our request for our outfit of twelve chamois leathers to be increased to 100 so that the ship's side, chromium, windows, screens, and all that can be finished off with due regard to the polish that will be on them when we commission has been (or I am told by Cowburn will be) turned down. I am most disappointed. We will do our best with cotton waste and clearing cloths but may have to try again if they don't work. The old V & A always had chamois leather for ships side and boats, also sponges.

Royal Barge

10. The Royal Barge arrived by road wearing a sort of night-dress the other day. Chief Painter DORE travelled with it on one of those horrid trailer things one meets on the winding bits of the Great North Road. I am very pleased with it.

Fireplace

11. Mr Paton wants to move the fireplace in your Day Cabin 12 inches to port. This would put it between two frames and thereby save 5 inches or so sticking out. Mr Graham would not approve it without me taking the responsibility because you had taken such personal care over the drawings and lay-out. I approved because I believe it to be much better. It also brings the fireplace more central in the space between your curtain and the port bulkhead. I hope you don't mind.

Programme

12. I mentioned confidentially in a private letter to you that Mr Harrison told me the Contractors were a long way behind in the Royal Apartments. Sun Lounge and Main Stairway were the chief stumbling blocks. He now says he has no objection to me saying this to you in my weekly letter. The Controller has ruled that there shall be no delay in us leaving Clydebank. I am of course delighted. We will commission then on 7th and leave on

the 11th. Any work that the Contractors (mainly Hamptons) have not then finished will be completed by them while we are in Portsmouth Dockyard in March. I have been asked to alter the programmes so that we get to Pompey earlier and we spent a hectic day doing this and getting the draft off for typing before the Office shut down in V & A. I have taken the week at Rosyth for Vibration Generator Trials out of the programme and we have a weekend there now only. We arrive at Portsmouth on Friday 26th February and that gives five clear weeks for the work to be done and the sixth to me for cleaning the ship up before departure.

13. You will of course receive the official copy of the letter to Admiralty.

Games

14. The papers say you all played Deck Hockey in GOTHIC yesterday. I wonder could you give me an idea of what games and so on are popular with Her Majesty and HRH so that we can have them laid on.

Lieut Cdr

15. Lt Cdr A.D. Cassidi is being called in (for interview by me) on 18th Dec in addition to Cunningham. The latter is now being delayed turning over his job in Washington and may not be available at all. NA2SL rang me about it all. He asked if we could accept the Lt Cdr late in January and I said sorry no.

I will post this off today to catch the mail of the 8th. I hope you will have another from me by Christmas but if not – in addition to the sentiments in our official card to you (there may be something underneath the frivolous stuck-in slips) – may I wish you a very happy Christmas and repeat the thought that is so often in our minds that we all long to have you back.

Yours sincerely,

P.S A frivolous and not at all respectful rhyme we thought of for Her Majesty's Christmas card –

O lucky Queen
In all that hot
While we are standing
By your Yacht.

We're making it
All span and spick
For when we come
To you up pick.

Dear

It is a long time since I last wrote, owing to sending it off early to catch you at Fiji, yet I don't seem to have much to talk about today. We are all looking forward to hearing how you are getting on since you left England.

Progress

2. Seeing that we are supposed to be completed by the time we go down the river for the Sea Trial next Tuesday, the ship still looks astonishingly backward. I am however not worried because such miracles were worked to get her ready last time that I'm confident that it will be the same this.

3. The fold line is being put on. All the decks are now planed - it's rather horrifying really to see so many muddy boots walking over them now they're so smart but doubtless the firm will sandpaper them before we take over. The teak rail round the bulwarks and guardrail is almost completed and the whip aerials are all on. The Chart House is still a shambles like the flag deck.

4. The panelling of the Royal Apartments is coming on fine. Harrison was here for two days last week and he was pleased. I gather he has been chivvying Hamptons and the rest and by getting material for them with priority it is possible that there may be less than originally expected to do at Portsmouth.

Visit

5. The First Lord came on Friday accompanied by the Controller. He was as nice as always and had a full go over the Yacht.

Officers

6. Bailey has joined. Captain Townsend rang again about the Lt Cdr yesterday and the latest form is that he now recommends CUNNINGHAM rather than CASSIDI but the former will not be back in time to be interviewed by me. Apparently he (Cunningham) was taking ages to turn over his job in Washington but in view of NA2SL's recommendation and that fact that I know you want to have him I have accepted him on your behalf for interview. He will therefore be told to leave USA 23rd Dec to arrive here 1st Jan and join when we commission. I am going to see Captain Townsend when I am in town on Friday 18th as he asked me to do so but from what he said on the telephone I am convinced that we are right in accepting Cunningham like this rather than calling in doubtfuls for interview. A signal asking for your approval will be despatched today.

7. I have asked for Miller, the Lt Cdr (C), to join at Clydebank on Sunday 10th Jan. We will put him in the Director of Music's cabin.

Berth in Portsmouth

8. I have accepted the inevitable, after a request from Harrison, and agreed to a dockyard berth alongside when we get to Portsmouth. It will expedite any work that has to be done onboard.

Gibraltar

9. A point Harrison raised was the question of the brow at Gib. I wonder if you will consider it worthy of re-consideration that we should call at Gib just to check on the arrangements there. I think it would be a good idea but by now you may have despatched to me my directive about the Programme out to Malta.

Your Office (Ashore)

10. The Office (Ashore) is now installed in BRITANNIA. It is in the Ships' Office because that was ready before the Admirals' one but it makes a lot of difference having the facilities up here for dealing with correspondence. John Cryer is here too of course and as he will be reporting to you in his letter I will not send news of his department.

Allowances for lodgings

11. There is considerable discontent among the sailors about the allowances they are getting for lodgings. I will not bother you with the details but roughly it is illustrated by the CPO Tel and the Stores PO who both have the same digs. The landlady charges them both £3 per week and they both have lunch in the Canteen here for 2/3 per day. The CPO Tel, having been here longer than three months from commissioning day, gets Lodging Allowance which is 23.1.10 per week to cover Landlady and dinners and it is taxable. Able rates, in lodgings mostly at the same price, get 2.13.1 per week. The men are not at all happy about it. We have been in touch with the RND paymasters and have been holding our horses because there was a Test Case of a similar nature being fought in Portsmouth. Now I have decided to raise it myself and today a letter has done to Combrex Portsmouth. Having discussed it on Friday with the Controller (who told me to go to him for help if I was in trouble after you left) I have also written him.

Mess Committee

12. You will receive your own copy of the minutes of our most important meeting last Wednesday. We approved expenditure of around £50 and settled the last of our mess business before commissioning.

Commissioning

13. We have had a great co-operation from the R.N.B rail people with the special train for our Main Body. It leaves Pompey 1830 Thurs 7th to arrive Glasgow (for breakfast) 0630 and Clydebank 0930. Meanwhile we will commission with the Advance Party (about 60 strong) after the Final Inspection on 7th Jan. I gather that the Controller himself may be doing the Inspection.

Rail Strike

14. We are very concerned about the impending Rail Strike called for Sunday night. As we have to be here for the Sea Trial on 22nd it may mean we shan't get home for Christmas. I am toying with the idea of cutting down on our numbers of rating for the 22nd, sending the ones cut down off before the Strike is due with orders to get back by book or crook by 6th Jan, and sending the rest after the Sea Trial with orders to report to RNB if the strike is still on or on the 6th. The officers will of course be unlucky both ends going late and having to get back early. Perhaps the Strike will not materialise after all.

London

15. On Friday I have appointments with NA2SL a.m and with General Browning and Milbank p.m at the Palace. Next day I go to Pompey to call on the Commodore and address the Main Body of the Ships Company, then back here Saturday night train.

Presentation glass

16. The glass tray of the set that was presented by J.B & Co has been engraved by Whistler and returned. The Firm do not want the responsibility of getting all the glasses back here to put onboard us when we commission (for fear of breakages, also the stowage is not yet completed) and would prefer we got some from the Palace to Portsmouth later on. I agree with this so we have arranged to take the tray only, suitably packed, when we commission and fetch the rest later on.

Film

17. I forget whether or not I have told you before of the lovely colour film made by the Firm's photographer of BRITANNIA doing her C.S.T. I saw an edited version last week. It lasts 10 to 15 minutes and I gather that the plan is to finish up the remaining length of film on the 22nd and despatch the film to you in GOTHIC in case Her Majesty would like to see it. I have recommended that they do not rush it because they are unlikely to get it to you before end January and it would then be available to be see between New Zealand and Australia if desired.

That seems to be all. We are all rather harassed here but bearing up all right. I completed the writing of my orders and they should be typed any day now. John Mott has got his done too. John Cryer is on his now I know. No 1 has most work to do at the moment drafting things for commissioning day and all that but now Bailey and Eve are here his load may be eased a bit.

I hope you find New Zealand a lovely place. If you meet my late Captain Godfrey Brewer who is now in the Services Liaison Mission would you please give him and his wife love from my wife and me. I hope 1954 is a Happy New Year.

Yours sincerely,

Dear

I am thankful to hear that B N L No. 4 at least has reached you. I discovered last week that everything I had written you was going by sea from the G.P.O. This was owing to a misunderstanding that c/o GPO was as good as c/o the Palace. It apparently isn't, though I can't think how No.4 got to you as it went the same way as the rest. I hope our Christmas cards were also received.

Visit to Admiralty

2. NA2SL had a long talk with me about our officers and then took me into the 2nd Sea Lord who I had not met before. He was very interested in everything of course and asked particularly about the Laundry crew. As a result of that I am raising a paper with a letter for you to send him with thanks for what he did. From all that I have heard there is no doubt whatever that our crew has had a wonderful period of training at the White Heather and they ended up doing alone and unaided Her Majesty's washing before she left the country.

3. Admiral Russell said we had irrevocably insulted the Naval Laundry Service and I replied that I thought it was indeed insulting what we saw was so awful.

Visit to the Palace

4. Here I met the Crown Equerry and discussed the Rolls. He has sent it up to Manchester (I think he said) for it to be tried with the Platform but I understand that DNC is going to accept the Garage to be tried with only a token equivalent weight for the davits. As I am informed that the clearance is only 1/4 inch between car roof and ventilation trunk this seems risky but as DNC, knowing my views quite clearly in writing, has bypassed me in arranging this I am letting it be. Sir Dermott will send me the Rolls to Portsmouth to try for myself and by then the ship will be mine and no-one from DNC can tell me how to try out the Garage to my own satisfaction. The man Peake is the problem in the woodpile.

5. Milbank, Sir Frederick Browning and I had a profitable discussion of BRITANNIA's programme and the accommodation of everyone onboard and in March they will come down with a party of about twelve to have a look at everything. I like the General very much and I am looking forward very much to having him onboard for the trip out.

Meeting with C in C Med's Representative

6. As I have reported separately, by the same mail as this, the B.N.O was sent by air from Malta to discuss certain details with me. Unfortunately, the Malta grape-vine was not working well and he clocked in at V & A instead of up here! Luckily he had a spare dry day before having to fly back so he and I met for lunch at the Senior on the following day. He said gaily our business would take five minutes but after half an hour after luncheon we found it necessary to meet again in the evening and then spent two whole hours. It was most useful in many ways and it fully justified the wrath of my sister-in-law at whose farewell party I arrived disgracefully late. She has gone to Canada to get married (at last.)

Portsmouth

7. I then dashed down to Portsmouth and on Saturday morning called on the Commodore. We had a long talk about things. RNB really has done us proud in every way and in every department, by contrast, Levenport and Chatham have been disgracefully inefficient and casual about our affairs. It is I suppose because the Royal Yacht does not belong to them, or is that taking a charitable view I wonder.

8. It is very thrilling that the wheels are turning fast and our commissioning is very near. Our sailors assembled on Thursday and have all been measured for their uniforms. All but six will start with the new Crown on their sleeve flash and of course it is on all cap-ribbons. Out of the twelve men we nominated for voice tests, Cdr (L) found six acceptable for the Telephone Exchange so the four of them we have told off should be all right. Two of our men are doubtful medically, otherwise all have turned up and are now on leave until noon on the day they join our special train (7th Jan).

9. I addressed them in the VICTORY Theatre on Saturday. I had at first thought of speaking for 5 or 10 minutes but they were so keen and interested that I went on for 40!! My main theme was to give them stuff to make their chests swell with pride and to let them have something to "shoot a line" to their girl-friends about. The Coxswain remarked on how they had markedly improved in smartness during the three days they were in PNB and I am just longing to see them onboard and on the job. We shall start right from scratch with no verbal noise onboard – in fact No.1 brought them all to their feet on my arrival by a very small signal. Very impressive. Woodford came along and listened from the back – he said he wanted to be in at the beginning of the new line – and it was grand to see him there. He and Sandy really have been wonderful in their enthusiasm for BRITANNIA.

10. Then up to London again in time to watch Wales and the All Blacks on TV. As you will be in New Zealand when you receive this I must tell you that we don't think much of the All Blacks of 1953. Their backs are so weak. I don't suppose you will meet my friend Lt Colonel Andrews RNZAOO who was Manager of the "Kiwis", the Army touring team of 1945, but if so you might have a chance to tell him that the only really good player is Scott who was in his party then.

Progress

11. I am writing this at the moment on Sunday and I apologise for the nasty paper but the pussers won't let us get at the commissioning outfit of paper yet. I have not been onboard since BRITANNIA docked for her final scrape and to ship the spare propellers – now very sharp with much filed off. Mr John Brown admitted that he awaits Tuesday's Sea Trial with trepidation to see if they have got rid of the "song" of the propellers.

12. Paint is being put on everywhere and an astonishing advance is noticeable every day. The Royal Apartments in particular are being transformed from what a few days ago was not much in advance of weeks ago. Just when it will be said that the ship is completed (apart from the Royal part) I wonder. We go on leave after Tuesday's trial, leaving the Senior Engineer, Bailey, Mr Eve and the Sentry Party up here. There is plenty for them to do before No.1, Cdr(S) and the key people return on Monday 4th Jan to complete the final arrangements.

Next Letter

13. I will not write next week as I shall be parted from my typewriter but will try and set off No 7 on the eve of Commissioning. Meanwhile I will leave this open for last minute additions up to going on leave.

W.U.P

14. The Admiralty has approved out W.U.P and we are going into type with a detailed copy to send out to you. I have given you the number of the letter as requested in a signal of yours this evening but will not send copies of the missing letters you asked for because I have only kept one copy of each and I'm sure that by the time I got them done again the originals will have reached you. The CPO ltr is on leave and the l_tr completely snowed under with orders and all that.

Lay Apart Store

15. This matter seems to be amicably settled. Whether the settlement is entirely satisfactory to us will not be known until we reach Pompey.

Lodging Allowances

16. The Controller has written a nice letter in reply to my personal one to him. He says the matter (see Para 11 of B N L No 5) is of course a Joint Service one. My official letter to Combrax P has gone on from him to Admiralty.

Fuel Consumption

17. We fear that the fuel consumption may be heavy. Of course all figures are theoretical at present but for example it seems we may need 21.5 tons per day in harbour when all services including Air Conditioning are at peak load. By ourselves, it looks like 16 tons.

Team Work

18. Having been paid on Friday, one of our Ems in RN5 had £7 pinched. The coxswain organised a shilling a head contribution from the Ship's Company and £11 was raised with thus. The EM then paid for the stand-easy cup of tea for the rest. I was pleased to hear of this as I know you will be. A lot of sailors who start all friendly like that should be good.

Must stop now. The tempo is extremely fast at the moment but I suppose we shall survive. I hope you are all well and enjoying yourselves.

Yours sincerely,

Dear

I don't think any of us really know whether we are coming or going at the moment. You will understand that I expect with the wonderful day of our commissioning just tomorrow. It will affect the length of this letter and I hope that I will be excused if I am somewhat incoherent. I do however to get off something today.

Officers

2. We are all back from leave and seeming in good health except for poor Chief who has a cold. Mr Eve has departed for Portsmouth to be the right hand man – hot with all the latest orders etc. from here - to Lt Cdr Cunningham, in charge of the draft. The three Subs also travel with the Main Body tomorrow evening.

The Royal Yacht

3. Despite Hogmanay and all that that means, they have been working day and night since Sunday yet it still seems incredible that the Controller will be pleased tomorrow forenoon. No doubt a miracle will be worked tonight when the cleaners move in. Today 250 painters are slapping on paint everywhere and over the stem is a platform for the shipping of the Royal Coat of Arms. There are so many small details unfinished that, as I say, no one quite knows whether he is coming or going but we are all extremely happy and longing to move in.

Inspection

4. The Inspection is billed for 1000 and the reading of Form D 448 immediately afterwards (say 1200). As soon as the Controller moves off our sailors will move in with their bags and hammocks, stow them and then for ashore again for dinner. After dinner the party will be fully employed until late in the Dogs on embarking this and that.

Commissioning

5. As you already know, the actual commissioning takes place as above with the Advance Party. The Main Body then arrive next day and on Monday 11th we sail at 1030 for the Acceptance.

6. I really will have to stop. There is too much going on and I will send a proper B N L as soon as we settle down.

Yours sincerely,

Dear

I apologise for my dismal effort last week. You must have thought that things were properly out of hand if I myself was harassed – not to mention poor No 1 who did so much of the work, Sailey his right hand man at that time, and of course John Cryer and his stalwarts who were laying on our food and stores. Nevertheless, it was a hectic day and perhaps I was a fool to attempt to get a letter to you in the middle of it.

Inspection

2. No one seems to have suffered from overwork in spite of everything and looking back I think we had a very smooth commissioning. The Controller, in great form I thought, took nearly two hours to go round and the Yacht was looking very nice. We tried to show him what we didn't like and a lot was incomplete but by soon after 12 the Inspecting Party left the vessel and there on the jetty were our 50 or 60 Advance Party with their baggage waiting to move in. As soon as we left, they went onboard, unpacked and then went ashore again for their dinners in the Works Canteen. Meanwhile we attended the reading of Form D. 448 and we all signed at 1245. J B & Co were clearly relieved that the Controller let them off lightly and he deleted as many adverse items as he could.

3. We drank upstairs and I made the formal presentation of our gas-lighter to the Firm. A funny story comes at this point. Tony Dunhull was the lucky chap I asked to fix the job on our behalf and early the day before he heard that the plinth that had been clearly promised for the 7th had not even started. At his wits end not to let us down, he eventually took the job to the only firm in Glasgow who could do such a thing in 24 hours (or less) – J B & Co!! So after I had presented it on behalf of you and all of us I had to tell the Doctor where the plinth had come from. Some thought it particularly funny after the far from warm welcome many of us had had in the early days.

Commissioning

4. After lunch we all went onboard ourselves and I despatched the commissioning and other signals. We were very pleased with yours from GOTHIC also with one from V & A. we unpacked and settled in.

5. A terrible amount of work is still undone onboard. We have had workmen onboard every day since completion,- mostly joiners putting up tallies on doors and painters painting – and this has been a most depressing aspect of the ship. Even during meals in the Ward Room there have been frequent occasions of workmen wandering through with caps on and without so much as “By your leave”. The ship has not been our own at all. We've had to lock our cabins for fear of theft and as fast as places have been cleaned up more dirt and stuff has arrived. Even today at Tail of the Bank 49 workmen embarked (and I might say delayed our swinging for compasses by half an hour because they were late). Such things as the seats on the Royal Deck to cover the life rafts have not yet arrived, nor have the spreaders we need to lower the dinghies and Despatch Boats (they consequently remain inboard). The after bell, on the screen outside the Verandah, has not been fitted yet. All this is quite separate from the Hampton's people who are hard at it aft and who we realise have had a raw deal.

6. But enough of unsatisfactory matters. On Friday morning the main Body arrived, half an hour late at Buchanan Street for their breakfasts but on time at Clydebanks. We just got the baggage stowed below before the men appeared marching very smartly indeed considering

the noise of riveting. There was no trouble from the Press. I found after we had commissioned that among the money in my pocket were three 1953 Queen Elizabeth shillings, - surely a lucky omen.

7. It had been lovely and sunny both days but as I said a few words to the ships Company at 1800 it was raining on the forecastle so I had to be brief – perhaps just as well! Her Majesty's gracious message was wonderful to receive. Thank you for getting it through to us so that it was in time for me to read out. (We had to postpone my Address until after the workmen had left us in peace and after the Yard had closed anyway because of noise).

Entertaining

8. We had the Foremen for whisky and beer on Friday at 1145 and the Director to a more superior selection of drinks on Sunday. On Saturday we had the Bank Manager and Cashier and the three Telephone Girls, all of whom had done a great deal for us, for tea. They were the proudest people in Clydebank that day. We entertain our personal friends and a very few Service messes in the Ward Room on Friday and Saturday of this week (totals of 40 or so each day). All inviting has been by telephone or private letter and I have instructions that the word "party" was to be avoided so I hope we have been entirely discreet. One or two ill-mannered people have asked us outright when we were giving "the party" (one none other than Mr Strachan's wife) and Dr McNeill and Mr J.B were very surprised when I delivered a verbal invitation to them and explained the private nature of the drinking and the whole thing.

First events of the Commission

9. I have been very struck by the team spirit and general initiative displayed by officers and men since we started. Before we had been going one day, S/Lt Parry had a Cinema Programme organised for the first time two weeks and S/Lt (sorry Lt) Grindle knew more about the S.R.E than we ever dreamed of. Last night after fuelling there was a horrid oil flood in the Canteen Store (the cause – JB's joiners in fixing the wooden battens had screwed same right through into an adjoining oil-tank) and it took till 0230 to clear up. Volunteers from all branches turned to and helped the Stokers with great spirit, and it was a foul job too. However, as Stores CPO(V) Prickett said to me "It's nice that we can hop up for our pints of beer, Sir, on a job like this."

10. From that you see that beer is "on", in fact it was available in the Canteen the first evening. We carry one month's stock and it is 9d. per pint. After an initial rush, about 2/3rds of the S.Coy seem to be taking up their pint a day. So far it is rationed to one per head per day verbally and the Canteen Manager told not to sell more than 230 pints per night. I am hoping that the restriction will continue to be honoured.

11. We had our first formal dinner in the W.R on Saturday (yes indeed – we had planned to wait till Tuesday but we got tired of not changing properly and it seemed best to get started) and on Sunday our first Cinema Show. Cdr(L)'s arrangements were excellent, even to the extent of two projectors and continuous working.

12. Church on Sunday was on the After Seamen's mess deck. I had intended to say a few words about attendance but for the rain on Friday evening but to the delight of all of us the

place was packed and we shall need more seats in future. Chief F.A. Jones read the lesson for me extremely well.

Acceptance Day

13. We left Clydebank at 1030 on Monday, again in sunshine. Hundreds of workmen massed to see us off – in complete silence, which we hear is the custom at Clydebank because the departure of a newly built ship usually means hundreds of men get laid off next day. In our case the evil is deferred to next week after ARCADIA leaves. (I forgot to say we had ARCADIA's four Senior Officers onboard for gin on Saturday forenoon.) Dr McNeill KCVO and Mr Peck came to see us off and the other three Directors came with us and we have the signatures of all five in our new Visitor's Book. Captain Harrington RAN represented the Controller and DNE and Harrison was there (he also stayed the night). We lunched in your Day Cabin and then the full power trial was successfully achieved by 1500 and I signed the form. Immediately after anchoring, I broached three bottles of Champagne in your cabin and we had a representative gathering of 16 to drink to BRITANNIA. I made a signal to Dr McNeill directly after acceptance thanking him for the lovely ship.

14. We had a guest-night Dinner that night, with Mr Harrison in No.1's dinner-jacket. The toast was again BRITANNIA and the evening convivial, despite the fact that by then we were feeling somewhat tired.

15. I can't really describe exactly how PROUD I felt and indeed still feel at taking command of this vessel. I am unquestionably the most lucky officer in Her Majesty's Navy at this moment, - with my rank, the acting bit on top of it and such a wonderful command. I am most acutely aware of how much I owe to you for it all and before I forget and become blasé with it all I must say thank-you very sincerely.

16. The Ceremony of Hoisting the Ensign was very simple and (I thought) the more impressive thereby. The sailors were fallen in facing the aft in divisions some on the Royal Deck aft and some on the Verandah Deck. I stood at the head of the stairway to the QD and ordered the one bugler (the other's bugle is in Malta!) to sound the Alert; the red duster and JB's flag were lowered in silence: I ordered the General Salute and the White Ensign and the Commissioning Pendant (at the main) were hoisted; then we carried on and I dashed back to anchor the ship. Photographs were taken by Ldg Ann Smith.

Oiling (Saturday)

17. They sent a beastly small oiler down for us and she anchored not more than five cables from shoal water on a lee shore and in quite a gale of wind. I made two passes to go alongside, badly restricted for room in which to straighten up and blown about (we were very empty) like a carrier; in the first when the bow seemed to be being blown too fast on to the oiler we corrected too far the other way, the wind got on the other bow and we blew away; in the second I didn't like the look of it at all as there seemed the possibility of us getting broadside on to the wind and being blown into the shallow water before I could extricate myself. Apart from one shot at a buoy on our way round to oiler we'd had no handling practice at all, the Engineand Coxswain were not fast in executing orders and I'd have expected the oiler to come to us anyway (she was only 275 feet long). So I swallowed my pride, returned to anchor and told her to come to me. I was secretly rather pleased that

he took a whole hour himself to get alongside though I must admit that when he mastered the element he did a beautiful manoeuvre and did not hurt us at all.

Swinging (Today)

18. We spent the forenoon, in pleasant weather, swinging for adjustment of compasses and I found it valuable for handling the ship. She blows unexpectedly but I will wait for more experience before recording it.

Teething troubles

19. This baby is becoming quite troublesome. I fancy we'll get a spate of other bothers in the first week or two but so far you've heard above of the oil-fuel leak only. Three times the sirens have jammed hard on and now we have loosened the wire operating portion; the wind was causing it! Tonight the After Sewage Plant has overflowed, chiefly due to hardware left in it by the Yard. The Duty Part have had to clear up the After Shore Rooms Flat this evening. Of course the Triturator has got bunged up often, so much so in fact that already we have had to put one of our all too precious hands on to it full-time. There have been leaks behind the panelling in the Royal Chart House, your cabin and aft. Two men have got split heads from cracking them against the top of doors. One came from EAGLE and said he was used to bigger things! The 2nd M.B rammed the port gangway this evening; it has bent the stay and broken the handrail. The Motor Cutter has rammed the Royal Yacht head on. A Stoker has put a girl in the family way and wants leave. There's never a dull moment, but none of us would change for all the world.

Silence

20. We of course started the commission with the rule of silence and already the idea seems to have caught on. It's certainly nice to be in a ship without blaring loudspeakers and my Red Hot Notice ideas seem to work.

Walkie Talkies

21. I am trying to get boats' crews and OOD's radio-conscious. Walkie Talkie radio sets are frequently used on long trips and are most successful. We particularly need them for embarking our guests on Fri and Sat when we have to do so from both Greenock and Helensburgh. Harrison is most interested because I gather he has been got at by the man who wants to supply Pye radio for the Barge at fantastic expense. I must say I think what we are doing is perfectly adequate and as I say most successful so far. I will report further as we try more but as I say, my aim is to make them all radio-conscious.

The Press

22. Our sole Press bother so far has been the Mr Low of the BBC Television Service who was the man, I think, who occupied me for half an hour on the phone before our November trials. This time he has missed us but has been harrying the SCO to BNO Clyde. We have referred him to CNI.

23. I really must not write any more or you won't have time to read it. I have purposefully not attempted to answer any of your letters to me because these B N L's are meant to be

NEWS and not so much FOR ACTION. I will get down to your points now I have got all this off my chest. John Cryer will be sending a copy of the Order of Service for the Dedication on the 24th and we'll be sending a copy of the Royal Yacht Orders as well as the Admiral's Standing Orders (sic).

I hope your week's leave was fun. We liked the feeling that you were with us in spirit on the 7th and I hope I have managed to convey to you a bit of what is going on in this beautiful ship.

Yours sincerely,

Dear

I am delighted that our two-way communication is now well established and every time I see the familiar long blue envelope from GOTHIC I hasten to open it. It helps me a great deal, principally because I like to feel that you know of all our doings so that you can comment and as your comments so far have been favourable I feel that we are interpreting what your wishes would be in each different circumstance.

2. I acknowledge the receipt yesterday of four from you – of the 8th re candelabra, the 9th in reply to some B N Ls, the 11th re Malta and the 13th re deck games. I am sorry to have delayed yet again the day of the week on which to write my B N L. In Clydebank I chose Tuesday because there was always so little work that day from V & A, here I thought Wednesday (a Make and mend we had hoped) would give me free time but at sea there is no free time so I am trying nearer the week-end. I will probably end up on Sundays!

The Gale

3. I wonder how much news reached you in New Zealand of the horrid Gale that smote us four days after our acceptance. I gather that we were “headlines” in some papers but as we were at sea we have not seem them ourselves. The background to the incidents is that I had had no ship-handling practice (except for turning her at rest for the adjustment of the compasses) because we were getting behindhand in programme, were still extraordinarily filthy from the shipyard and I gave up a half-day at sea to try and catch up (also to meet the wishes of the workmen onboard, or rather to facilitate their work).

4. On Friday 15th at 0400 I was called because the weather was deteriorating. I came from 4 to 2 hours’ notice for steam. On a further report at 0630 I ordered steam at half an hour’s notice. We were yawing up to seventy degrees side to side and had out 6 shackles on the stbd cable. We had steam at half an hours’ notice by 0805. At about that time I set anchor watch – for what it was worth because we were watching anxiously anyway – and a few minutes afterwards we received (a) the Gale Warning and (b) orders from RNO Clyde to set anchor watch. The barograph looked horrid and at about 0815 I ordered steam on the main engines at immediate notice. This was effective at 0845 at which the moment we first observed that we were dragging and at 0854 we let go second anchor and veered to 8 on the stbd and 4 on the port. Every time we yawed it brought the wind about 70 degrees on the bow and imposed an enormous strain on the cable. The wind at that time was west force 8. Blowing unhampered right across the Firth, and I have heard subsequently that the anchorage is notoriously bad in a westerly gale.

5. We had to weigh and shift berth. In weighing we dragged dangerously near A.L buoy and the wreck there and at one stage I had to go astern with the anchors on the bottom to drag clear. We shifted berth half a mile up wind and put 7 shackles on the stbd and 2 on the port. We held there, with steam at immediate notice, for two hours.

6. At 1205 a strong gust of force 9 started us off again. I was in no mood to drag across the harbour like the time before so we weighed, using half speed on the engines in an attempt to point ship while the last few shackles were out. A tug came out but could only

communicate by shouting and could have been of no possible use in that wind. He left us. I put to sea.

7. We spent the night steaming up and down off Arran and the wind was at times force 10. We had a list of fifteen degrees due to the wind when abeam and carried 25 degrees of lee rudder at 12 knots.

8. Saturday forenoon we did some ship handling in the gale and after lunch returned to Tail o' Bank to try again. The elements must have seen us coming because the wind suddenly increased again and though we out seven shackles on the port cable we soon began to drag for the third time. I weighed forthwith and we spent the night in the entrance to the Holy Loch. We anchored once more at T o' B at 0930 on Sunday. I will enclose the barograph trace for your edification. All this of course wiped out the private entertaining we were hoping to do on Friday and Saturday but we were able to give leave on Sunday and Monday and I stayed in harbour the latter day to make up to Hampton's and J B & Co for the day they had missed. You would have been amused to have seen a signal I got from Rannie on Friday before the gale drove us out. I had asked him and his wife as my guests because they alone of the Directors had asked me into their house. His message read "Rannies very good ship-builders, very bad sailors. Regret will not be coming tonight."

Last day in the Clyde

9. S.N.S.O Rosyth called on me on Monday. He had been told to do so by D of S himself because of our complaints about quality of Stores supplied brought to a head by The Controller noticing filthy hoses during the Inspection. He was searching in his questions and we spoke honestly to him and after lunch he left with details of what he came to find out about as well as a number of other requests we had. As a result we are getting rapid and personal attention to our (fairly numerous) requests for replacements. Our initial outfit is in many respects lacking because it seems the Stores people couldn't decide whether we should be a Destroyer or a Minelayer. We have, to quote an example, got the signal pad issue comparable to a private DD.

10. I had hoped that lots of J B men would pour onboard the last day but can quite understand how it was that they did not with ARCADIA coming down river the next day. Mr Baird said I should thank my lucky stars that BRITANNIA was completed first because ARCADIA was in a most unfinished state. There is to my mind no question that J B & Co, biggest builders in the World as they are, take on a shade too much. We are, quite clearly, not completed. What we lack is I admit mostly woodwork, the seats for the Royal Deck to cover the life-rafts for example, but it was shattering to find when I asked that we could not properly secure our anchors in The Gale that the tommie bars for the Bottle screw slips had been promised but had not come. We have them now!

11. Mr Martin had a brainwave and as a result we have obtained four Shipwrights and two ERAs on loan from R.N.B. for two months. The repair work they are doing makes just the difference for the rest of the staff.

Rust Collectors

12. The funnel, reputed to be to clean, cool and free from smoke inside because of the Howden's Rust Extractors, has been far from so from the commencement of Contractor's

Sea Trials. Mr Strachan said it would be all right on the day but it is not. John Mott has discovered that some welding on each of the Extractors has been improperly done. They were never air-tested. He has, by considerable personal effort not only pinned down Howden's to come and weld up properly but has also borrowed from them a large Vacuum cleaner which is in use today to suck up the muck inside the funnel casing.

Appearance of ship

13. There is no doubt that BRITANNIA is a lovely ship to look at. I went ashore to play squash with John Cryer at on Sunday and saw her for the first time from some distance off. The Gale has unfortunately removed much of the top coat of paint on the port side and now we find that the screen at the back of the Admiral's Deck is blistered and peeling. I gather that in both cases the paint was put on in frost.

14. Big strides are being made in the polishing of all the cortisone in the ship (including on mess decks). What has been done certainly looks lovely and of course it saves washing every day. Contrary to what one would think it is not slippery. The past F O's R Y's portraits are all up outside your cabin and look most distinguished. We have this very day had all the Ward Room silver out for inspection and have retained 1/3 to 1/2 (as much as we can stow at present) so the remainder will be packed away yet again until it is finally inspected on your return. What we have kept is, I feel, extremely nice.

Presentation

15. We have been presented with a most attractive and unusual Cigarette Box by the Flag Officers and House Committee of the Royal Northern Yacht Club. It is made of onyx and has just the burgee in enamel on gilt. It was presented to John Cryer and me on Sunday, - you remember we both stayed at the Clubhouse at Rhu for some time - when we went to play squash. They knew we had booked a court. They said it was for "the whole ship" but we pointed out that the only place where it would be used were the W.R. or the Admiral's cabin.

Caricature

16. Knollys has obtained the original of the caricature we used in our Christmas card to you. As we expect you would like to keep it we will have it photographed for the scrap-book.

Too much work

17. It was lovely to leave the River Clyde on Tuesday 19th. I had come to hate the tide-bound anchorage there, the hordes of workmen who boarded us each day, and everything that remained of the builders. So we sailed gaily down the Firth, but soon came No 1 to tell me that there was a bit of unhappiness among the sailors who reckoned they worked too hard. Of course we have had a singularly tough time; the weather has been most unsettling in small ways as well as dislocating our programmes. Often for instance we had to lower different gangways because of the seas or damage (one got hit by the 1st M.5 very early on), leave was intermittent, we had the sort of teething troubles one expected in our organisation (such as men being in a seaboat's crew in harbour) and so on. The Coxswain reported it first. I wandered round the decks at sea and thought I saw the usual smiling faces but it seemed desirable for me to say a few words. Weather, space and ship

movements precluded me doing so, as I wished, in public so I used the S.E.E system. I shall be writing more privately.

Work up

18. During this week, we have sent the sea boat away a few times including twice in to WEMYSS PIER in which trips the walkie talkie has been invaluable. We prepared to tow forward one day and of course prepared for the buoy where we now are secured. At other times we just had to go on cleaning up the ship instead of working up our drills. She is definitely improving both above decks and below but hands are scare; the average in P of S p.m. is 2 FX and 2 QD.

19. We had some good ship-handling practice yesterday before we came in here. Our cross-plank target having broken up on reaching the water we made a couple of passes at a small white buoy in KILCHATTAN BAY. The first time I grossly misjudged it, we hit the buoy a shrewd smack forward and it scraped right down our starboard side. When we came round again we approached more cautiously. She steers beautifully but it is very sluggish in reacting to the engines. I was still too DD minded but I'm learning! We next tried in open water sending the Jolly Boat away with the Picking Up rope. When we arrived here at Rothesay it was our first ever appearance before Naval eyes and we were very much on our mettle. Silence reigned almost everywhere (even to the extent of using the Conning Intercom for the first time) but our securing was hampered by the jumpers shackling on the lazy bridle first and then the other was two links too short and couldn't be easily veered because they had the P.U. rope on the wrong cable holder. However I have seen much worse.

Trials

20. Warren and a man from Haslar did timing over the Measured Mile and vibration trials over the whole range of speed, 10 revs at a step? For the vibration. We got 22.45 kts at a displacement 400 tons greater than in November when we got 22.8. We also tried on one boiler and got 22B revs and 17.5 knots.

21. There was an enormous party of people for the Radio Trials and as you will have seen from my two signals they were pretty abortive. The fact is that the receiving aerials are all to near the transmitting ditto. The Main Peceiving ones are the whips on the funnel and some vertical ones. The Main transmitters ones are the whips (3) round the Flag Deck and the long horizontal ones between fore and mizzen. They were able to get some results with the two receiving ones installed for Her Majesty's radiogram; these run up the mizzen and it seems likely that we shall have to have main receiving ones there instead of on the funnel and the foremast. A wiring problem arises of course. The Trials Party tested carefully over the full range of frequencies to obtain data to prove their arguments to the people at the Admiralty who over rode the professional opinions said to have been expressed at the design stage. I was told that it was difficult to counter arguments because the last word always lay with the Constructors who would say that it was all direct from the Palace.

22. I can't go on to page 6 so will stop. We are all very happy in the Ward Room. I am sorry that you feel so strongly against the No Treating idea because I have never seen it work so well and so unobtrusively as it does here. There are, of course, no chits as the Steward notes it down on a sheet of paper. One offers a drink to anyone in the ordinary way, gets it or has

it brought in the normal way, and there you are. Should a chap not wish to drink he says so. To anyone coming into the mess it is entirely apparent that whoever orders pays, only the members of the mess and the Steward know otherwise.

Yours sincerely,

Dear

Another week has passed like a flash and once again we are safely secured to our buoy at Rothesay but only for three nights. Still that will let the sailors get some leave and there was an enormous mail here for us when we arrived.

Too much work

2. I continue with more grievous tales to tell leading on from paragraph 17 of B N L 9. I have three Leading Seamen who have put in requests to leave the R.Y.S.! As a bald statement of fact, this is disquieting to say the least and it has naturally caused me a very considerable amount of worry. The first, Clark from my old ship AISNE, made a mess of a seaboat evolution and in came his request next day. He has seen the 1st Lt today and says he just does not like the ship. He makes no claims of overwork. He will be no loss at all as he has a sulky look and definitely resents criticism; one theory is that he lacks professional ability and does not feel up to the job. He is 23 years old.

3. The other two are Quartermasters and, though so far they have only been seen by Divisional Officers, say they want to leave because in a normal ship they would not have anything like so much work to do and they see no prospect of the load ever getting less. As one of these is Jackson, aged 35 and our best Leading Seaman so far, their requests are more serious. I don't mind if Clark goes tomorrow but as a matter of principle I do not want to lose two Quartermasters with a chip on their shoulders.

4. Two things are apparent at this stage – 1. Their Lordships in their wisdom have pared our seamen to the bare minimum for the ship when in running order (and even then I'm at a loss to see how we can reasonably reduce one single AB in winter, but that is a separate problem), and 2. With so much seagoing, our QM's have been worked harder than most. Special Sea Dutymen daily early after night watches is one thing, another is that we have had to give them their quota of cleaning stations.

5. No 1 has spared us no pains to try out how best to use our resources. FX and QD have thirteen hands each to play with at peak periods of the day and now we have introduced for each man a Cleaning Station (a) for Below Decks (0800 to 0900) and (b) for the Upper Deck (0900 to 1150). We hope that personal pride in one's own personal bit will work the miracle. We hear that the idea is popular and that is a bit of consolation for our worries. (One small murmur for instance was that the Seamen scrub decks from 0600 to 0700 yet the Stoker Mechanics do not turn to until after breakfast.)

6. I am only waiting for a moan from the Sigs and Tels. As you know, we are extremely short-handed in that department since you have no less than six of mine in GOTHIC and Communications Efficiency apart – they mean six pairs of hands to No 1 at this time when the whole ship is filthy and getting little better after being in commission three weeks.

7. I will not dwell on this part of my troubles. I hope that we shall settle them soon. What is depressing is the state of the ship to look at.

Appearance of Yacht

8. I pray that it will not rain again from the SE this week-end. The Coal Dust that fell in the rain last Saturday has ruined the paintwork. Every single square inch above decks has got to be washed with a detergent. The masts and funnel are as bad as the rest but the sort of weather we have been having does not make for work aloft (apart from not having a gantline rove on the Mizzen anyway thanks to all three signal halyards having been allowed to part before any action was taken). We've got part of the boat deck finished, also the FX screen and round the bridge but the other forward screens look even worse by comparison to what has been done, not to mention details such as davits. The wind has been East all this past week and cold as one would expect.

Washing facilities

9. You know that we have one basin per ten men on the mess deck. This is causing unhappiness among our other bothers. There is a queue until 20 to 8 for a place to wash and shave in the Seaman's Bathroom (8 basins for 80). Doubtless the scale has been arrived at by the Constructors after weighing up everything but in the Yacht it does not seem right. I don't yet know whether our men wash more, or all want to shave at the same time, or what. It seems to be bound up with having so few men hence few basins to veer and haul on yet everyone needing to be washed at once (e.g. in a destroyer there would be twice the number of basins and a larger number of "special dutymen" who could wash at some other time). I shall be looking into this more.

Trials

10. We have done our Circles satisfactorily this week at speeds of 10,15, 18 and 21 knots and with rudder angles of 10,15,25,30 and 35 with two turns (one each way) at each. On Tuesday we had ideal conditions for the low speed range but of course it blew up and one day we had to pack up early as the results were useless. We didn't get so much done on Acceleration and Deceleration because I just had to get in before noon today to embark 120 beer drums for the canteen, 2 tons vegetables, to disembark the scientific gear, to oil and to water in the 24 hours ending noon tomorrow Saturday. We got some useful figures for 16 knots and an acceleration figure for 14 but had to miss out the 8 and 12 series. Will try on our own if opportunity permits.

11. You have heard by signal how the Radio Interference people got on. The Airbourne Noise chaps went round the ship at the various speeds measuring in decibels in every space and compartment and they have obtained some most useful information which we hope to get unofficially in writing on the assumption that the official report will, like the results of November's trials, never get further than the Departments of the Admiralty.

Work up

12. We got the seaboats away several times this week and the drill for doing do is improving. I have introduced my coloured discs for eliminating verbal orders and they are gradually being used more and more. We anchored in LOCH RYAN on Tuesday and had Admiral D-Hamilton onboard for the day on Wednesday. It blew up that afternoon and I would not go up the loch in the teeth of the gale that was screaming down it but out Motor boat landing him successfully (and the radio was invaluable) and we put our anchor down

four miles further up the coast where it was very cosy for the night. Last night we anchored north of Weymss Point. I have had to go alongside and recover the Circle people's dam buoy five times and that was nice practice for me. We came in here at 1100 today, stern to a force 4 wind and were secured with two bridles in 15 minutes exactly (including swinging on the P U rope through 180 degrees) so I was pleased with the men there.

Funnel

13. More Howdens' people come tomorrow to weld more leaks in the dust collectors.

Gear from J B & Co

14. I am doing my best to extract from JB & Co sometime the numerous articles we have not yet received. These include the seats for the Royal Deck to go over the life rafts. I am very cross with the Firm at the way they gave us the ship in the end.

Ward Room

15. Hugh Knollys has made a wonderful start with the scrap book. Whenever we are free of Trials Parties we dine every night in the mess with the usual service custom of every officer doing President in turn. Today a charming thing arrived for us, a gavel and block made from the wood of V&A and engraved "H.M.Yacht Victoria and Albert 1901-1954".

16. John Cryer is writing you I know so I hope he will fill in any gaps I leave. I am sorry that much of this letter is depressing; there are bound to be enormous ups and downs of course and just now we seem to be in one of the downs although I hasten to add that we are in good heart considering everything.

Yours sincerely,

Postscript 30th January

17. I am rather ashamed at the gloomy picture I seem to have painted in the body of this letter. Today is sunny and fine. There is hardly any wind and for the first time in the commission sailors are actually polishing something. A start has been made on scuttles and storm rails and we are even beginning to make some impression on the film of black coal-dust which is everywhere – even though it needs TIDE from the Canteen. If only we can have a few days of weather like this our morale will rise to the heights.

18. Both the Quartermaster Ldg S have withdrawn their requests. Thank God.

19. Mr Eve has spent most of the day up the Mizzen trying to climb to the top to re-reeve the three signal halyards which had parted. He has two or three feet to go now. Until that is done and we can reeve the gantline we cannot wash the mast or fly any flag from it. Our useless Chief Yeoman (he must go as soon as GOTHIC is in company) failed to send a signalman aloft when the first halyard went so this has happened.

20. I am sorry to have caused the Admiralty to send that rather puerile signal excusing their inefficiency in not supplying our Royal Standards by telling me we can't hoist them anyway. As if I would do so anywhere where we could be seen.

21. I forgot to tell you that I called on the Provost and Town Council of Rothesay. I thought about it very deeply first and of course consulted John Cryer and I came to the conclusion that it would be discourteous of me not to since this is a Royal Burgh and of course the Duke of Cornwall is also the Duke of Rothesay. Also the Town Clerk had written privately to SM3 to ask whether I would call giving the obvious impression that he hoped I would. I took four officers and had to make a small speech in the Council Chamber. The call was returned two days later when the Provost was accompanied by three Bailies, the Town Clerk and two lady members of the Council. I met them at the gangway with my Heads of Departments and we went straight and direct to the Admiral's cabin. After gin and half an hour's gossip the boat was reported back and they left by the same route. I understand that one of them said something about "Aren't we going to be shown round?!" but the officer he spoke to explained why not. I hope you will agree with what I did. I thought it was what you would have done.

BRITANNIA NEWS LETTER No.11 **BRITANNIA at Sea (from Loch Ewe to Invergordon) 5TH February 1954**

Dear

It hasn't rained (except for a bit this forenoon) since I last wrote you and the difference that has made to us is almost unbelievable. We have at last washed the whole of the upperworks except for the mests and the black rain of Rothesay is gone. That such muck should have been sent to try us was most unkind of the elements.

State of the Yacht

2. Nevertheless, we are still dirty but I think I can say no longer filthy. Inside we are in fact becoming fairly nice. The ship's side is terrible. The port side would be a disgrace to any ship, let alone the Royal Yacht, because it is all blotched where JB's people painted her in either rain or frost. Owing to sea-time we have not given the Side Party much chance but in Invergordon where we shall be in harbour for four whole week days we hope to do something about the port side. That of course depends on the rain but one of the many good things about Admiral Robson's trip with us next week is that it gives us all a target to work to because he will be critical and expect the best. The starboard side is not too bad though the geranium red needs touching up in many places. The stokers got up the funnel for the second time today to wash off the Rothesay black rain and straight-away (like last time) it rained. They have made an improvement and a few touches next time we're in should finish it off. Teepol and powdered bath-brick has been needed everywhere to shift the stuff!

3. Much of the "stainless" storm railing round the screens has now been polished up and vaselined. The decks are still spattered with paint in many places but holvstones regularly are wearing it off.

Organisation

4. As I mentioned in para 3 of No 10, the First Lt's new organisation seems to be working out. Decks are scrubbed at 0600 and after breakfast there's hardly a soul to be seen on deck because all are at Messdeck Cleaning Stations. Then around 0900 or 0930 they all come up to Upper Deck Cleaning Stations – depending of course on what bit of work-up is on. I hope you don't look too often at the imposing typed Working Up Programme 1954 because I'm afraid that it has more or less gone by the board. We have had to divert so much effort to cleaning and now I have to weigh up what essentials of the "work-up" must be done bearing in mind what we will have to do on the Commonwealth Tour together and defer the other bits in favour of Cleaning. To quote examples, we have today for the first time got out both After Ladders. It took 3 hours to get them out and in again. The Royal Barge has also had its first run today – but that was not for want of trying but was due to mechanical defects in the engines.

Rounds

5. I have twice been rounds of the Supply Department and now I have judged it time to start on the other Depts as well. Up to now all have been fully extended in making good defects in building, leaning the ships, etc. The fact that I was starting has caused a noticeable effort everywhere and my weekly Programme is now:-

Wednesdays – Electrical
Thursdays – Supply
Fridays – Engineering
and of course
Saturdays – Messdecks
Sunday – Upper decks.

In addition, I am doing the Royal portion, accompanied by my Heads of Departments, next Tuesday and I will decide then whether to do so every week also. To see the effort being put in by the Royal Stewards at this moment because of the impending Rounds shows what food it is doing. (No.1 has designs on the Royal Stewards getting down to polishing the Royal square windows and perhaps even parts of the adjacent screens as soon as they have got their portion below decks up to scratch.)

Engine Room Department

6. My first E.R. rounds showed that the problem below is basically the same as on deck – that in time things will be made to shine, paint will be cleaned off tallies, paint will be washed, and so on but for the present I have to be content with evidence that an effort is being made. I look of course for freedom from dust and dirt and for the proper stowage of gear. In the former respect, John Mott's boys have done well but in the latter they have yet to get right round the stowage question and there are one or two bad places and too many cardboard boxes (garishly labelled SUNSHINE SOAP or what not) containing items of shipbuilders supply. Some spare gear too has yet to be supplied but I am very impressed with Mott's system of stowages (each numbered and the contents catalogued) around the ship. A lot of thought has obviously been put into that.

Electrical Department

7. For all their lack of numbers, the L boys have done extremely well. One or two places like the Gyro Compass Room and the Low Power Room are well up to standard even now. There are cases of scruffy stowages like in the ER Dept and there is considerable evidence of the effort having been made to clean away dirt and dust. I appreciate of course that Electrical spaces are on the whole cleaner anyway, certainly less oily and largely less frequented since the working spaces of Electricians like where everyone else works. The worst L space is No 1 Fan Space (boat deck) where spare gear of a scruffy nature needs restowing.

Supply Department

8. A marked improvement has been made here since I first went round three weeks ago. Store rooms have become emptier and have been re-stowed and a certain amount of ingenuity is creeping in to make places look better. The oil-impregnated Canteen Store will by now have been restowed so No 2 Provision Room will be back to its normal outfit of Pursers Stores by the time I next go rounds.

Royal Cinema

9. Last Sunday, instead of having the film in the Ward Room, we all trooped along to the Dining Room and saw "The Malta Story" there. The few private guests had not been told beforehand and were merely asked quietly not to go round telling the world where they had

been. The film was excellent and the test was worth doing because it exercised the operators and put them on their mettle. Unfortunately, reels of a very inferior nature had been supplied and it was inevitable that the film should break at some time. It did, half a reel before the end.

10. The equipment is otherwise very good. More practice is needed to get the system working without fuss and I hope that we'll get another 35mm. film – and better reels – to try out. Meanwhile I have authorised one showing for the Ship's Company. Gym shoes will be worn, there will be no smoking, and the wooden floor will be covered to prevent scratching by the chairs. We find, by the way, that far less sailors go to the pictures than we had anticipated. Maybe this is due to the appalling selection of films we have had issued to us but anyway our plans for the Messdecks to be used so as to seat audiences of 80 or 90 are not needed and films are now shown in the Rec Space to about 30 or 40.

Semaphore

11. I have put all executive officers (including myself) on to signal exercises at Semaphore. My idea here is that it is an excellent way of inter-communication without noise, e.g. from Bridge to FX. Our other efforts towards silence are gradually bearing fruit. Boats' crews are inclined to shout up for orders or for this and that. The noisiest place in the ship is alas often the Bridge and I am starting a new campaign here too. Wheel orders down the voice-pipe get given as if on the Parade Ground, especially by our enthusiastic younger officers of the watch!

U.S. Navy

12. Cdr Roseborough USN, whose presence onboard you approved after I had refused to do so without your sanction, is extremely nice and it has been a joy having him. I have heard nothing from him about wanting to see round aft – maybe he has looked for himself but I fancy not because he seems to be such a particularly decent chap. When he told his wife, in Texas, that he was coming to England the first thing she said was "Will you see the Queen" and John Mott has given him some sheets of Royal Yacht notepaper so that he can write to his family in the States on it. He told me this evening that he had also written to his friends in Australia as they'd be tickled pink to know where he was this week.

Trials

13. Which leads me on of course to our doings of this week. We left ROTHESAY with TERMAGANT in company and in lovely weather. We made her guide and did a lot of simple manoeuvres keeping station on her in an attempt to find our characteristics. Then she took us in tow, in ideal conditions for a first shot and everything went very smoothly. After lunch she came up for a jackstay transfer and we did a bit of station-keeping close aboard so as to exercise the Coxswain and myself in the feel of the ship. We then did a further Jackstay and resumed our manoeuvres before parting company at 1645. It was a fine day, probably the best of the commission, which prompted me to make that signal to you.

14. We found the swell we wanted during the early hours of the Morning watch of Tuesday and by daybreak, off St Kilda, there was a lot of sea sickness. I think every one of the 13 civilians was unwell and three of them –including the principle man of the Rolling Trials Team – did not appear all day. We spent twelve hours, alternately half an hour at a time

stabilised and half an hour unstabilised, at different speeds. The first eight, beam on to the well, weren't too bad but undoubtedly the worst two hours were between 1600 and 1800 when the sell had to be on the Bow and BRITANNIA pitched like a proper bitch. I made my signal about the stabilisers in the hope that you might think it worth passing on to Her Majesty before she arrived at Sydney. Briefly, the stabilisers make it possible to have a glass of gin on the arm of one's chair in the nastiest sea but nothing can prevent this ship pitching if she wants to.

15. Next day we did nothing but Wind Trials, steaming all day slowly head to wind to give about 20mph over the Royal Bridge. The scientists said at the end of the day that they had obtained far more data than they had ever expected which was nice as we had gone out of our way to weigh between the three requirements – Rolling, Wind and our own work-up – and had hoped to strike the right weather conditions in the right places at the right times. We anchored Wednesday in Broad Bay, just north of Stornoway.

16. Forced Rolling Trials in calm water were the order of the day for Thursday and then we spent 24 hours at a buoy in Loch Ewe. We took 12 minutes again to secure but I still hope to improve on it although this time conditions were ideal.

F.O.S.

17. Now we make for Invergordon and pass through the Pentlands shortly. Admiral Robson asked me to consider having a small party for the many friends of the Navy and offered to pay towards it. After great deliberation I wrote that I could not but hoped perhaps that individual officers might meet these people and invite them onboard privately. I know I was right in my decision but I was very torn as to how best to communicate it to the Admiral.

18. And so to bed with a disturbed night prospect and a busy day tomorrow. As I write, we have negotiated the Pentland Firth and have reduced to 10 knots while crossing the Moray Firth. Tomorrow forenoon we will lock one shaft and try running the other for exercise, then messdeck rounds, then Dress Ship (yes, at sea but away from land_ and then we are due at Invergordon at 1400.

As you see, we are in better heart – almost entirely due to the weather and looking forward to the spell in harbour and a ghastly six-a-side football competition.

Yours sincerely,

P.S Would you please apologise to Colin for me not writing him yet but there's plenty on.

BRITANNIA NEWS LETTER No. 12 **BRITANNIA at Invergordon 12th February 1954**

Dear

Since I last wrote we have of course had our quota of gales. One from the southward blew up suddenly and I judged it imprudent for me to risk taking BRITANNIA alongside at Invergordon on the appointed day, Saturday. It was a difficult decision because we so badly wanted the time in harbour with our plans for games and washing the paintwork but it was force 8 from South outside and I reckoned – knowing how unmanageable we are in a wind – we'd better not. QHM suggested letting go an anchor to ease us in but we had already rejected that idea because it would prove an embarrassment when we came to leave on the flood. Seeing how it is again blowing up at this moment a few hours before we are due to leave I am thankful I kept the anchor up.

Lossiemouth

2. Instead we let it go off Lossiemouth and got out Trials Party ashore in time for their train. We then rode out the gale under the lee there, although we had a boat weatherbound inshore with four libertymen we had sent in. The wind veered right round during the night and we entered Invergordon on Sunday in the teeth of a stiffish westerly. We didn't make a very good shot at our first alongside although one nice feature was the complete absence of noise. We had landed our own berthing party who facilitated this. We could not decide in advance how much the ebb setting on to the jetty would counteract the wind blowing us off. In the event, the wind won and though we got nicely in position abreast the jetty and wires out we took some time to come in. Still it was much better than charging like a bull at a gate.

Football and all that

3. We found that the grounds were and had been unfit anyway (snow) so we had not missed much from our night at Lossie. There was a thaw on Wednesday so the 6 a side Football Competition got under way and I appeared in goal for the Ward Room (the others – Crompton, Bevan, Bailey, Parry and Nelson). The Stokers beat us 4 – 0 but we were delighted when they wiped up the Supply Division in the next round by 9 – 0. Next day we had 24 out on a Paper Chase as well as 48 or so on the football field so lots got a breath of fresh air.

Concert Party

4. To raise our spirits while off Lossie, an impromptu Concert was arranged and they recorded their programme on the tape for presentation over the S.R.E. after the news. This stood us in good stead because Cdr(E), Cunningham and Bland (the Concert Party chaps) had planned to put on a show in the Canteen at InverG and this duly took place on Wednesday. It was a "smoking concert" with the audience at tables quaffing beer and most of the Ward Room attended. A big hand was given to PO Richardson the piper and to one or two singers; POSM Parker told some pretty vulgar stories and the turn I liked best was that by three Bishops (LdgSmn Booker, AB Clench and SImkr Mate Smith accompanied on the piano by LEM Woods) who sang a colloquial dirge with a dig at most of the senior officers and ratings. It was altogether a nice friendly evening and we had 128 ashore, about three times more than ever before.

Ward Room entertaining

5. If Invergordon goes down to history as the place of considerable achievement in the knitting together of the Ship's Company, it unfortunately stinks in the nostrils of the Ward Room. The Q.H.M. has A LIST and even before we arrived (as you could see in para 17 of No.11) there was considerable talk locally of "When is the Party?" It seemed almost as if the guests to the party Admiral Robson had asked me to give had already been invited, if one could go by the slightly intoxicated word of QHM's wife. She gave us to understand that she had to ring everyone up and say there would be NO PARTY and it was a job she didn't like. As I suspect that weak handling in the first place by her or her husband was the cause of the misunderstanding, I was not particularly sympathetic to her problem; nor were my feelings improved by what I thought her bad manners and her voice like a foghorn. Anyway she left us in no doubt that we had let Invergordon (by which one supposes was meant her friends) down.

6. So instead of going out of our way to get in touch with the locals and ask them onboard we sat back and watched. We asked our friends to drink last night, including six from Lossiemouth, and there were about fifteen InverG locals (from THE LIST) who had been hospitable to individuals. Personally I asked a first cousin of mine I discovered here with her husband and I also looked after Johnnie Ievers, Captain of Lossie and his wife.

7. All this has opened our eyes even more concerning visitors onboard and I am preparing a Memo for guidance at Portsmouth.

Leaving Invergordon

8. We have now left. There was a wind of about force 6 blowing 60 degrees on our port quarter, i.e. on to the jetty and the tide was on the flood (a weak one) i.e. up our stern. I let go all except a headrope, which I used to heave in (for what it was worth) and a doubled spring from the middle mooring pipe on the FX. Slow ahead port, slow astern stbd caused a slight movement which looked more against the line of the jetty than on the compass (2 degrees only). So I tried half ahead and astern with 80 revs, then 100 revs and finally 120 revs (about ten knots) before the desired effect was achieved. We made a sternboard up towards the wind and between the tanker EDDYREEF and a mooring buoy and then turned across and towards the wind with a little headway. This is the first time the wind has really helped us and on this occasion we spun round like a top. Looking back, it was easy meat once we had sprung our stern off but it was beginning to look like touch and go whether we'd do that.

Prince Louis

9. The Outward Bound training ship about which we signalled for your advice turned up at Invergordon and the C.O. is a nice man who was asked onboard on two occasions by our officers. I also visited his ship with Cdr(E), Cunningham and Miller. It certainly is an interesting set up. He, Harrison seemed surprised that Prince Philip – who has always been particularly interested in them, was one of their boys, and has his signed photo onboard – should have authorised the boys not coming onboard us but we of course told him we had asked.

Uniform

10. Today from noon we have started to wear the R.Y.W.D., as Michael has named it (Royal Yacht Working Dress) having at last received the issue of jerseys and white badges. At first sight I think it looks very smart except that I think the non-sub badges on the right arms look entirely out of place. As one sailor said to me – “We ought to have medal ribbons if we have these”!!

11. Unfortunately, not more than 50% have got their new No 1's properly fitting so we are still not yet able to wear them ashore. I have had to give the decision that I should be all or none, so far as men dressed as seamen are concerned, for libertymen but they will be worn at Sunday Divisions and at Monday's Royal Rehearsal by those who have got them.

Accommodation

12. In one of your letters you seemed to ask for a reply concerning Milbank's Accommodation Plans and in connection with Mr Pardy's Royal Stewards. I could not quite see what the query was but anyway I do not think you need bother at the moment because as you know the details are about to be fixed up onboard BRITANNIA early in March and I really think they are details best settled here by us than referred to you. Your letters are taking two weeks except two which arrived just before we sailed today and they took only eight days.

Letters

13. The letters referred to were very welcome. They were your Confidential one of the 31st Jan and your Personal one and typed one of 4th Feb. Thank you for your kind words of encouragement. Morale is higher now and I hope that the worst is past. I will answer them later.

Appearance

14. This week at InverG we have washed down all three masts and got one coat on each. The stokers also washed the funnel for the third time, lucky at last, and we washed the starboard side and were at last able to repair and touch up in the vicinity of the hawsepipes and the stem. So it was that coming back from the soccer on Wednesday I thought she looked really fresh for the first time. The port side is however beyond us. We had not the hands to get it washed because every time No.1 tried to do so a storing party was needed. We topped up with food and also got a lot of stuff from JB & Co long overdue, including 18 seats for the decks aft. I have told Mr Harrison that we must paint all the upperworks (or I should say the Dockyard must) as well as the ship's side in Portsmouth, and then do the side again in Malta. We lack everywhere sufficient coats of pain. In places on the masts and upperworks we have been through to bare metal and rust is coming through in numerous places where we had though the Firm had taken more care. Every time the anchor goes and is heaved up again, off comes all the paint near the hawsepipes. Today however, I noticed No 1's depressed look when I told him to stand by to let go the starboard anchor if I needed it to help me turn. He had just had it enamelled! Luckily I didn't need it!

15. We tried different sized of Jacks at the mastheads one day and there is no doubt that we can do with the biggest that can be worn in the wind there is. Size 14s looked none too big

though I am waiting to do it again at the same time as dressing overall as the other flags may affect the symmetry. We also tried the floodlighting twice and it is now very effective and when Jacks are flying they are well lit. Minor changes are needed and I will go on viewing it from time to time.

JB & Co

16. I wrote Dr McNeil this week. I thought it would be a gesture because I remember how the conversation at luncheon often included queries as to whether any news had been heard of so and so. I had the time to spare and wrote quite a lot.

17. Now we are plugging into a head sea and pitching like anything. It really is most uncomfortable and it will be two hours before we can alter course and get out the Stabilisers (with the wind abeam). I had a meeting this evening to go firm on our Defect List for Pompey and that will be typed for despatch tomorrow.

I hope you are able to get some more leave in Australia and that Colin is in good form. We are preparing our "Navigational Data after One Month in Commission" to send out to you.

Yours sincerely,

Dear

Once again the week has slipped by and I settle down to start this letter while I have a moment. It is a lovely sunny day and sunshine makes such a difference to this Yacht – it dries up the decks, makes the paint glisten where it has not peeled off and the brightwork shine.

Foul Weather

2. ~~We had a pleasant though foggy time at Rosyth.~~ On our way round from Invergordon we had the nastiest weather of the commission. There was a gale and a head sea and we pitched most uncomfortably. I estimate from reports that at least 50% of us were sea-sick and that includes the First Lieutenant, the Coxswain and even Chief Shipwright Flux, the trans-Atlantic RNSA Yachtsman. I kept going at 15 knots because only by doing so we had a chance of arriving on time (we were only making good 12.5 knots against the storm.) and because of my instructions from you and from the Controller to try her out in bad weather. For the first time we shipped it green over the forecandle and were able to see how the freeing ports did their work. Generally the seas had drained clear by the second pitch after they had been shipped. Spray hit the bridge first bounce.

3. There were two mishaps, both of which I am glad to have had happen at this time when we can rectify them. First around 2100 the Coxswain of the Seaboat going rounds of the boats reported that the Royal Barge was surging two feet forward when we pitched. The gribes were not preventing this fore and aft movement because the four pads against which the Barge is griped bear against a smooth and straight portion of the boat's hull. At these four places all the paint was scraped off and bare wood was showing. I eased down to 8 knots (no steerage way at less) and tackles were rigged fore and aft. It gave us the first opportunity for summoning the Emergency Party by the Alarm Rattler signal (shorts) and this was effective. We are trying to work out the best permanent measure to prevent a recurrence.

4. The second mishap we did not discover until after arrival in harbour and that was that the bulwarks have distorted on the port side forward. Three stiffeners are knuckled and the teal rail splintered with the torsion. At the same time we found the bulwarks in the way of the Mooring Pipes aft have also "bent" from the strain of the wires alongside in the gale so it seems that the bulwarks, though lovely to look at, are too weak. Stiffening will be undertaken at Portsmouth.

Rosyth

5. Admiral Robson kindly made a general signal that all calls were to be considered paid and returned so I was able to get on with Messdeck Rounds after we arrived. We were exactly one hour late as a result of the Royal Barge trouble but we did a snappy buoy jump and were secured in nine minutes. I was delighted with the Messdecks considering the chaos and sickness there must have been down there the night before and our entry into harbour at 0830. The decks below are well up to the standard I had hoped for in the Royal Yacht so I have every confidence that when we meet decent weather the weather decks will be even better.

6. Eve stayed with the Robsons, so I saw quite a lot of her between noon Saturday and lunch on Monday. We had a lot of fog and at times had to direct our boats using 974 radar and the walkie-talkie radio. Cunningham loved doing this and we have to stop him saying Tally Ho at the height of the evolution!

Royal Rehearsal

As Mrs Robson was ill, Eve stood in for her as Queen, with the Admiral as Duke, at our Rehearsal for Reception of Royalty which was really the main reason for our visit to Rosyth. Luckily, it was a sunny day. The Yacht did not at all look her best after the gale and the weekend. Salt spray was everywhere and previously polished places green again (despite the grease we use freely). However a wonderful two hours' work was done. The starboard after ladder was got out for the second time in the commission and its canvas sides and bottom rigged for the first time. They just finished it before the Royal Barge left shore. The Barge's crew had worked all Sunday to repair the storm havoc and they produced a fine looking boat and they wore their Royal Yacht No 1s and looked very smart. The creep on the Royal Barge clutches makes it difficult to handle even with kicks astern on the centre screw. It really is a ghastly old boat and we must soon get a new one.

8. I am going to write separately with details of the Royal Rehearsal and our queries arising from it. It was thoroughly well worth doing.

Passage South

9. We slipped at 1530 and had a perfect passage. There was hardly any wind and once we had got round the corner we stopped pitching into the easterly swell. At around 2000 on Monday history was made, as we entered English Waters for the first time off Berwick-on-Tweed. I did two fuel consumption trials on passage, 16 knotts the first night and 20 knots the second. That gives John Mott further points on his curve.

10. Mr Harrison came with us. He has noticeably swung round "in our favour" so to speak, i.e he understands our point of view so much better now than he did in the early days at Clydebank. During the trip, he went through points with each departmental officer in turn and he told me before he left that it had been most valuable.

Stern Gland

11. We began to leak badly through the starboard stern gland. Unlike most ships which have lignum vitae and a stern gland packing, we have a patent oil gland. Cdr(E) has been teased with the problem and how to account for it, let alone how to stop it. He got a representative of the makers down but he was useless. We now think that the long run at 20 knots caused overheating (that gland was inclined to over-heat anyway) and the oil, made thinner, got through. I am all the more thankful I did twelve hours at that speed now.

12. The plan is to do trials next week during which Cdr(E) will experiment with slacking off the packing (which must be causing the heating) and perhaps with different oil. At first I was depressed at the thought of having to dock but now this does not seem quite so likely.

Photographer

13. You asked how Ldg Amn SMITH, the Photographer; was getting on. He is one of the nicest men in our complement. He works like a slave below decks and keeps his bit cleaner than most. To do so he turns to early sometimes to leave himself free for photography after lunch. Then he takes quite a lot of photographs and on top of all he takes a great interest in everything that goes on – for example, I found him in the Motor Boat the other day having a spell with the Coxswain purely voluntarily. He always smiles.

Canvassing

14. We have about 200 stanchions to be canvassed and No 1 has started a campaign to get them done by volunteers who have a few moments to spare. The After Canvas Store is a centre, another is the Royal Charthouse for officers, and seaboat's crews also perform while on watch. 50 have been done in the week since the campaign started and it really is quite an achievement. The campaign is called "A Stitch in Time" or "The Itching Palm". I wandered along after dinner at sea the other day and found Sailmakers Mate SMITH down aft tacking on canvas (he prepares the jobs for the amateurs) because, as he said to me, so many stanchions are being done that he can't get them ready in time in working hours alone. Also there was Ldg Smn BOOKER with the Admiral's Stern Lights in small pieces polishing them for all they were worth. He "does" that bit of the Yacht (almost the whole Royal Deck – an indication of the shortage of hands) and was trying to catch up because he'd missed the afternoon owing to the Welfare Committee Meeting. Funnily enough one of the keenest "itching palms" is Ldg Smn CLARK, whose release you have just approved. I just don't get it!

ACNS Meeting

15. You have heard by signal all about this, John Cryer represented me and did his best over the questions of who provides boats at Tower Bridge. We were however, rather hamstrung by knowing that Colin thinks we should use someone else's boats but I hope I made my point in the signal I sent to you. I do hope you agree with me. I think it is scandalous that anyone should think we are too "Royal" to secure to a buoy ourselves, no matter what V & A used to do.

Dockyard meeting

16. On the same day I sent Cdr (E), Cdr (L) and Mr Martin to Portsmouth. I had a hard time getting across my point that such a meeting to discuss our refit before we arrived was a good thing but after three signals and one telephone call AS called the meeting and the team were delighted at the co-operation shown in every way by Admiral Hubback. Capt BONE, representing DNE, put in every spoke he could to oppose us. He kept pointing out that such and such was not a defect but an A & A but fortunately A.S.'s view was that if the work needed doing it did not matter whether it was an A & A but he would do it. Down with DNE! How those people have obstructed us all along – and particularly over our stores and small requirements. I hate them.

Security

17. Great plans are afoot concerning Security while in the Dockyard. Two policemen have been promised us for our gangways and coloured passes are being printed so that no one

can come on board without one. I have written and asked C in C to promulgate that callers cannot be received onboard during this period and if everything works out to plan I hope that despite being alongside we shall not be pestered as we were at Invergordon.

Portland

18. We were received with a flurry of cameras here. In QHM's boat was a Movietone News cameraman, in another boat was an ordinary photographer while Reuters flew around for ages in an aeroplane. This was while we were going over the shallow water DG Range – a horrid place for an underpowered vessel like this. I hated hearing the Echo Sounder saying gloomily “2 fathoms” and no buoys at all to indicate where it was less.

19. My letter asking FOTS to limit callers was acted upon by the Commander of the Flagship as a result of which we have had a quiet time. I exchanged calls with Captain in Charge and with F.O.T.S. Both asked if I would show them round and both got the same answer. IMPLACABLE today asked us at 1145 together with the Ward Rooms of other ships and tomorrow, without making any RPC signal, we have got a dozen coming back spread around the ships present.

20. As you can see, morale is up all right. We have given a short weekend to about 70 sailors to enable Devonport ones in particular to get away. I wasn't going to but representations were made and I changed my decision. It's wretched to think that our workup is nearly over and so much more we would like to do. However, we have found one thing we hadn't expected – two buoys exactly 500 feet apart (like ours at Malta) – and I am going to go at them twice before we leave.

Yours sincerely,

Dear

Fourteen weeks since I started this series of letters a week after that day when you sailed in GOTHIC. That began a fresh era for us and now today we come to the end of the era after that. We commissioned seven weeks ago and now we have ended our work up. It has of course passed all too quickly but we've certainly done a lot of seetime and no one could call us fair weather sailors!!

Lady Mary

2. Glancing through what I said about Rosyth I see that I did not tell you that I invited Lady Mary to lunch in your cabin. Actually I wrote and told her that we would be in Rosyth the weekend but that I hesitated to ask her over in case you would prefer to show her the cabin yourself. She replied that she could not resist coming and I asked her to "square it" with you. I hope she has!

TYRIAN

3. We had two excellent days at sea with TS2 (Captain F.H.E. Hopkins) in TYRIAN. I placed myself entirely under his orders after giving him the broad requirements I had and I asked him to treat me as one of his own C.Os. He played wonderfully. We left harbour on Monday in company, BRITANNIA seconds the line with two frigates astern all 2.5 cables apart and all the way to Portland Bill we did manoeuvres and also fun and games such as "Seaboats crew fall in on the FX", "Fire a rocket" and "Hoist the Swedish ensign". Then we opened out for the UHF Trial which was entirely successful and we closed at twenty knots. He made me take station astern from ahead at that speed and very kindly made "Well done" – fortunately before our loss of speed on the turn (3 knots) took effect and we dropped back.

4. PM we did Jackstays twice, once as Guide each. Lots of sailors transferred between the two ships including Phot. Smith who we had sent over to get some shots of us.

5. Like Monday, Wednesday was a lovely day and we left Portland again in a flurry of manoeuvres and then took TYRIAN in tow. It was very easy as can be seen from the following figures – gunline to shackled on 10 minutes, going ahead in a further 4 minutes. I got him up to about 8 knots through the water with revs for 9.5 (110) then eased down after altering course through forty degrees and we were all clear aft in 20 minutes from stopping engines.

6. After lunch I went up on him for a final Jackstay and we manoeuvred back to harbour in good time because I wanted to do two buoys again (see below). Hopkins told me how sad he was at sending out such a scruffy ship to exercise with GOTHIC and he asked me to repeat what he said in his letter to you at that time. I can only say that he has amply made up for it to me by giving us such an excellent work-out.

Two buoys

7. We had two shots at the two buoys at D 20 berth (where destroyers calibrate ahead-throwing weapons). On Monday evening the wind was too much for us blowing from right

abeam about force 3. We got secured ahead but the after boat found the wire heavy to pull up as the stern swung away from the buoy. However, it got hooked on eventually and the crew learnt a lot. I then slipped after we had got the stern wire in (I made no attempt to force the stern up as I had no tug and the screws would never have done it) and we anchored for the night.

8. On Wednesday the wind was nearer force 2 from on the bow and this time we dressed ship as well as securing ahead and astern. After undressing, I let go aft then again slipped and went out to anchor because the buoys are only fourth class moorings and one never knows when it will blow up. Sure enough there was a gale warning at 0600 next morning.

Oiling

9. It was blowing like hell on Tuesday when we met GOLD RANGER and tried to fuel by the Astern Method. As you know, I think nothing of our arrangements for this and sure enough the float line parted as we were heaving it in due to chafe through the ridiculous square door through the bulwarks.

10. While waiting for him to heave in the hose and reeve a fresh float line, I tried it up alongside. I was yawing up to three degrees and on enquiry I found that he was also so I suggested to him that it looked borderline to me and when he agreed I gave up the Abeam Method for the time being.

11. After lunch we successfully fuelled astern. We tried a new rig using the freeing ports at the after end of the FX and we took in 50 tons. Then a leak was noticed and we just got shut off in time. The hose had chafed against the square edge where a shot mat proved insufficient protection and when we came to ease the pipe out there was quite a big gash there. The fuel on the port side was washed off next morning before we went to sea.

12. The weather by then had eased considerably and though it was 1630 I decided that my Aim must be achieved or you'd be let down. So we went up abeam and fuelled very successfully there, taking in 70 tons before it got too dark for me to see comfortably. I was delighted with this day's work as I think were the whole Ships Company despite the fact that we did not anchor till 2030 and gave no leave.

Stern gland trials

13. On Monday we did 16 and 20 knots for two hour periods for Cdr (E) to experiment with the stbd stern gland which had been overheating and losing oil. The trials were successful and Chief thinks he knows what was the cause and how to prevent recurrence. Thank goodness.

More Miles

14. When we left Portland yesterday it was again blowing a gale and we were seen off by a boat full of cameramen and BBC Television cameras sent out at the request of Admiralty. We did eight run over the Measured Mile on Anvil Point, at 10 and 18 knots with and without the fins out. Hugh Knollys has not yet reported the results – we were of course trying to get a measure of the effect of the fins but I fear they may not be too easy to go because of the high wind and sea. I felt quite seasick.

Visitors

15. In accordance with your instructions, we embarked for the trip from Portland to Pompey My WYNN, the Trinity House pilot which is relieving Mr Brayne, and two members of the Queen's Flight, Wing Cdr GRINDON and Flt Lt McCARTHY. I put the latter in Household Cabins and it has been particularly nice the three of them on board. My Wynn has been most interesting and I have directed Knollys to record his discussions with him to send to you. When he arrived he said that two more senior pilots than him declined the job. It seems they don't like the speed and tight schedule arranged and they are bothered about the two tight corners we have to turn and about having no tugs buttoned on through Tower Bridge. I like Mr Wynn very much. He is 51 years old and says he was probably chosen because he does four or more ships per week up into the pool. He strikes me as an honest man and a steady one. Mr Brayne has had a stroke.

Helicopters

16. I almost persuaded Gosport to do a helicopter landing on the Verandah Deck. I made them get clearance from Admiralty and this was obtained by signal structurally but later I had a signal saying all off (except for our official photographs from the Dragonfly) but that if we would lower a boat on anchoring they would winch our mail into it instead of on to us. I presume Harrison got on the phone and said don't you land on. Anyway there's a meeting to discuss the whole thing next week. I'm disappointed because that would have been the last of the jobs you gave me to do in the work-up.

17. It was a great thrill when the news was released about Prince Charles and Princess Anne. It happened on Sunday and the P.M.O. heard it first on a news bulleting to America. I was sorry I could not tell the Royal Yachtsmen first but it has given us a new job and everyone is very pleased. In order to get men in square rig ashore with white badges I have had to authorise the removal of Branch badges from working dress jerseys since the issue of the second sets has not yet been received onboard. I want every man to go ashore wearing a flash on his arm but I do not want the RY No. 1s to be worn by men dressed as seamen unnecessarily because (a) they must be perfect for Her Majesty and (b) they don't get another paid of cloth trousers for two years. So they will be allowed to wear them on Long Leave and Weekends (optional) otherwise white badges.

It's blowing hard and looks doubtful for entering Portsmouth Harbour in two hours' time but I've been ordered a Pilot and two tugs (inside) by C in C. I heard there was an awful gloom on the messdecks at standeasy I wandered round and said I'd do my best to get up harbour if the weather moderates. It's our steerage way at slow speed that worries me.

Yours sincerely,

Dear

In yours of 23rd February you apologise for not sending lengthy replies to my B N Ls but I assure you that I do not expect replies because they are intended to be News. In cases where I am out for an urgent answer I send a proper letter. All the same, your comments on what I write are carefully noted and John Cryer raises Minute Sheets on points requiring positive action.

Arrival

2. After being touch and go all day because of the force 8 wind we eventually got up harbour all right. A front passed over at 1430 and the wind dropped to force 4. I was pleased to have my opinion – that it would not be safe to enter harbour in the gale – confirmed first by the Senior Pilot who came out to us and later by QHM. The Pilot got us alongside with tugs but I could have done it far neater by myself! Anyway, it gave Mr Wynn, from the Thames, a good idea of how we handle.

3. QHM, an old acquaintance of mine and a Gunnery Officer (!!) Jack Unwin, and SO (Admin) to C in C, Scatchard, called to offer anything we required on behalf of their respective Admirals. I find Unwin most co-operative as indeed is everyone I have met so far in the Dockyard. I got permission from C in C for relations of officers and Royal Yachtsmen to be allowed in to see us berth and then come onboard. We had arrangements for ratings' friends below and about 150 came. I gathered from COS that it proved slightly embarrassing with the Press who complained at relatives being allowed in and not them. However, I did it as part of a policy to ensure Pride in the Yacht.

Calls

4. I called on C in C and he returned it personally and we had a pleasant talk in your Day Cabin which he admired a lot. I mentioned the Admiral's Inspection of the Yacht which I was under the impression you had asked him to carry out on your behalf but he seemed to know nothing about it. I showed him the Ward Room before he left.

5. Admiral Superintendent came onboard the day after we arrived and spent two and a half hours with me going all over the ship.

6. Admiral Robertshaw returned my call on him today and I showed him the Bridge and the mess decks. As you may know he was my CSO in the Far East, so I know him pretty well.

Refit

7. Thanks to the ground we had paved beforehand, the Yard were able to inspect the jobs on Saturday morning and they arrived onboard to start work early Monday. The whole attitude is of co-operation combined with disgust at John Brown's work. We have an excellent Constructor, Mr Grinyer, on the job and all seems very good so far. So much however depends on the weather because of the heavy painting commitment. Sixty Joiners have been allocated to Hampton's and Bath Cabinet people and we have about the same number of painters working onboard. There was a meeting presided over by Mr Harrison to fix the

dates of outstanding Trials and, briefly, the completion dates are Contractors – 24 March, Dockyard work except for painting – 26 March and all work 2 APRIL. Apart from the painting, the main upper deck work is on planning the decks, cleaning up and varnishing the teak rails and moving (and repainting) the Bow Coat of Arms.

Passes

8. We have an apparently cast-iron system of Passes so that no one without one is permitted onboard. Police at the gangways do the work and so far we have been saved much casual calling and general sponging.

Leave

9. Three quarters of the Royal Yachtsmen have today gone on leave, leaving behind the bare minimum to police the ship. I have had careful Security Orders brought into force because we cannot, of course, risk any nefarious damage to the vessel by a disaffected person.

Leave-breakers

10. They say it takes three years to train a Royal Yachtsman. Because of that I have taken a lenient view of four men who broke their leave by amounts up to half an hour due to over-sleeping. In the future there will be no relaxation at all but for this period of indoctrination I consider it is reasonable to accept a limited amount of what might be called “ordinary ship behaviour”. They just don’t realise that to be punished (in some way) is not sufficient to atone for an offence here. The sailors must learn that there is no half way measure – they play by the rules or they go.

11. However, as I reported by signal, I was unable to overlook the case of LSM Stanton. He missed the (RNB) bus from Birmingham at midnight and took a train at 10 A.M (which I do not believe was the first he could have) and between-times he returned home. He thus missed a whole day’s work (arrived back at 1545) and at the time that he was actually supposed to be waking over the gangway of BRITANNIA he was lying in bed at home because he had missed his bus. Having been investigated by No 1 (I allow no charge to be preferred onboard so that no man appears with his cap off as a defaulter) I said he must be drafted forthwith to RNB. Later he put in a request to see me to be permitted to remain in the Royal Yacht and a very strong story was made to me by his divisional officer. I saw him this morning but in spite of a heart rending appeal I decided I could not allow his request. I was not unduly influenced by the most salutary effect that this will have on the mess deck, yet I felt a real four-letter person after. However I am certain I did my duty.

Programme

12. The deperming was duly carried out. I found out by telephone conversation with DOD (Capt Litchfield) that he felt there was a risk so we must be done and you now have the proposal for sailing half a day early. General Browning and Milbank will come to see us tomorrow (which is one reason why I have started this letter earlier than usual) and I hope to get a lot of business settled then.

Standards

13. It seems that my letter about our allowance of standards has had effect because we have had the changes approved. I was just going to come up to you for further support but now it will not be necessary. Instead I hear from you that silk standards are not all that they are cracked up to be but I do not intend to climb down unless you would have me do so.

Helicopters

14. The reason for no helicopters last Thursday was that FO(Air) Home was so heckled by the Press who wanted to know all about it and when and where that he cancelled the exercise. We have now had two experts onboard and we have decided that it is perfectly in order for a landing to be carried out. Your letter saying that Prince Philip is pleased makes me even more determined to do so and I am arranging to land one on at sea during Radio Sea Trials on Monday 5th April.

Escort

15. It seems likely that LOCH ALVIE will be out Escort to Malta. DOD is providing one for safety rather than ceremonial reasons and he has discussed with the effect of LOCH ALVIE's top speed being only 15 knots.

I must now go into the whole question Accommodation for the homeward trip and will then write a proper letter. I am terribly depressed at the thought of not being able to feed in the Ward Room at one sitting. I suppose that will also put paid to any question of dining Her Majesty or HRH.

Yours sincerely,

Frensham Grove
Lower Bourne
Farnham
Surrey

13th March 1954

BRITANNIA NEWS LETTER No.16

Dear

I am writing this on leave. Eve was left this house when a great-aunt died last December and we moved in exactly two weeks ago. It is an enormous mansion with seven acres of land and we are busy having alterations made to modernise it a little and make it more economical to run. So my leave has come at just the right time, with a lot of furniture moving to do, likewise sorting out papers, clearing away rubbish and re-organising things while plumbers and painters do their worst by day. It's all very exciting and a lovely break from the worries of the ship.

Navy Rugger

2. To my consternation, I have been elected the Sole Rugger Selector for the Royal Navy XV next season. The Committee realise that I may well not be in the Royal Yacht for the whole season and I believe that something may be being done about a suitable job to go with selecting. Poor Eve, I tried to argue my way out of it for her sake but it's the sort of thing not many people will take on.

Leave

3. The Yacht is practically closed down. The bare minimum to keep watch and provide precautions against sabotage and fire are onboard and really it would be deadly quiet but for the work being done by the dockyard. By the grace of God we have had no rain for about ten days and I hope therefore that the first undercoat on the ship will stick. When I left on Monday evening the port side had its first coat and the stages were being transferred to starboard. Now I hear that they have finished stbd first undercoat also the masts and are on the upperworks. The Royal Apartments are due to be completed two weeks on Wednesday. Goodness knows how this will happen judging from progress up to the time I left but Mr Harrison and Sir Hugh Casson are visiting at least once a week and as before no one of the ships officers is let into the secret of what is being done.

Palace Visit

4. The controller accompanied General Browning and Mark Milbank when they visited us last Friday and we had a long walk round. The General was delighted with everything he saw and especially with the size of the cabins which he says are much roomier than GOTHIC. He reckons the Royal Staff cabins in BRITANNIA are better than the one he, as senior member of the Household, had in the GOTHIC last time!!

5. Milbank came back (after we had all lunched with the C in C) and had a further session with John Cryer and me over Accommodation. I told John to make the signal he did in reply to your letter to him but advised him to keep off details until you had seen and commented on Milbank's full proposal in the post.

Baggage

6. I have received several requests from people to take baggage in BRITANNIA out to Malta. How anyone can ask is beyond me – I think it is damned cheek- but I am taking the same line with everyone, that I regret that I will not carry any baggage or personal effects in the Royal Yacht. Latterly, I have been suggesting LOCH ALVIE as an alternative. She sails the same day and is in fact going to be our escort but maybe they really want either to get onboard in Malta or to say that their stuff is being brought out in the Royal Yacht. Both the Flag Lieutenant to C in C Med and his relief have asked!

Letter from the Med

7. As soon as you approved my painting suggestion I wrote and told the COS to C in C Med because I had dealt through him before. He replies that he does not think we had allowed enough time to paint anyway, observing that a weekend intervenes. You may remember that you originally were only going to give me four days but later increased it to a week. So much depends on the weather. I am not worrying at present because the work is (so far) going well at Pompey and Malta should not be necessary. On the other hand, in the early days after we reached Pompey and it was alternately raining and snowing. Admiral Hubback said one day that it might be necessary to do only the undercoats here and leave Malta to put on the top coat. I hope that won't be necessary.

Nore Meeting

8. The meeting at Chatham yesterday was most useful and you will have received three signals about thins arising therefrom. I was sorry to hear by telephone this evening that you will not pass the signal I asked for and referred to in one from you to me. It would have been nice for "FOR Y Ashore" to have been fully in the Press picture at the meeting because no one else seemed to be.

9. I was horrified to hear from Coleman about the buoys at Battle Tier not being moved further apart because Wynn, the Pilot, said they would have to be and I certainly think they must. I hope I have not gone against anything you particularly wanted. They said that you agreed after ringing up Clydebank and enquiring about the position of mooring pipes as an alternative to fairleads. I knew nothing about this or I would have raised the matter ages ago (BNL 13 para 4). They find that the job of stiffening the bulwarks is not what it seemed at first and we may get nothing done about the weakness. The buoys must be a distance away from the stem and stern or the pull on the buoys will be entirely upwards and when we fall back on the ebb the flood buoy will take all our paint off, and vice versa. The fairleads forward are 30 feet above the water and those aft about 20 feet.

10. I gather that Trinity House are thankful that Mr Brayne has gone sick because they would never have put him up for the job because of his age and senility. Now they have nominated their best man for the Pool. Did you get Brayne through Trinity House? I for the impression that they knew nothing about it until it was fait accompli.

11. We discussed the use of PLA boats and buoy-jumpers again and as I expected, everyone thought (a) we had Whalers and (b) had to hoist them by hand. Coleman said plaintively that Madden had said PLA boats were best. I will not comment.

12. On that somewhat discordant note I had better end. Thank you for your personal one of 3rd March which has reached me on leave. I am very sorry you were not in the picture about me having a full crew for BRITANNIA. I gave you a chit in type last October showing the state then of our Selections and pointing out the duplication in every rating except Weeks and the Communications people. As it was during a visit to Clydebank it must have got lost among your papers. I think that our experiences during the work up have justified what I did and I certainly could not have done without a full and separate Royal Barge's crew.

13. There would not be room in the ship without overcrowding to take two crews home so I propose to transfer "my" crew – including the best Petty Officer in the ship – to GOTHIC so that they can man the barge (ex GOTHIC) when it is used at the Pool of London. I have arranged for that Barge to replace C in C Nore's and I hope that – if you approve the idea – that will sugar the pill slightly. I am afraid that the Royal Barge's crew is – somewhat naturally – composed of our best men so that they would not be the ones to be liquidated after the Tour. I would therefore like them to rejoin BRITANNIA and later we can decide which men have to leave. The question of who goes is further complicated by the large number of men rated up on receipt of B 13s. We are overborn in Ldg Smn. POs and LSMs and I hope my signal in reply to yours on that matter – dictated over the telephone from here – was clear.

Press

14. One more point before closing. Yesterday at the meeting I met a dumb CNI chap. He enquired about the Press seeing the Yacht after the Tour and I suggested (a) Portsmouth not London and (b) not more than about 100 at a time a.m. and p.m. in separate parties on the same day. He of course has to put it up officially but after discussion I thought the above seemed best. What a ghastly day that will be!

Yours sincerely,

P.S I hope this letter does not seem to factitious. I do not mean to do anything you would no wish, that through is always foremost in my mind before I say or do anything.

Dear

Here I am back from leave and on a strange typewriter because Eve has kept hers like she threatened to do!! I had a lovely, if most exhausting, leave and we have by now cleared out most of the cupboards and drawers and a lot of the furniture to go for sale. We never actually got down to the painting we had hoped to do because of the presence of many workmen altering the plumbing, re-decorating, etc, but by now our rollers ordered at the Ideal Home Exhibition will have arrived and I shall get to work next week-end. We are much more excited by the house by now and not so frightened by its size. Eve stays on there until the school holidays start (early April) then goes to Yorkshire for a fortnight before Malta.

Progress onboard

2. Having only had this one day to look around – and I deferred writing until I had seen the vessel again – this letter will be sketchy. While I was away I was kept informed only of important things and I am very pleased at the initiative of my officers in my absence. The first thing that caught my eye was the gloss on the funnel and at closer quarters the masts have more shine on them than ever before. Two undercoats are on the side both sides and AS awaits a favourable weather forecast from Lee before ordering the go ahead with the glossy coat.

3. Woodwork everywhere shows the effect of hard and personal treatment by the dockyard. Thus, the decks have been hand planed in many places and the polish on the rails has to be seen to be believed.

4. God knows how Hamptons will finish the Royal Apartments by the day after tomorrow despite the fact that two van loads of furniture and carpets arrived this afternoon. There seems to be so much more paint needed. Thank goodness there is time before everything else is ready. Sir Hugh Casson didn't help matters by lowering the position of the light fittings last week after all were installed! Then the roof of the Verandah is planned to be green and white stripes but Mr Harrison suddenly realised it was supposed to match our Ceremonial Awnings which are of course red and white. Walking round today with Admiral Lubbock I almost dropped a brick talking on my views on Green and White awnings because he told me – just in time – it was he as CS Malta who made green and white ones for the Med Fleet after the war.

The Press

5. I am not sure how much you watch the home papers for BRITANNIA's (usually adverse) Press. If you are not fully informed, reference to our Scrap Book will soon bring you up to date. There are two outrays (a) Mr Bonce M.P. nad our COST and (b) why can't the Press come onboard. Last week, Hugh Knollys rang me up and asked did I know a Lt Cdr LONGDEN and if so had I invited him onboard. The answer to both was NO but the man talked his way onboard as my acquaintance. Hugh suspected afterwards that he was from the Press. He was – see the Daily Sketch of a day or two later. I am very sorry for this lapse on the part of my officers but you know how effusive people can be and they did not want to offend anyone who might have been a friend of mine. When they saw him, after the

preliminary skirmish on the telephone, they thought he was probably no friend of mine(!) but by then it was too late. At least his wife did not get onboard also and of course he got no further than the Ward Room.

Royal Barge

6. I am sorry about the Royal Barge propeller shaft bombshell exploded in my signal to you just sent. Sandy should have turned it over to Hott. Owing to the heavy engines in the boat the distortion on hoisting was anticipated and all three shafts are fitted for uncoupling before hoisting. We have not been doing it hence three bent shafts and a lot of vibration I noticed in the boat at Rosyth. The shafts are now straightened and three spares will also be carried but every time the boat enters or leaves the water there is fifteen minutes work to be done.

Answers

7. In a letter of yours dated 23rd Feb brought up by John Cryer for action on some points I see that I need to reply to a thing or two – so I will break from my rule for once and include action here when normally I confine myself to news.

8. Her Majesty's heels – rubber mats (white) are being supplied for the gangways.

9. You say you have not received a copy of my orders re Smoking. All is in my Royal Yacht Orders. If yours and Madden's copies have not yet been received, please signal and duplicates will be sent. No 17 refers.

10. We intend to paint at Malta (if necessary, but God forbid) with Dockyard hands. I note your remarks on Economy but honestly I don't think I would like to do it in the time, assuming there is something also to be done as well such as getting in food or oil. The Dockyard here use 36 experts and they can do one side in one day. You know my complement and that four days would be needed to do two sides trice. I could afford four days with all other work stopped – especially as I must spread awning some time before the Queen arrives. (The Stokers would help of course but my argument still holds.)

If you will excuse me writing more now until the end of this week, I'll stop. I hope this will catch you at Freemantle but it really is horrifying how close we are getting to being on the job. Mind you, Sir, I'm perfectly confident and I shall not hesitate to use signals more and more as letters become more outmoded. There is a distinct air onboard among those who have of course had their leave of "Let's get started". It's wonderful that we start with the Royal Children, somehow it has given us an extra fillip-if such were needed with such a placement prospect in May awaiting us.

Yours sincerely,

Dear

The pace is hotting up, principally in the number of people one has to see. Many of the Directors of the Firms who have been making the stuff for the Yacht have been coming down with passes given to them by Admiralty (I suppose), this today for instance I have seen people from Dictograph and from Hamptons over and above purely Naval people like D.M.C. who also paid us a visit.

Progress

2. Despite their date for completion having been two days ago I still think the Contractors aft will be hard pressed to finish before the Final Inspection of the Royal Apartments next Wednesday! Thank goodness we have just that little time as a cushion before we go for our day at sea on Monday week. The furniture is in aft and the carpets are all laid except in the outer passage where painting is still going on. The Verandah is nowhere near finished. Everything looks extremely nice, especially the Dining Room.

Painting

3. We have been lucky with our paint. The top coat went on the port side on Tuesday and starboard next day and still it has not rained. Instead there was a strong wind and the paint is very "dusty" but we hope to remedy that with fresh water washing. A.S. today asked in that connection how many chamois leathers we had and he was horrified when I told him twelve. I think he is going to tell SNSO to give us what we want because he says he does not want to have his coat of paint ruined by us using anything other than chamois on it. I have told him the story of us and DNE and that I have only recently sent my official request to you for support in getting the chamois now that our experience has shown how ridiculous is the alternative sponge cloth DNC said was all we could have.

4. The funnel really is beautiful. It is a shame that it is bound to get smoky on passage but I will have it washed (by the stokers) more regularly than we were able to do during the work-up. Now the dockyard painters are on the white round the Boat Deck and the screens. Incidentally, to paint the side 50 painters were used with 44 stages and it took them 9 hours to so each side. It would never be practicable for the painting to be done by the Ships Company because, for one thing, we do not carry any stages and if we did we have nowhere unsightly to stow them.

Tape recording

5. You never told me whether you received the tape recording of the Dedication Service. Did you?

Saluting Platform

6. The Saluting Platform for the Queen on top of the Compass Platform looks far better than I ever expected. My worries are that it may warp and that it will take ages to get erected up there. It is comparatively thin and – thank goodness – nothing like the monstrosity that was built for SURPRISE. The way up there is draughty but I think it will be quite cosy for two

inside. There is as you know no room for more than two or three people up there. I have just remembered that you want a voicepipe between Compass Platform and the erection so much check up tomorrow that it is being fitted. There was much opposition when I told Mr Harrison it must be done.

Visits

7. 1st Sea Lord and Controller walk round informally on the 6th and the First Lord accompanied by the Naval Secretary on the 7th. I am so sorry I got the wrong end of the stick over C in C doing our Inspection. Instead, he will walk around the Ships' Company at Divisions and then on round the ship on the 13th. I awaited your signal before asking him, through the Chief of Staff, so everything is on a basis.

P.L.A.

8. Coleman and a Captain Edwards who deals with buoys came to see us this week. It seems that the buoys are only 380 feet apart but they are going to lengthen them to about 490. Did you think we would put the cable out through the hawsepipes I wonder. (We cannot of course eat the anchors.) It was a most profitable visit and they were astonished at the size of the vessel and particularly at our freeboard right forward. I think Coleman is now perfectly satisfied about us using our boats should you decide as I hope you will. His boats will be standing by on call and I have not interfered at all with the arrangements made by the Admiralty should you prefer to use PLA boats and accept the delays.

9. Coleman is going to run No.1 and Parry over the course at 1700 on the 7th when current conditions will be the same as on 15th May. At the same time, No 1 will have a much needed reconnaissance of landing places and all that and get in touch with the Police.

Royal Baggage

10. I have, as you see, from a signal started the ball rolling over the disembarkation of baggage directly after Her Majesty has landed. I am convinced that we must get it all out at once otherwise will catch up with us and we shall be swamped with Press and other visitors in the days that follow. Bevan, the Baggage Officer, will accompany No 1 on the 7th when he will accompany the Army. I hope that Milbank will do before then what I asked him to do re firing pongos to handle everything ashore including the Customs.

Conclusion

11. I've not hear from you for ages so there's no more news to give you at present. I am waiting to hear your rulings on a number of matters including how many Rangers (on come) in the Ward Room, what to do about the Royal barge's crew, and other things I cannot at the moment remember. We're all very happy here. I wouldn't say we were rearing to go just at the moment because we have a few things we want to do before them such as spread some of the awnings for the first time ever. We plan to do this for Royal and Verandah decks after our day at sea on the 5th.

Yours sincerely,

Dear

I suppose one day we shall really be able to say that we are clear for once and all of civilian workmen. It's rather a fine sight today to see streams of them going over the side with their gear. All from Hampton's and Bath Cabinet have left and tonight the Dockyard also are off. I'm thankful all the same that I inserted in the programme our Day at sea on Monday because that has forced the pace considerably.

Royal Apartments

2. Admiral Dumford-Slater carried out the Final Inspection of the Royal Apartments on Wednesday. Half an hour after it was completed, all the workmen poured back in and continued polishing and even painting in some cases. It all looks very beautiful however and I dearly wish that the Press and Mr Dence M.P. could come and see it all in its simplicity and lack of expensive of lavish ornament. I won't describe it all to you because you will see it when you take over. I have now given orders that all curtains are to be drawn and of course all is locked. The price of a photograph of Her Majesty's Cabin is about £500 (from the Press) I believe.

3. To quote an example of the lengths to which people go to get onboard, Cdr(L) brought in to me yesterday two gentlemen who had BRITANNIA passes and who wanted to be shown the electric light fittings in the Royal Apartments because they had been made by their firm. One was the Managing Director and the other the Sales Manager and they were astonished when I refused to show them anything. They asked if they should go ashore and ring anyone up to get permission and I told them that the chap who gave permission was myself and I was not giving it. So they left disgruntled and I warned the Duty Officers against similar attempts in my absence.

Royal Chart House

4. The map of the world for the above has been stuck up today and it looks very nice.

Admiral Superintendent

5. I went and saw Admiral Hubbeck as soon as I received your signal of reply to my letter about the Docking data. He quite understands the situation and says he would never have approved the proposed one had he been consulted. The date will be put off until you wish. To do a quick docking as you suggested is really out of the question at present because it would mean repainting the ship at once because of the marks made by the shores.

6. The Admiral has been most helpful and kind to me. This forenoon for instance he rang up to say that he heard that all his painters and woodworkers would be completed onboard by the evening but if there was anything else I wanted doing I had only to ask Mr Grinyer. I thought it was so nice of him to bother to ring me personally to say that.

John Browns

7. Sir James McNeill and Mr J, Brown came to see us today. I showed them all round aft and had a lunch party for them including Eve, Peggy Madden and Mr Grinyer. The Doctor was in very good form and I think he enjoyed himself. He has done off to the Naval Architects Dinner at RNC Greenwich tonight.

Letters

8. I have not heard from you for ages but I suppose there is not much to write about and of course you must have been extremely busy with the change of Freetown Plan. Thank you for the signal about NOBLE. You must have read my thoughts because I was even then drafting one to ask for your final answer. I think he wants to leave before we sail and thus leave the Department under CYS Lucas (who joined as E. Yeo). There are other matters on which I await your ruling but I hesitate to worry you for answers because I do not want to give the impression that I do nothing but criticise your decision from this end. For my part, I am sending more signals because letters take such ages to get through as we get closer.

Departure

9. I am very much in the throes of the planning for our departure when Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother and Princess Margaret come down. C in C's staff is doing it of course but both they and Milbank seem to work a lot (naturally) through us. It is causing that I –so entirely unversed in dealing with Royalty – should have to play a leading part on this very first occasion of meeting them. It's an intriguing new problem that I enjoy having thrust at me.

Royal children

10. We are planning a number of things for the amusement or indoctrination into Naval ways of the Royal children. We have the red baise swing from V AND A. I am arranging a wooden sand pit to go on the Verandah deck and small scrubbers, squeegees and brooms are going to be available in case they should wish to join in at cleaning stations. We are getting special Children's Mae Wests. I shall of course discuss all this with their Nanny next Thursday.

11. I have not finally decided on my arrangements for their physical safety except that there will be a rating for each child whenever it is on deck. Probably two special chaps will be told off because I believe that that would be better for the children but I will also have reliefs for meal hours and so on. We are canvassing over the mooring pipe holes and other places where small things might climb into danger and probably having a gate for at least one of the ladders.

I will stop now as I seem to have nothing more in mind at the moment to tell you and Colin. Everything is bearing a very even strain this end and I am looking forward to the next three weeks a lot. I hope you are having lovely weather across the Bay of Bengal.

Yours sincerely,

Dear

On this swanky paper it seems appropriate that my final letter to you should be written with us so nearly ready for duty and with most stores onboard. Although, I don't think I will ever be completely satisfied with the state of the paintwork, woodwork, messdecks, boats, etc because No 1 and I look at all with a much more critical eye than most and also of course from closer quarters than most yet nevertheless I think BRITANNIA is looking confoundedly nice. I am more proud of her now than ever before. The Dockyard workmen have all left at last tho' there may be a few coming tomorrow to finish varnishing the teak rail and a lot of the Ships Company have gone on Long Week Hol. We have got down to polishing and general cleaning up this week and thanks to fine weather much progress has been made.

Awnings

2. We spread the Royal and Verandah Deck awnings for a stretch and an airing, also the Ceremonial Awnings and side curtains for both. They need to be spread for quite a time yet to stretch into proper shape and I will do so in Malta. The after stanchion on the Verandah Deck folded up (literally) under the strain and the Dockyard had to renew the struts with solid instead of hollow bars.

Radio Telephone

3. It was fascinating hearing your voice on the telephone this forenoon and I hope that all the matters you mentioned will receive the attention you want. We hoisted the Land Rover on Wednesday but can easily change it for the ... if you say the word.

Day at Sea

4. Monday was wonderful value. It was fine when we sailed and the forenoon's programme went off perfectly. The Coastal Forces did their rehearsals with us and our Radio Trials were entirely successful – so much so that the experts consider that all our troubles have been located and even the lack of insulators in the main rigging may not prove to be essential. Around lunchtime it began to blow up and the Helicopter Trial was spoilt. Spalding did in fact manage to get his wheels on twice but with a squally force 5 wind condition more risky and to be honest I was scared stiff. Winching was easy and should present no difficulty in almost any weather. We got photographed by an Anson from Ford and we exercised seaboats, steering gear breakdowns, and tried all the things we could think of. It was a most useful day if only because of all the cobwebs it cleared away. Coming directly after leave we needed just that to shake people up and to us all together again as a team.

5. We took Reggie Woodford and Tod Sandy out with us. I hope perhaps that the former will have written to you as he at one the following morning – said he wanted to. He wrote a delightful letter afterwards saying how it was probably his last day at sea in the R.N. and how pleased it should be so in BRITANNIA. We had a Guest Night on return to harbour with the V&A's as Mess Guests. For the first time we had the candelabra and the mess looked lovely. All of us dined and there was a maximum number of guests and as I said we were still going at a very late hour. Monday was a good day.

First Sea Lord

6. Tuesday brought the First Sea Lord and the Controller. I had all the officers there but otherwise work continued and we spent an hour and a half going round. He struck me as being out of sorts, - he looked pale and seemed absent minded.

First Lord

7. By comparison, Mr J.B.B. Thomas was as charming as he always is and I thoroughly enjoyed showing him everything. He spent an hour here and was most interesting about Dance, the Press and all that. He told me to tell you that the Queen must not worry because he thinks he has got the measure of things and people now accept for the Sunday Express.

CNI and the Press

8. CNI's people have been on the phone to us a lot this week in connection with the Press Facility of 16th May, our departure from here next Wednesday and questions asked after the DNC's paper to the Institute of Naval Architects. I was handicapped by not being included in the address of your signal authorising the Facility but it was soon apparent that a signal had been made.

Security

9. I gather that it was your wish that BRITANNIA should be given the once over by the Security people like SURPRISE was. Admiral Robertshaw sent for me to tell me that C in C had at last approved it and as a result Cdr Clayton will be here on Tuesday together with Major Boddington.

Loram

10. Lt Cdr Loram has joined and I can't tell you how pleased I am to have him. I am taking the liberty of giving him tasks such as testing Dictographs, lights and bells aft and I hope he will get enough of our "atmosphere" to be able to interpret us to the Household while at the same keeping me in the picture as to their requirements.

Visit from Palace

11. Mark Milbank, Sir Dermot and Mrs Lightbody lunched with me on Thursday. During the two hours I spent showing them round I got lots of information I was after and delighted as the Nanny seemed to be with the arrangements I have put in hand for the children I myself was delighted that what I had in mind seemed to be acceptable to them. Each will have brooms, scrubbers, dust-pans and all that (being made now with their names on), we have a lovely slide from Royal to Verandah Deck starboard side, a sand pit in front of the Verandah, an inflated liferaft on deck for climbing in and out of, a 'skimmer' available whenever required (on deck of course) for imaginary driving (I know so well how children can spend hours at a time doing that). My two Lifeguards (a Ldg Smn and an AB) will be always waiting on deck and for each child and will only be relieved by the Relief Lifeguards (two SMs) for meals etc.

And so, on the crest of a wave, I end my B N L series with the exciting thought that it's under three weeks now before I see you and turn over to you a lovely Yacht. I hope you have a comfortable run in the aircraft from Aden and perhaps I may speak to you over the radio again before then.

Yours sincerely,