

530/10
Lieut E J Keel
RAN
on leave
joining F.N.D.
3 July

FROM.....THE SENIOR SURVIVING OFFICER, H.M.A.S. VAMPIRE.

TO.....THE COMMANDING OFFICER, H.M.A.S. "PENGUIN".

DATE.....3RD JUNE, 1942.

SUBJECT..MOVEMENTS OF SURVIVORS EX "VAMPIRE" - 10TH APRIL, 1942
to 2ND JUNE, 1942.

I have the honour to submit the following report of movements of officers and ratings ex H.M.A.S. "VAMPIRE" from the time of arrival in Colombo until arrival in Australia.

2. Personnel arrived in Colombo in H.M.H.S. "VITA" at 2030 on 10th April, 1942. Arrangements had been made for all unwounded personnel except those officers required to attend a Court of Inquiry, to proceed to the Naval Rest Camp at Diyatalawa. Before entraining in the special train which came down to the pier, an advance of pay and issue of bedding and some clothing were made. The train left shortly after midnight and arrived at Diyatalawa at about 1330 on the 11th, and ratings were marched off to the Naval Camp and given lunch.

3. Just before arrival of "VITA" in Colombo it had been announced over the B.B.C. that "HERMES" had been sunk - reception had been bad and it was not certain if "VAMPIRE'S" name had been included in this report. After the departure of the train I therefore went to the Naval Office, Colombo, with the Maintenance Commander and sent a signal to Admiralty repeated to the Naval Board giving a list of killed and missing, which I considered should be despatched as soon as possible. I regret that this signal was sent as from "VAMPIRE" after the ship was sunk and may have given the impression that the ship was only damaged. At the time I thought that the loss of "VAMPIRE" would have been already reported by a higher authority.

4. I submitted my report of proceedings, which had been made out in "VITA", to the Deputy Commander in Chief, Eastern Fleet, on 11th April, and was told to wait in Colombo with the Engineer Officer, Lieutenant (E) L.L. Williams, R.A.N., in case of a Court of Inquiry. Accommodation was provided at St. Thomas College, Colpetty. On Thursday, 16th April, "HERMES" and "VAMPIRE" officers still in Colombo were sent for by the Commander in Chief, East Indies, and were informed of the circumstances of the loss of the two ships. This being done so that we should know the full facts of the case in order to counter rumours which had been passing round Colombo and opinions that "HERMES" should never have been sent to sea but remained in Trincomalee. There was to be no Court of Inquiry and all officers left next day for the Naval Rest Camp at Diyatalawa.

5. Of "VAMPIRE" wounded, one, Petty Officer R.A.H. McDonald, had been left in "VITA" as he was in too serious a condition to be moved. Two had been sent to the Royal Naval Hospital, Colombo, and the remaining four to the Military Hospital, Mount Lavinia. One of these ratings was subsequently moved to the 12th Australian General Hospital, Ragaina. H.M.H.S. "VITA" left Colombo on Monday, 13th, and it is regretted that Petty Officer McDonald died shortly afterwards and was buried at sea. I requested the Surgeon Captain, H.M.H.S. "VITA" to inform the Naval Board in the event of this rating's death.

6. After I had been a week at Diyatalawa, all "HERMES" ratings left for disposal and passage to England. I therefore returned to Colombo to make enquiries as to the disposal of "VAMPIRE" ship's company. I was informed at the Naval Office that a signal had been made to Australia requesting instructions and that an answer was expected at any time and in the meanwhile I had better wait in Colombo. I accordingly found my own accommodation.

7. From information received from the Sea Transport Office I found that the S.S. "MADURA" was due to arrive in Colombo in the next few days en route for Australia. It was thought that she could accommodate all the officers and 96 ratings. I therefore requested that if no reply had been received from Australia by the time of this ship's departure we should be allowed to proceed in her. This was approved and all personnel brought down from Diyatalawa, the night before the arrival of MADURA. The Sea Transport Office was then informed by "MADURA" that she could not accommodate any ratings, but could take the officers. Five officers therefore took passage in her sailing on 30th April.

8. Whilst in Colombo, ratings were accommodated at St. Joseph's College which had been turned into a barracks. All ratings were there kitted up with two tropical suits, a cap or a helmet, gym shoes and a hammock and bedding. Kit lists were sent into the Base Accountant Officer, Colombo. Personnel were employed as working parties and sentries.

9. At 0930, 11th May, I was instructed to stand by to proceed to Bombay by train to join H.T. "DOMINION MONARCH". This order was cancelled at 1030 and orders were received to stand by to proceed on 12th. This again was subsequently cancelled as it was found that "DOMINION MONARCH" had sailed from Bombay and was calling at Colombo with an R.A.F. draft.

10. "DOMINION MONARCH" arrived Colombo P.M. 17th May having discharged her R.A.F. draft in Bombay and "VAMPIRE'S" ship's company embarked P.M. 18th May, the ship sailing at 1830.

11. Due to the lack of warm clothing, ratings ex "VAMPIRE" were only able to man two of the ship's A.A. weapons and instead provided standing mess orderlies, servery hands and flat sweepers.

12. During the voyage, sports such as tug of war and relay races were organised for the troops. All hands were vaccinated before arrival at Fremantle. Messdecks were large and ventilation adequate and the health of the ship's company on passage was good. The food provided for all ranks and ratings was particularly good.

13. Ratings of Chief Petty Officer's rank only were provided with cabins, but as there were three spare bunks in the two cabins occupied by "VAMPIRE'S", I allowed two Engineerroom Artificers II and the Gunner's Mate to occupy them. The remainder of the Petty Officers were accommodated in an open mess on the mess deck.

14. "DOMINION MONARCH" arrived at Fremantle shortly after noon on Tuesday, 26th May. Lieutenant Commander Gasking, First Lieutenant of H.M.A.S. "LEEUEWIN" met the ship and provided lorries for the transport of survivors to the Depot. His organisation was most efficient and by 1700 all ratings had received an advance of pay and a Supplementary Kit consisting of blue trousers, jumper and blue jersey. Eleven Western Australians were discharged to "LEEUEWIN" fully kitted up, paid and sent on long leave. Short leave was granted from "DOMINION MONARCH" to the remaining ratings.

15. "DOMINION MONARCH" sailed from Fremantle at about 1600 27th May having been delayed by Army absentees. There was one absentee on sailing, Able Seaman F. Stokers, O.N. M21639 who had been returning from England and was under medical observation. This was reported by Lieutenant Grabb to H.M.A.S. "LEEUEWIN".

16. Whilst in Fremantle I saw the widow of the late Petty Officer R.A.H. McDonald, D.S.M. Mrs. McDonald had been

/ much ...

Urgent personal delivery
Telegram sent 21/4/42.

Casualties released to
press Noon
22/4/42.
Wings Dept
investigating
whether any
delay in
delivery.

much distressed by reading of her husband's death in a Perth newspaper before the arrival of a telegram from the Naval Board. Though this telegram may have had a delayed delivery from the Post Office, it is earnestly submitted that there may be a longer interval between the sending of telegrams to the next of kin and the issue of casualty lists to the press.

17. "DOMINION MONARCH" arrived in Sydney at noon, 2nd June, and after anchoring for medical inspection secured at Dalgety's Wharf. No authorities appeared to have any knowledge of the presence of "VAMPIRE'S" ratings. After transport arrived, personnel were taken to Garden Island where their gear was stowed. Owing to the loss of "KUTTABUL" no accommodation was available and ratings were sent on leave for the night. The following morning advances of pay were made and all ratings proceeded P.M. 3rd June.

18. It is strongly recommended that the pay of Petty Officer J.D. May, O.N. 16449, Acting Coxswain of "VAMPIRE" may be continued until arrival of draft in Sydney. This rating had a large amount of regulating to do during the period 9th April - 3rd June which he did in a most satisfactory and efficient manner. 2nd

21st Feb
349/57/1364

I have the honour to be

Sir,

Your obedient servant.

Blue
LIEUTENANT.

11.

No.P.6032/41
The Rear-Admiral in Charge,
SYDNEY.

Forwarded for information.

"PENGUIN"
8 June, 1942.



20 Rhodes
Commander.

27/5