



OFFICE OF AIR FORCE HISTORY

Ground Floor, Scherger Ave, FAIRBAIRN ACT 2600, AUSTRALIA
Postal address: Department of Defence, Air Force, PO Box 7932, CANBERRA ACT BC 2610

Dr Timothy L. Francis
Histories Branch Head
Histories and Archives Division
Naval History & Heritage Command
Washington, DC
202-433-9669

Dear Dr Francis,

I was recently approached by Air Marshal David Evans (Ret) with an e-mail you had passed to him via the USN's Naval Attaché to Australia, Captain Holbrook. I believe the e-mail was prompted by Air Marshal Evans' request for assistance in correcting errors in Dr Samuel Morrison's *History of the United States Naval Operations in World War II*. In particular, Air Marshal Evans was seeking to provide some measure of redress for Mr Eric Geddes and his fellow crew members of the RAAF's No 32 Squadron who feel slighted by claims they did not provide adequate sighting reports of the Japanese fleet prior to the Battle of Savo Island.

I believe you are seeking copies of the relevant documentation concerning the missions flown by the Hudson crews who identified Admiral Mikawa's fleet as it approached the chain of islands north of Savo Island, as well as records confirming the dispatch and receipt of the enemy sighting report to the Allied vessels at Savo Island.

Please find enclosed a copy of those records I have located to date regarding the operations of the RAAF's No 32 Squadron, the unit which made the two sighting reports, and extracts from witness testimonies to the enquiry into the loss of HMAS *Canberra* during the Battle of Savo Island. Unfortunately more detailed after-action reports from No 32 Squadron have not been located and the records enclosed from the unit are of little real value. The testimony of the officers from HMAS *Canberra* however are clear in indicating that the enemy sighting report, as described by Mr Geddes as being sent at the moment of the sighting, were received by ships at Savo Island.

I am aware of claims that the signal dispatched from No 32 Squadron after the aircrew had returned to base was changed to omit certain details regarding the force disposition of Mikawa's fleet. In particular, references to 'gun boats' was excluded. Further, it appears that Dr Morrison claimed that the sighting report from No 32 Squadron was delayed due to negligent performance by the aircrew after the flight was completed.

Accordingly I have endeavoured to locate records from the period to confirm or disprove these claims, however to date have been unable to locate primary source documents that address this matter. However, the testimony by the ship's officers of HMAS *Canberra* would indicate that they were in receipt of the original sighting report sent by No 32 Squadron while still airborne, as this signal included reference to the gunboats, and that the report was received in good time to respond accordingly. I believe that there are similar records from the USS *Chicago* relating to this matter, but I have been unable to access these records directly.

Rather than delay my response to you any longer by conducting further searches for additional records, I have decided to send to you what we have so far. However if you would like further research done on this matter I would be only too happy to assist. So please feel free to contact me directly if there is anything we can do.

Yours Sincerely,



Martin James
RAAF Historian
Office of Air Force History

Tel: (02) 6128 7032

Email: martin.james@defence.gov.au

20 March 2014

OPERATIONS RECORD BOOK

R.A.A.F. Form A.50.

No. of Sheet 11

of (Unit or Formation) 32 Squadron

Place.	Date.	Summary of Events.	References to Appendices.
	August 1942		
Moresby-Moresby	1	A16-192. Dep. 1230Z/1. Ret. 1505Z/1. Sgt. Clarke. Operation PM51. Drop supplies.	
Moresby-Moresby	1	A16-192. Dep. 0330Z/1. Ret. 0435Z/1. Sgt. Clarke. PM36 Patrol.	
Horn Is-Horn Is	1	A16-223. Dep. 2100Z/31. Ret. 0457Z/1. P/O Hawthorne. Search Area A.	
Moresby-Moresby	1	A16-218. Dep. 2215Z/31. Ret. 0509Z/1. P/Lt Manning. Convoy PM37.	
Amberley-Moresby	1		
Horn Is.	1	A16-205. Dep. 2200Z/31. Arrived H.I. 0738Z/1. W/C Kingwell. Travel.	
Horn Is-Horn Is	2	A16-185. Dep. 2100Z/1. Ret. 0515Z/2. P/O Hawthorne. Search area A.	
Horn Is-Horn Is	2	A16-223. Dep. 2100Z/1. Ret. 0341Z/2. P/O Pennyquick. Intercept vessel. Hor 49.	
Moresby-Moresby	2	A16-192. Dep. 0305 Z/2. Ret. 0750Z/2. Sgt. Clarge. Convoy. PM53.	
Moresby-Moresby	2	A16-218. Dep. 2105 Z/1. Ret. 0347Z/2. P/Lt Manning. Convoy. PM 42.	
Moresby-Moresby	2	A16-218. Dep. 2045Z/2. Ret. 2140Z/2. P/Lt. Manning. Supply dropping. PM55.	
Horn Is-Horn Is	3	A16-205. Dep. 2100Z/2. Ret. 0515 Z/2. S/L Lear. Search A. Hor 1.	
Horn Is-Horn Is	3	A16-185. Dep. 2100Z/2. Ret. 0250 Z/3. P/O Pennyquick. Recco. Hor. 2.	
Horn Is-Moresby	3	A16-223. Dep. 0300Z/3. Arr. 0656Z/3. P/O Robertson. } Travel.	
Moresby-Moresby	3	A16-157. Dep. 2100Z/2. Ret. 0420Z/3. P/Lt Murphy. PM45.	
Moresby-Moresby	3	A16-192. Dep. 0001Z/3. Ret. 0801Z/3. Sgt. Clarke. Anti-Sub. PM46.	
Horn Is-Horn Is	4	A16-205. Dep. 2100Z/3. Ret. 0506Z/4. S/L Lear. Search A. Hor 3.	
Moresby-Horn Is	4	A16-173. Dep. 2328Z/3. Arr. 0238Z/4. Sgt. Airy.) 0109 Z/4. Sgt. Clarke.) Travel.	
Moresby-Moresby	4	A16-185. Dep. 2046Z/3. Ret. 0609Z/4. P/O Laws. Patrol. PM1.	
Moresby-Moresby	4	A16-223. Dep. 2053Z/3. Ret. 2208Z/3. P/Lt Milne. Supplies dropped. PM60.	
Moresby-Moresby	4	A16-223. Dep. 0510Z/4. Ret. 0820Z/4. P/Lt Milne. Supplies dropped. PM60.	
Moresby-Moresby	4	A16-218. Dep. 0647Z/4. Ret. 0750Z/4. Sgt. Stutt. Photo recco. PM62.	
Horn Is-Horn Is	5	A16-205. Dep. 2100Z/4. Ret. 0520Z/5. P/O Laws. Search A. Hor 4.	
Horn Is-Horn Is	5	A16-205. Dep. 2100Z/5. Ret. 0510Z/6. S/L Lear. Search A. Hor 5.	
Moresby-Moresby	5	A16-223. Dep. 2000Z/4. Ret. 2340Z/4. P/Lt Milne. Dropped supplies. PM6.	
Moresby-Horn Is	5	A16-223. Dep. 0345Z/5. Arr. 0540Z/4. P/Lt Milne. Travel.	
Moresby-Fall R.	5	A16-218. Dep. 2047Z/4. Arr. 0015Z/5. Sgt. Stutt. Travel.	
Fall R-Fall R.	5	A16-218. Dep. 0545Z/5. Ret. 0620Z/5. Sgt. Stutt. Recco. PM 64.	
Horn Is-Moresby	5	A16-192. Dep. 2145Z/4. Arr. 2342Z/4. P/O Pennyquick. Travel.	
Moresby-Fall R.	5	A16-192. Dep. 0320Z/5. Arr. 0442Z/5. P/O Pennyquick. Travel.	
Moresby-Fall R.	5	A16-157. Dep. 2057Z/4. Arr. 2230Z/4. P/O Robertson. Travel.	
Fall R-Moresby	5	A16-157. Dep. 2317Z/4. Arr. 0615Z/5. P/O Robertson. Recco. PM 64.	
Horn Is-Fall R.	5	A16-173. Dep. 2326Z/4. Arr. 0741Z/5. P/O Shore. Recco. PM 6.	
Moresby-Fall R.	6	A16-157. Dep. 2200Z/5. Arr. 0155Z/6. P/Lt Milne. Travel.	
Fall R-Moresby	6	A16-157. Dep. 0415Z/6. Arr. 0545Z/6. P/Lt Milne. Travel.	
Horn Is-Amberley	6	A16-221. Dep. 2100Z/5. Arr. 0650Z/6. P/O Pennyquick. Travel.	
Amberley-Horn I.	6	A16-186. Dep. 220 Z/5. Arr. 0755Z/6. P/O Teede. Travel.	
Horn I.-Amberley	6	A16-223. Dep. 2108Z/5. Arr. 0550Z/6. Sgt. Clarke. Travel.	
Horn I.-Amberley	6		
Wagga	6	A16-160. Dep. 0300Z/5. Arr. 0145Z/7. P/O Strauss. Travel (180 hourly).	
Horn I.-Moresby	6	A16-186. Dep. 1900Z/6. Arr. 2350Z/6. P/O Teede. Travel.	
Horn I.-Moresby	6	A16-205. Dep. 1900Z/6. Arr. 2230Z/6. S/L Lear. Travel.	
Moresby-Moresby	6	A16-186. Dep. 0225Z/6. Arr. 0117Z/6. P/O Teede. Travel. (returned because of bad weather).	
Moresby-Moresby	6	A16-205. Dep. 0225Z/6. Arr. 0117Z/6. S/L Lear. Travel. " " " " " "	

Place.	Date.	Summary of Events.	References to Appendices.
Morooby-Horn I	6	*16-186. Dep.0410/86. Arr.0800Z/6. P/O Todd. Directed to search for sub. which	
"	6	A16-205. S/L Lear. } attacked Hamata and return H.I.	
Fall R.-Fall R.	6	*16-185. Dep.2200Z/5. Ret.0440Z/6. P/Lt Milne. Rocco. FR2.	
Fall R.-Fall R.	6	*16-192. Dep.2256Z/5. Ret.0528Z/6. P/O Shore. Rocco. FR2.	
Fall R.-Fall R.	6	*16-218. Dep.2256Z/5. Ret.0530Z/6. Sgt. Stutt. Rocco. FR2.	
Fall R.-Fall R.	6	*16-173. Dep.2256Z/5. Ret.0530Z/6. Sgt. Airey. Rocco. FR 2.	
Morooby-Fall R.	7	*16-157. Dep.2050Z/6. Arr.0031Z/7. P/O Robertson.	
Morooby-Fall R.	7	*16-185. Dep.2050Z/6. Arr.0031Z/7. P/Lt Milne.	
Fall R.-Fall R.	7	*16-157. Dep.0047Z/7. Ret.0750Z/7. P/O Robertson. Area B FR 61.	
"	7	*16-185. Dep.0158Z/7. Ret.0750Z/7. P/Lt Milne.	
"	7	*16-218. Dep.0017Z/7. Ret.0750Z/7. Sgt. Stutt.	
Fall R.-Horn I.	8	*16-192. Dep.1920Z/7. Arr.2250Z/7. P/O Shore. Travel.	
Fall R.-Horn I.	8	*16-173. Dep.1920Z/7. Arr.2250Z/7. Sgt. Airey.	
Fall R.-Fall R.	8	*16-157. Dep.2000Z/7. Ret.0500Z/8. P/O Robertson. Search Area B. FR 62-1.	
"	8	*16-185. Dep.0104Z/8. P/Lt Milne. " 62-2.	
"	8	*16-218. Dep.0241Z/8. Sgt. Stutt. " 62-3.	
Horn I.-Fall R.	8	*16-205. Dep.205Z/7. Arr.0200Z/8. P/O Law. }	
"	8	*16-185. Dep.0400Z/8. Arr.0714Z/8. P/O Law. Search Area B. FR 62.	
Fall R.-Fall R.	8	*16-192. Dep.0045Z/8. Arr.0440Z/8. P/O Shore. Travel.	
Fall R.-Horn I.	8	*16-173. Dep.2040Z/8. Arr.2445Z/8. P/O Hawthorne. Travel.	
Morooby-Horn I.	10	*16-173. Dep.2230Z/9. Ret.0736Z/10. P/O Hawthorne. Patrol 35Y. Hor 7-2.	
Fall R.-Fall R.	9	*16-205. Dep.2300Z/9. Ret.0555Z/10. P/O Law. Search Area B. FR5-1.	
"	9	*16-157. Dep.230Z/9. Ret.0555Z/10. P/O Robertson. " FR5-2.	
"	9	*16-185. Dep.2300Z/9. Ret.0630Z/10. P/Lt Milne. " FR5-3.	
"	9	*16-218. Dep.2304Z/9. Ret.0633Z/10. Sgt. Stutt. " FR5-4.	
Horn I.-Morooby	11	*16-192. Dep.0547Z/11. Ret.0840Z/11. P/O Shore. To assist search Area B.	
Horn I.-Horn I.	11	*16-192. Dep.0045Z/11. Ret. " W/O King. Call. Travel to Fly R.)	
Fall R.-Fall R.	10	*16-185. Dep.2350Z/9. Ret.0448Z/10. P/Lt Milne. Search Area B. FR 6.	
Fall R.-Fall R.	11	*16-185. Dep.2330Z/10. Ret.0630Z/11. P/Lt Milne. Area B. FR 8.	
"	"	*16-205. Dep.2330Z/10. Ret.0630Z/11. P/O Law.	
"	"	*16-157. Dep.2330Z/10. Ret.0630Z/11. P/O Robertson.	
"	"	*16-218. Dep.0358Z/11. Ret.0630Z/11. Sgt. Stutt.	
Morooby-Fall R.	12	*16-192. Dep.2055Z/11. Arr.2242Z/12. P/O Shore. Travel.	
Horn I.-Horn I.	12	*16-173. Dep.2100Z/11. Ret.0542Z/12. P/O Holmes. Area A. Hor 9.	
Fall R.-Fall R.	12	*16-185. Dep.2300Z/11. Ret.0617Z/12. P/Lt Milne. Area B FR9.	
Fall R.-Fall R.	12	*16-157. Dep.2300Z/11. Ret.0530Z/12. P/O Robertson. Area B FR9.	
Fall R.-Fall R.	12	*16-205. Dep.2300Z/11. Ret.0600Z/12. P/O Law. Area B FR9.	
Triville-Horn I.	13	*16-163. Dep.220Z/12. Arr.0200Z/13. P/O Cutler. Travel.	
Horn I.-Horn I.	13	*16-173. Dep.2100Z/12. Ret.0447Z/13. P/O Hawthorne. Area A. Hor 10.	
Fall R.-Fall R.	14	*16-157. Dep.2200Z/13. Ret.0550Z/14. P/O Robertson. Area B FR14.	
Fall R.-Fall R.	14	*16-192. Dep.2200Z/13. Ret.0605Z/14. P/O Shore. Area B FR 14.	
Fall R.-Fall R.	14	*16-185. Dep.2200Z/13. Ret.0119Z/14. P/Lt Milne. Area B FR 14.	
"	14	*16-205. Dep.2200Z/13. Ret.0630Z/14. P/O Law. Area B FR 14.	
Fall R.-Fall R.	14	*16-205. Dep.2200Z/13. Ret.0530Z/14. P/O Law. Area B FR 14.	
Horn I.-Horn I.	14	*16-163. Dep.2100Z/13. Ret.0500Z/14. P/O Cutler. Area A. Hor 52.	
Fall R.-Fall R.	15	*16-157. Dep.2025Z/12. Ret.0150Z/13. P/O Robertson. Area B FR 11.	

COMMANDER (E) O. F. McMAHON, R.A.N. AND LIEUTENANT COMMANDER JOHN PLUNKETT-COLE, R.A.N., EX-H.M.A.S. "CANBERRA" PRESENT.

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER JOHN PLUNKETT-COLE, R.A.N., CALLED AND CAUTIONED.

1. Are you Lieutenant Commander John Plunkett-Cole, R.A.N.?
Yes Sir.

2. Are you the senior surviving officer from H.M.A.S. "CANBERRA" present in Sydney?
Yes Sir, the senior executive officer.

3. Look at this report and tell the Board if it is an accurate report of the proceedings of H.M.A.S. "CANBERRA" up to the time you left her?

Yes Sir, that report was made almost entirely in the presence of Commander (E) McMahon, Lieutenant Commander Mesley, Lieutenant Commander Wight, whom I had present at a discussion. As a result of that discussion, that report was produced.

APPENDIX
"A"

4. Will you describe briefly the proceedings of H.M.A.S. "CANBERRA" for, say, 24 hours before the commencement of your report, so that the Board may judge under what conditions the ship was in the position reported by you?

At sunset the night before, Sir, the ship took station in company with U.S.S. "CHICAGO" to carry out a patrol to the south-eastward of SAVO Island, similar to the one which we were carrying out on the night of 8th/9th August, 1942, - that was the night of 7th/8th August. - During daylight on the 8th August, we were patrolling off Gavutu and Tulagi, and at dusk we were ordered to patrol in an area southward of Savo Island. That day we had a torpedo bomber attack. The aircraft were reported in the Bougainville area. We were all on the alert. The landing operation as far as I was able to tell had been suspended - all ships including transports were under way, steaming about in the area between Florida and Guadalcanal, and Savo Island, more or less aimlessly, but without getting too far away from their sphere of operations. There was a huge number of ships moving about in the area. At about 1200, as far as I can remember, 23 torpedo areas entered the area from a south-west direction, came around Savo Island at an extremely low altitude - about 20 feet - and proceeded to carry out an attack on the ships in the area. Aircraft were very hotly engaged - as far as "CANBERRA" was concerned, with 8", 4" Oerlikon guns, Machine Guns and Lewis guns. I, myself, saw three aircraft crash. I believe that only 2 of the 23 aircraft returned. I saw no torpedoes drop. The only damage I know of was a transport set on fire and burnt out by a blazing aircraft crashing on it. Damage was also caused to a destroyer by the same thing. When that attack had passed, the ships resumed their duties and the landing proceeded. At dusk, in company with "AUSTRALIA", "CHICAGO" and screened by U.S. Destroyers "BAGLEY" and "PATERSON" we proceeded to the area south-east of Savo Island to carry out a patrol similar to that ordered before. Paragraph 3 of my report covers that.

5. Were "Bagley" and "Paterson" A/S vessels?
As far as I know, yes Sir. That class of vessel is fitted.

6. Were they fitted with Raedar?
Yes Sir.

7. Did you personally see any simple or written orders ordering that patrol?

Yes Sir, signalled orders to the best of my belief. They were from CPG 62.6, who was Rear-Admiral Crutchley in H.M.A.S. "AUSTRALIA", Sir.

2.

Lieutenant Commander J. Plunkett-Cole.

8. Can you remember roughly the terms of that order?
It was a long signal, Sir. I think Lieutenant Commander Mesley would remember it.
9. In paragraph 3 of your report, you stated that "AUSTRALIA" parted company at 2115. Do you know why she left the Squadron?
I believe it was so that C.T.G.62.6 could confer with the Admiral in Charge on the Operation, in U.S.S. "McGawley".
10. Did the Admiral make any signal when he left you?
Yes, Sir. He signalled to the effect that that was what he intended to do. He said that he may rejoin later.
11. Were any night instructions received when establishing the patrol?
Not that I recall, Sir.
12. Were any signals made affecting the state of readiness during day or night at any time?
Not since 1000 on 6th August, 1942, when ships were ordered to assume the first degree of readiness.
13. So the ship had been in the first degree of readings ever since Thursday, 6th August?
By day, but not by night, Sir.
14. What was the reason for altering the degree of readiness by night?
I was present at a discussion on this matter with the Captain, Commander, Gunnery Officer and Navigating Officer on the Compass platform, and it came out that we might expect to be occupied with this duty for some time - at least until 11th August. That was the earliest date the duty was expected to be completed, and the fatigue of personnel would not allow of continuous maintenance of the first degree of readiness. It was decided that the time to relax was by night. In other words, the greatest danger apprehended was from air attack.
15. During daylight on 8th August, 1942, apart from the air attack which you have already described, were any other reports of enemy aircraft or surface craft received?
We were warned of a further impending air attack which did not materialise - we were warned to expect it about 1600. Other than that there were three enemy reports, only one of which I personally saw. I have mentioned that in my report. There was a force of cruisers, destroyers, and either transports or seaplane tenders in an area about 400 miles away.
16. Was any air reconnaissance carried out by our aircraft before dark on 8th August, 1942?
The reconnaissance was organized, and our aircraft's duty was an anti-submarine patrol which would not include an area one might expect to be covered by reconnaissance.
17. Did it carry out that patrol?
Yes Sir.
18. What time did it return?
About 1730, Sir. It had three patrols on one day and two on another.

L1 Lieutenant Commander Plunkett-Cole.

19. In paragraph 4 of your report, in referring to the enemy reports received, it is stated that it was realised that the enemy could increase speed so as to arrive in the combat area before dawn. Did that cause you to take any additional precautions?
No Sir - for the reason that the appreciation that this force was on its way to establish a base from which aerial torpedo attacks could frequently be carried out on the transport area. I am aware that the Captain's appreciation was that enemy surface craft were frequently seen in this area, and that abnormal activity at this time indicated preparations on the part of the enemy to prepare a base closer to Guadalcanal and Tulagi from which frequent air attacks could be carried out.
20. Have you any idea of the general air reconnaissance carried out?
No Sir.
21. You say the first degree of readiness was imposed by signal - was it ever relaxed?
No Sir, not to my knowledge.
22. In paragraph 5 of your report, you describe the situation on board by day and by night. Can you tell the Board briefly exactly what this meant as regards the various parts of the ship after sunset on 8th August - that is to say, what turrets were fully manned, etc.?
Two turrets were fully manned, Sir. Other turret Communication numbers were closed up. Half the 4" armament was manned - half the short range armament. One torpedo tubes crew was awake - the other was asleep in the torpedo space. With regard to the Damage Control personnel and 'tween Deck parties, I think the Commander (S) could tell you about them. On the Compass Platform was the Principal Control Officer, the Officer of the Watch, an Enemy Bearing Indicator operator, the Yeoman of Signals, the second hand of the Watch and the Midshipman of the Watch.
23. What length watches were they keeping?
About 3 hours, Sir. It was mutually arranged between them what parts of the night they should keep.
24. Also between ratings?
I am not sure about that, Sir.
25. What was your duty that night?
P.C.O., Sir.
26. When was your last watch?
From 2000 to 2250, Sir.
27. What were the orders for the P.C.O. off watch?
The Gunnery Officer slept in the Admiral's Sea Cabin; I slept in the Admiral's Sea Cabin; I am not sure where Lieut. Commander Wight went - he was a turret officer.
28. Were you there when the alarm sounded?
Yes Sir - in the Admiral's Sea Cabin.
29. You have said that the P.C.O.'s were in three watches. Was there also a Commanding Officer of the Watch?
No Sir.

Lieutenant Commander Plunkett-Cole.

4.

31. Would you please tell the Board what the Captain's normal routine was at night?
When he left the bridge Sir, he made a particular point of never switching a light on in his cabin after darkening ship because of the effect it would have on his eyes. He slept - if he slept at all - fully clothed in a chair at the end of a voice-pipe from the compass platform.
32. Do you know what time he left the bridge on 8th August?
He was on the bridge for most of my watch until 2250. After that, I cannot say, Sir.
33. Who relieved you at 2250?
Lieutenant Commander Wight, Sir.
34. During your watch, had you any enemy reports of any sort, or any indications of enemy activities?
I saw one report, which is one of the three I mentioned in paragraph 4 of my report. Which one I cannot say. It didn't alter the situation at all.
35. Do you remember what it was?
Three Cruisers, three, I believe, destroyers, and two Seaplane tenders or transports. Course south east about 120 degrees, Sir. Speed 12 knots - but I am not at all certain.
36. Did you look at that on the chart?
No Sir - there was no chart that included that area. If there had been I wouldn't have looked because of the effect of light on my eyes. The Captain was shown the report. It didn't tell us anything that we didn't know before. I heard no aircraft myself. We had been warned that submarines were operating in the vicinity.
37. Did you receive reports of aircraft as P.C.O.?
Not during my watch, Sir.
38. In paragraph 5 of your report, you say no guns were loaded. Can you explain that?
No Sir, particularly as it was the first night the ship had been at sea without having the ~~gx~~ guns loaded at sunset.
39. With what had they previously been loaded?
S.A.P., Sir. That is by night, Sir. H.E. by day. Actually they were not loaded by day. If there was an aircraft report or alarm, they were loaded with H.E. barrage by day, but not otherwise.
40. Had they been fired during the day?
Yes Sir. H.E. Barrage had been fired at Torpedo bombers - with, I believe, some success.
41. Were the guns loaded with H.E. after the torpedo attack?
I think they were, Sir, but I am not sure.
42. Was it normal for you to be at night with your star shell unloaded?
Yes Sir. There was a fuze setting ordered at dusk, depending on the visibility. This particular night the visibility was very varied.
43. You had only the single 4" guns either side?
Yes Sir.

Lieutenant Commander Plunkett-Cole.

45. What were your star shell guns by night?
The four 4" guns, Sir.
46. All of them?
Yes Sir.
47. Were any of them loaded?
No Sir, not at that time.
48. Were anti-aircraft guns - both long and short range - permitted to open fire independently, or by orders from the bridge?
By orders from the bridge, Sir, but there was nothing to prevent them opening fire independently if they saw a suitable target which they thought they should engage.
49. In paragraph 6 of your report, you stated that aircraft had been heard occasionally from 2300 onwards?
Yes Sir.
50. Was any particular apprehension felt, and action taken, in case these aircraft should have been enemy?
They were thought to be friendly, Sir.
51. Can you give the Board an outline of R.D.F. orders for the night?
Type 290 aircraft warning set closed down at sunset;
Type 271 commenced operating;
It was my opinion, and I think that opinion was shared, that the type 271 could be expected to be of very little value in those land locked waters. From my previous experience, I had no reliance on the set.
52. Do you know whether the Captain shared your views on this matter?
He did, Sir - I discussed the matter with him.
53. Had the set been operating satisfactorily until you were in these land locked waters?
Yes Sir.

WITNESS REMAINED PRESENT.

COMMANDER (E) O. F. McMAHON, R.A.N., CALLED AND CAUTIONED.

54. Are you Commander (E) Otto Francis McMahon, R.A.N.?
Yes Sir.
55. Were you the Senior Engineer Officer on board H.M.A.S. "CANBERRA" on the night of 8th/9th August, 1942?
Yes Sir.
56. Does this report give a fair and accurate account of all that occurred, so far as you were able to say?
Yes Sir.

APPENDIX "B"

57. Please state briefly how you set about compiling it?
After I had been taken on board the United States Ship, I informed the Senior Engineer he was to collect as many reports from men in the engine room department who could give any evidence which would throw any light on any important incidents which occurred in the ship, or any damage that had been sustained by the ship. I did this with a view to compiling my own report. I understand the same thing had been done in U.S.S. "FULLER". We therefore have many

Commander (E) McMahon.

76. Were the W/T bulkhead doors on the main deck closed?
They were in the following state, Sir. Each transverse bulkhead door was marked alternately "O" and "Y". They had been marked this way since 3rd September, 1939. This was done by order of Captain Patterson in 1939; he had the opinion that it was important to retain communication along the main deck. To reduce the effect of blast or flash which might occur on the main deck, the doors were open alternately port and starboard, Sir.
77. These doors being open - would they accentuate the fire through ventilation?
No Sir.
78. It would not?
No Sir.

WITNESS REMAINED.

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER J. S. Mesley, R.A.N., CALLED AND CAUTIONED.

79. Are you Lieutenant Commander J. S. Mesley, R.A.N.?
Yes Sir.
80. Were you the Navigating Officer of H.M.A.S. "CANBERRA" on the night of 8th August, 1942?
Yes Sir.

APPENDIX
"D"

81. Please examine this report and state if it is the report you have written yourself on this question?
That is correct, Sir.
82. Have you anything further that you think might assist the Board to add to it?
The only thing, Sir, was that an aircraft was seen by me about an hour after the action - flying over with two red lights showing. It was a seaplane, and looked very much like an American Cruiser's seaplane.
83. What is your duty during night cruising stations when on ~~the~~ patrol such as the one carried out on the night of 8th/9th August?
I had no definite duty other than the navigation of the ship. Each time before we altered course at the southern end of the patrol, I was called to fix the ship before altering, thereby gaining an idea of the set. The course was altered five degrees or so to adjust for set. I had been on deck at 2200, 0000, and I was down for a shake at 0145 to fix the position. Other than that, my duty was merely the safety of the ship.
84. Had you any arrangements with the Captain and Commander that one of you should be on the bridge at sea?
No Sir. I was normally on the bridge when the Captain was there, except that during this particular operation he had instructed me to get as much sleep at night as possible. I was handling the ship all day, and was called at least every two hours at night.
85. From whom did you get your orders for the patrol?
When "AUSTRALIA" left she told "CHICAGO" to carry on on these approximate courses which she had been steering - 305 degrees and 125 degrees. I adjusted the course on

Lieutenant Commander Mesley.

88. When "AUSTRALIA" left you that night, did she give any indication that she would return?
No Sir. The signal, as far as I can remember, was addressed to "CHICAGO". It was passed through us that she might return.
89. In other words, you were left in some doubt that if you met a ship in the night it might be "AUSTRALIA"?
Yes Sir. Actually, the night before a destroyer had appeared without any warning, and had gone past us. We hadn't been told what she was doing, and I don't know yet.
90. Did you see U.S.S. "BLUE" at any time during the night?
No Sir.
91. Was there any written instructions in the ship about this patrol?
Only the area in which we were to patrol, Sir.
92. Were there any written instructions in the ship as to patrolling of other ships in that area?
No Sir.
93. Do you know of any night policy signal?
There was no night policy signal, except that we got a signal to join the Admiral and patrol as for last night.
94. Was there any policy signal made before assuming patrol on the night of 8th/9th August?
Before dark, a signal had been received ordering "CHICAGO", "BAGLEY" and "CANBERRA" to join "AUSTRALIA" and patrol as for last night.
95. Had there been a policy signal on the previous night?
No Sir, not to my knowledge. We had joined after dark. We had to form single line ahead.
96. Were you aware of the presence of any enemy ships or aircraft in the vicinity?
There had been some reports of enemy surface craft received during the day. Two that came from submarines I had plotted. They came after dark. The third one came from aircraft and the position given was practically the same as the other two reports. I asked the Captain if he wished to see it on the chart. He said "No". I actually looked at the chart myself to check up the latitude and longitude. I didn't apply it. The Captain's opinion, discussed with me, was that all these reports referred to normal inter-island traffic. He actually mentioned that at Navy Office, Melbourne, there were constant reports of similar traffic.
97. In other words, you thought nothing unusual about these reports?
No Sir, I informed the Captain, and realised myself, that it would be possible for any of the ships mentioned in these reports to arrive in the transport area before dawn if they increased speed sufficiently. The actual speed required was 23 knots, I think. The reports had their speed as 12 to 15 knots.
98. To get from the reported position to the transport area they should have gone 23 knots?

10.

Lieutenant Commander Mesley.

99. Would it have been possible for them to get from the reported position to the action?
Yes Sir - I think their speed should have been 23.8, or something like that.
100. Did you feel in your own mind that you were fully informed of what reconnaissance was being carried on?
Definitely not, Sir. Our knowledge was absolutely incomplete. Task force 61, consisting of three aircraft carriers and numerous destroyers was in the vicinity - but we knew nothing. We didn't know what patrols they were carrying out.
101. It has been stated that various aircraft were heard from the bridge during the night before the action - have you any knowledge of this?
No Sir.
102. When you altered course at 0000, was the Captain on the bridge?
Yes Sir.
103. Was everything then normal?
Yes Sir. I worked out the set, reported to the Captain, and adjusted the course.

WITNESS REMAINED.

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER E. J. WIGHT, R.A.N., CALLED AND CAUTIONED.

104. Are you ~~knarknar~~ Lieutenant Commander E. J. Wight, R.A.N.?
Yes Sir.
105. Were you serving on board H.M.A.S. "CANBERRA" on 8th August, 1942?
I was, Sir.
106. What were your duties in the ship?
I was intelligence officer, Officer of quarters of the after group of 8" guns, and Principal Control Officer, Sir.
- APPENDIX "E" 107. Is this a copy of the report that you yourself made out?
Yes Sir.
108. Have you anything that might assist the Board that you wish to add to that report?
Subsequently, when survivors from U.S.S. "FULLER" came on board U.S.S. "BARNETT", Lieutenant Commander Plunkett Cole, the senior surviving officer present, called myself, Lieutenant Commander Mesley and Commander (E) McMahon together, and, in collaboration, compiled his report.
109. Would you know whether this is the report to which you refer?
That is the report, Sir.
110. Have you anything to add to this report?
Nothing to add to that report, Sir. In checking up on the times in my own report, when the final report was made, it was agreed that I, through lack of information, had estimated times to be approximately 10 minutes out. In the final report, it was stated that the Captain immediately ordered 'port 35' and the ship began to turn to port. I gave the order "Port 35" to open "A" arcs. Subsequently, I heard the Gunnery Officer give the order "Starboard 35".

Lieutenant Commander Mesley.

99. Would it have been possible for them to get from the reported position to the action?
Yes Sir - I think their speed should have been 23.8, or something like that.
100. Did you feel in your own mind that you were fully informed of what reconnaissance was being carried on?
Definitely not, Sir. Our knowledge was absolutely incomplete. Task force 61, consisting of three aircraft carriers and numerous destroyers was in the vicinity - but we knew nothing. We didn't know what patrols they were carrying out.
101. It has been stated that various aircraft were heard from the bridge during the night before the action - have you any knowledge of this?
No Sir.
102. When you altered course at 0000, was the Captain on the bridge?
Yes Sir.
103. Was everything then normal?
Yes Sir. I worked out the set, reported to the Captain, and adjusted the course.

WITNESS REMAINED.

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER E. J. WIGHT, R.A.N., CALLED AND CAUTIONED.

104. Are you ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Lieutenant Commander E. J. Wight, R.A.N.?
Yes Sir.
105. Were you serving on board H.M.A.S. "CANBERRA" on 8th August, 1942?
I was, Sir.
106. What were your duties in the ship?
I was intelligence officer, Officer of Quarters of the after group of 8" guns, and Principal Control Officer, Sir.
- APPENDIX "E" 107. Is this a copy of the report that you yourself made out?
Yes Sir.
108. Have you anything that might assist the Board that you wish to add to that report?
Subsequently, when survivors from U.S.S. "FULLER" came on board U.S.S. "BARNETT", Lieutenant Commander Plunkett Cole, the senior surviving officer present, called myself, Lieutenant Commander Mesley and Commander (E) McMahon together, and, in collaboration, compiled his report.
109. Would you know whether this is the report to which you refer?
That is the report, Sir.
110. Have you anything to add to this report?
Nothing to add to that report, Sir. In checking up on the times in my own report, when the final report was made, it was agreed that I, through lack of information, had estimated times to be approximately 10 minutes out. In the final report, it was stated that the Captain immediately ordered 'port 35' and the ship began to turn to port. I gave the order "Port 35" to open "A" arcs. Subsequently, I heard the Gunnery Officer give the order "Starboard 35".

11.

Lieutenant Commander E. J. Wight, R.A.N.

112. What was going on in the ship at that time? What was turned over to you?

The Course and speed - A.290 not manned - Type A.271 carrying out an all-round search - high frequency A/S set 'pinging' on Green 80 to Red 80 - Low frequency all-round listening watch - ship in a modified second degree of readiness - no guns loaded - "AUSTRALIA" had left Squadron earlier in order that C.T.G.62.6 might have a conference on board "McCRAWLEY" with C.T.F.62 - "AUSTRALIA" might rejoin us later. I was actually told the positions the destroyers were on the screen, and that "CHICAGO" had ordered us to carry on leading around on the patrol as we had been doing the night before.

113. Was there anything abnormal in the situation?
Nothing abnormal at the time I took over.

114. Were you at all surprised when the guns were not loaded?
I was, Sir - it was only the second occasion in some considerable time that the guns had not been loaded at night.

115. Do you know any reason for this?
No Sir.

116. Had you been informed of any enemy activity in the vicinity?
Yes Sir. At sunset, when I left my turret, I went to the Compass Platform to discuss with the Gunnery Officer splitting up the dark hours into three watches for P.C.O's. I was then present at a conference with the Captain on the events of the day, and I remarked that we had had High Level, Torpedo, and Dive bombing - the only thing left was surface craft, and, judging from this report (enemy report) we will probably get that tomorrow morning. The Captain, having previously discussed this report, was of the opinion that these ships were operating between Rabaul and somewhere in the vicinity of Boko Passage. As I remember it, the final report gave 3 cruisers, 3 destroyers, 2 aircraft tenders or Gunboats - course 120° - speed 15 knots. Two earlier reports had given substantially the same number of ships, but varying courses, and up to fifty miles apart.

117. While you were on watch, did you observe any enemy activity before the action started?

I heard an aircraft flying overhead at approximately 0100, and reported it down the voice-pipe to the Captain - I thought there was every possibility of it being friendly. I remarked to the officer of the watch that it was probably one of our own reconnaissance aircraft lost its way. The previous night, an aircraft, which subsequently proved to be friendly, came in after dark and approached "CANBERRA" and "CHICAGO" with Navigation lights on and made the correct recognition signal. Subsequently, it proceeded down to transport Area X-Ray, and I saw a cruiser operating a searchlight, possibly for the aircraft to land. I estimated then that it was possibly a friendly aircraft.

118. You stated in your report that at 0150 you observed an explosion which appeared to be a torpedo hit at about 6,000 yards. Presumably, as you were about 10 minutes out, this should have been 0140?

Yes Sir - It should be 0142.

12.

Lieutenant Commander Wight.

120. You got an average of about 4 hours a night?
Yes Sir.
121. Did you have any sleep in the day time?
No Sir, just a rest on top of the turret - there was far too much activity to attempt to sleep.
122. How long had you been in that state?
Since 1000 on 6th August, Sir. I subsequently found out after I made the original report, from reports from the turrets, that although the main armament was in a modified second degree of readiness, "A" "X" and "Y" turrets were closed up at the time of the action, and before the alarm was sounded. "B" turret's crew was in the vicinity of their turret, on "B" gun deck.
123. Were there any written Captain's Orders for the night?
No Sir.
124. Had you been informed of any policy in the ship for the night?
No Sir.
125. Can you say what lookouts were on?
Yes Sir - 6 Anti-aircraft lookouts, and four lower bridge lookouts.
126. Did you have an officer in charge of the lookouts?
No Officer was detailed, but the P.C.O. generally sends the Midshipman of the watch around at frequent intervals to see they are keeping a proper lookout and too they are relieving on the half-hour.
127. Can you give details of lookouts - more particularly the surface lookouts?
The normal procedure as I remember it was - Starboard foremost lookout - Red 5 to Green 90; Starboard after lookout Green 80 to Red 180. The port side the same.
128. That would be four lookouts?
Four surface lookouts that I remember, Sir. I am not sure if any of the A/A lookouts were used on that occasion.
129. Did the Captain's Standing Orders cover any action you might have to take on sighting enemy craft?
I knew what to do, but I don't remember seeing it actually written down.
130. Roughly speaking, what were your intentions had you sighted enemy craft?
Immediately call the Captain - the officer of the watch to call the Navigator - Get Main Armament loaded and on the target - Stand by to challenge. I expected by then the Captain would have arrived on the compass platform.
131. Had you any orders to open fire on enemy ships?
I have seen no orders to that effect, Sir.
132. Do you consider you had the discretion to open fire?
I would have assumed the responsibility, Sir, if the Captain had not been there.

133. Was the Main Armament in action on the 8th August 1942?

13.

Lieutenant Commander Wight.

134. What shells were fired?
6 H.E., one each from "A" and "B" turrets, 2 each from "X" and "Y" turrets. All guns were loaded with H.E. set to short barrage. At sunset, H.E. were unloaded from all guns, and stowed in the ready-use racks in the gun houses. That left Tilting trays empty, Pusher hoists loaded with H.E. fused D.A., half shell ring loaded with S.A.F. set to non-delay, half loaded with H.E. set to D.A.
135. Were the guns then reloaded?
The guns were empty - they were not reloaded.
136. On previous night, were they normally loaded at sunset?
They had been up to the night of Wednesday, 5th August.
137. Do you know why the guns were not reloaded?
I imagine the reason why the guns were not reloaded was that we could not be prepared for barrage fire against aircraft, bombardment, and action against surface craft simultaneously.
138. Would you have expected your Oerlikon guns to have fired without orders at night? Had they permission?
They were permitted to engage when they opened fire with star shell and Main armament.
139. Do you consider that any of your armament had permission to open fire without orders from you?
No Sir.

WITNESS REMAINED.

SUB-LIEUTENANT D. J. MEDLEY, R.A.N.V.R., CALLED AND CAUTIONED.

140. Are you Sub-Lieutenant D. J. Medley, R.A.N.V.R?
Yes Sir.
141. Is that a statement made out by you of the events in H.M.A.S. "CANBERRA" on the night of 8th/9th August, 1942?
Yes Sir.
142. With what R.A.F. sets was H.M.A.S. "CANBERRA" fitted?
Type 290, and type 271, Sir.
143. What were the general purposes of each?
Type 290 for aircraft warning, and for surface gunnery range. Type 271 for surface warning.
144. Had you any experience in operating these sets immediately previous to this action?
Yes Sir.
145. Were the sets satisfactory?
Type 271 was quite satisfactory, Sir. Type 290 had given considerable trouble immediately prior to action.
146. What was the state of operation of the sets after sunset on 8th August, 1942?
Type 271 was operating - type 290 closed down, Sir.
147. What was the general policy which directed that?
The policy we pursued ever since the fitting of the sets

APPENDIX
"F"

FROM. THE SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER, H.M.A.S. "CANBERRA".

DATE. 17th August, 1942.

TO. THE REAR-ADMIRAL COMMANDING TASK FORCE 44.
(Copy to:- The Secretary, Naval Board).

SUBJECT. REPORT ON THE LOSS OF H.M.A.S. "CANBERRA".

The following report, further to the Executive Officer's letter of 12th August, 1942, on the loss of H.M.A.S. "CANBERRA" is submitted.

2. King's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions, Confidential Admiralty Fleet Orders, Admiralty Fleet Orders and Commonwealth Navy Orders to which reference should be made are not available.

3. On the night of 8th/9th August, 1942, H.M.A.S. "CANBERRA" was in company with U.S.S.s "CHICAGO", "PATTERSON" and "MAGLEY" carrying out a patrol to the south-eastward of SAVO ISLAND in accordance with the orders of the Rear-Admiral Commanding Task Group 42.6 in H.M.A.S. "AUSTRALIA". U.S.S. "CHICAGO" was stationed 3 cables astern, U.S.S. "PATTERSON" was screening on the starboard bow and U.S.S. "MAGLEY" the port bow. H.M.A.S. "AUSTRALIA" had been leading the column but had parted company at 2115. U.S.S. "CHICAGO" then became the Senior Officer and ordered H.M.A.S. "CANBERRA" to lead the column as H.M.A.S. "AUSTRALIA" had been doing. The area to the northward of the line drawn 125° from the centre of SAVO ISLAND was being patrolled by U.S.S.s "VINCENNES", "QUINCY", "ASTORIA" with two destroyers. The seaward approaches to the channels to the north and south of the Island were each being patrolled by one U.S. Destroyer.

4. Enemy reports, one of them originated by aircraft and two by submarines, had been indicated the presence of enemy cruisers, destroyers and possible seaplane tenders or gunboats to the westward of BUKA ISLAND approximately 400 miles away from the Transport Area. It was decided that these ships were probably making for Japanese occupied islands in the vicinity of BORNIAVILLE ISLAND. It was realized that they could increase speed so as to arrive in the Transport Area before dawn.

5. By day H.M.A.S. "CANBERRA" had been in the First Degree of Readiness with hands eating meals at their Action Stations, since 1000 on Thursday, 6th August, 1942. By night a modified Second Degree of Readiness was assumed. Half the armament and Damage Control Parties were continuously closed up, the men off watch resting at or in the vicinity of their Stations. No guns were loaded. The aircraft had been de-fuelled at dusk but was still bombed-up with 4 in number 100 lb bombs.

6. Aircraft had been heard occasionally in the vicinity from 2300 onwards. R.D.F. Type 271 was in operation. R.D.F. Type 290 was not manned. Land interference was being experienced on R.D.F. Type 271 and little reliance could be placed on it. A/S Type 182 was in operation, one receiver keeping an all-round listening watch, the other a transmitting watch from Red 80° to Green 80° through right ahead.

No reports.....

Page 2.

No reports were received from A/S.

7. At approximately 0143 course was 310°, speed 12 knots with staggered revolutions, ship steaming on the unit system with all boilers connected. Weather conditions:- Sea calm, wind S.E. force 0-1. Visibility had varied from 10 miles to 100 yards. At the time stated it was about 4,000 yards. The sky was alternately clear and overcast with many heavy rain squalls, thunder and lightning. At 0145 it was cloudy.

8. At a little before 0143 a report of a ship ahead was received from the Port Lookout by the Officer of the Watch (Sub-Lieutenant M.J.GREGORY, R.A.N.) It could not be seen by the Officer of the Watch or the Yeoman of the Watch. At the same time the Principal Control Officer (Lieutenant-Commander S.J.B.WIGHT R.A.N. (Smy)) observed a large explosion bearing approximately 350° distant approximately 6,000 yards. He immediately reported this to the Captain by voice-pipe. The Captain was on the Bridge within a few seconds. The Navigating Officer (Lieutenant-Commander J.S.MESLEY, R.A.N.) was called by the Officer of the Watch by voice-pipe at the same time and was informed that it was 0145, he having ordered the Officer of the Watch to call him at this time. A few seconds after 0145 the Action Alarm was sounded and the Gunnery Officer (Lieutenant-Commander D.H.HOLLS, R.A.N.) and Torpedo Officer (Lieutenant-Commander J.PLUNKETT-COLE, R.A.N.) who were sleeping in the Admiral's Sea-Cabin were called by voice-pipe.

9. On arrival on the Compass Platform the Gunnery Officer took over the starboard Enemy Bearing Indicator from the Principal Control Officer who had trained it on Green 20, and ordered "Alarm Starboard, Load, Load, Load", having sighted the wakes of 3 ships on that bearing. At the same time the Captain ordered "Port 35" and the ship began to turn to Port. A report of a torpedo passing down the starboard side, having approached from fine on the port bow, was received from the Fore Control. The Captain immediately ordered "Starboard 35", "Full speed ahead both engines". This was at approximately 0144. The Navigating Officer took the ship at this stage. The Torpedo Officer, hearing the order "Starboard 35", and seeing two enemy ships opening from fine on the port bow, went to the Port Torpedo Control Position to fire the Port Tubes. As the ship altered course the Gunnery Officer changed from the starboard to the port Enemy Bearing Indicator and ordered "Open Fire". At about this time two flares or starshell were burning about a thousand yards to starboard of the ship and at least two torpedo tracks, crossing ahead from the port bow, were observed and reported by the Navigating Officer. At this moment the first salvo struck the ship from port. Shells are known to have burst in the Plotting Office, Port Torpedo Space, Four-Inch Gun Deck and the aircraft was hit and set ablaze. A shell of the second salvo, which arrived before the personnel on the Compass Platform had recovered themselves from the shock of the explosion in the Plotting Office, burst on the port after corner of the Compass Platform. This explosion mortally wounded the Captain, killed the Gunnery Officer, killed and wounded several others on the Compass Platform and in the Port Torpedo Control Position. The Torpedo Officer attempted to fire the Port Tubes, found he could not do so and went to the Compass Platform to report this to the Captain. He found the state of affairs as described above and the Navigating Officer conning the ship. Fire with main armament had not been opened because the target was not at any time seen by the Director Trainer.

10. The Ship.....

Page 5.

10. The ship was put out of action by the second salvo in which both Boiler rooms were hit and steam to all units failed. The engines were making approximately 250 revolutions and were working up rapidly to full power at this time which is estimated at 0147. The turrets were bearing Red 120° when electrical power failed.

11. During the period of about 2 minutes under fire the ship was hit by at least 24 shells which came from about Red 80 to Green 170 through astern. A summary of the estimated damage is appended. At the end of this period the ship was listing about 8 degrees to starboard, blazing fiercely amidships and many fires were burning between decks. There is no conclusive evidence to show that the ship was hit by a torpedo.

12. No communication could be established with the After Control which was the Commander's Action Station, so a Messenger was sent to inform him of the position on the Compass Platform. He was directing the fire-fighting amidships and though wounded came to the Compass Platform immediately and assumed command. The Captain was still conscious and the Commander conferred continuously with him. The Captain would not accept first aid and insisted that he would be all right.

13. The Commander (B) (Commander (B) C.F. ROMANOV, O.B.E., R.A.N.) arrived on the Compass Platform shortly afterwards and reported that the ship could not steam, that all power had failed, that there was no water pressure for fighting fires and that the Petrol Tanks had been released. He reported the fires that were burning round the After Control, Torpedo Space and in the Regulating Office Flat. The torpedoes had been fired locally at the same time as the Petrol Tanks were released.

14. A and B Turrets crews were ordered to form bucket chains for fighting the fires amidships. Four-inch ready-use ammunition was ordered to be thrown over the side. This was done with that which could be reached. The Magazines were flooded by the orders of Officers on the spot. Orders were given for all stretcher cases to be brought to the fore-castle and all rafts and flotation gear to be prepared on the portside for abandoning ship should it become necessary. As many wounded as possible were placed in the cutters and these were lowered and hauled forward to the port side of the fore-castle. Heavy rain fell at this time and damped down the fires on the upper deck until at one time it appeared that the bucket chains might gain the upper hand of them. Bucket chains were, however, totally inadequate to compete with the fires between decks.

15. At about 0300 U.S.S. "PATTERSON" was identified on the starboard bow. She offered assistance and was asked to come alongside the port side abreast the bridge. Her approach was impeded by four-inch ammunition exploding amidships and she was told to wait and asked to pass a signal to U.T.G. 32.6 reporting our position and condition. To make this signal she steamed to a position about 2 miles away, returned and secured alongside at 0325, U.S.S. "PATTERSON" passed in 3 hoses and a portable fire-engine and pumping was begun at once. It was necessary to improvise canvas sleeves to join her hoses with ours as they were of different size and pattern. Two hoses amidships were used to try and quell the fire in the starboard Pom-Pom magazine where ammunition was exploding continuously. The third hose was used to try and put out the
fire.....

Page 4.

fire in the Sick Bay Flat. The portable Fire-Engine could not be started.

15. At about 0345, while these operations were still in progress the Captain of U.S.S. "PATTERSON" passed a message that the following signal had been received from C.T.F. 62:- "If CANHERA cannot join general retirement at 0630 she is to be abandoned and destroyed". In the meanwhile "PATTERSON" had been asked to take the wounded which she agreed to do and the wounded, including the Captain, were passed in to her. The Commander was informed by the Commander (E) that without further assistance by hoses there was no chance of fighting the fires between decks and therefore no possibility of investigating the damage below. By this time the ship was listing about 30 degrees to starboard. At approximately 0415 the Commander very reluctantly gave the order to Prepare to Abandon Ship and "PATTERSON" was asked to take the whole Ship's Company. The Captain replied "I can try".

17. Shortly afterwards U.S.S. "PATTERSON" sighted a suspicious vessel on the port quarter, out all lines, dragged in her hoses and went ahead at high speed, the Captain saying:- "He'll be back". When she was about half a mile away a few shots were exchanged with the suspicious vessel before she had been identified as friendly. While this went on all personnel on the Upper Deck took cover.

18. After U.S.S. "PATTERSON" had left all hands were ordered to muster on the Forecastle and Quarter-Deck and to continue the preparations to abandon the ship.

19. At 0650 as first light was breaking a destroyer and a cruiser were sighted on the port beam. These turned out to be U.S.S. "BLUE" and U.S.S. "CHICAGO" respectively. U.S.S. "BLUE" secured port side forward, U.S.S. "PATTERSON" re-appeared and secured port side aft. The remainder of the wounded and the Ship's Company were transferred to these two ships by 0645 and taken to U.S.S. "FULLER" and U.S.S. "MARKETT" respectively. The Ship's Ledgers were transferred intact to U.S.S. "PATTERSON" and have been retained.

20. It is believed that H.M.A.S. "CANHERA" was sunk by gunfire from U.S.S. "SELFRIDGE".

21. The behaviour of the Ship's Company was at all times beyond praise.

John Hunter, Cdt.

Lieutenant-Commander, R.A.N.