

Kipper's Diary

This is a very special document. I received it from Mr Carl Clayton. 20 May 2014. And our conversation started this way:

I have been doing research into the life of Rear Admiral Eric Robinson VC 1882-1965. At the outbreak of WW1 he was serving on HMS Amethyst attached to the Harwich Force providing an escort to the 7th Cruiser Squadron. He was transferred to another ship the day before the three cruisers were sunk by U9.

A few weeks later his brother Ernest Robinson died when his ship HMS Hawke was torpedoed by the U9.

Eric kept a brief diary of his time on Amethyst which may be of interest.

My reaction:

Dear Carl,

I just returned back home from a holiday in Italy, and yes this is very interesting. I would appreciate you to send me his diary, and after reading I'll be back to you about publishing on my website.

Thank you!

His reaction, 29 May 2014. He wrote:

Dear Henk

Thank you for your interest in Eric Robinson's diary. I should explain the background. I began my interest in Eric Robinson (known as Kipper) when I was married to his Granddaughter. The diary is held by the family. I began to transcribe it and I attach the document. There is a note about the complex layout of this diary. I did not finish working my way through the diary so there are a few entries missing.

I have written an account of the life of Rear Admiral Eric Robinson VC and this is due to be published on the website <http://www.personanavalpress.co.uk/>

After I answered him, this was his answer:

There are several references to the cruisers of the live bait squadron in the diary. I have highlighted them in the attached version. Most of his diary is about the day-to-day routine of naval life. His frustration at missing out on the Battle of Heligoland Bight is obvious. I think that it is interesting that he mentions the damage caused by the storms on the 14th and 18th September. This led to the Admiralty saying that the smaller escort ships should stay in port in bad weather resulting in the Cressy, Hogue and Aboukir being on their own on the 22nd. Eric left HMS Amethyst on the 20th and joined HMS Vengeance on the 21st. The three cruisers were sunk on the 22nd. Eric does not mention the sinking. I don't know when news was released but it may have been typical of the times that he mentions British successes and ignores German ones.

And here it is, Kipper's Diary. Thank you Gary.

Kipper's diary 4th August 1914 -

The diary was written in a T.J. & J. Smith's Scribbling Diary of 1914 with 1 week to a page format, but the entries are not written in the corresponding pages. Following some routine

entries at the start of the diary in another hand, Kipper's diary starts on the 4th August 1914 on the page for the week starting 9th February. It then skips around so the entries are not in chronological order. I have been working through the book from front to back but have arranged the entries below in date order.

Dates in *italic* below indicate the page in the diary that the entry is found. This is followed by the date for the entry. Kipper was serving on *HMS Amethyst*.

{ } words not clear

[?] Possible wording

[text] my additions, mainly dates where these were not recorded.

9th February

4th August Landed all gear from fore hold, also officers chest of drawers & private gear. 2 big cutters full of stuff for Shotley. 98A & { } landed with SW for a route march at Shotley.

Heard ultimatum to Germany up at Mid! Quite exciting. Rather too much so. Gieve nearly sold us a dog by not coming off, had to send MAA into him in end. Cabin seems quite large with no chest of drawers. Wrote to J[*Jinks, his wife*] also Mrs C at home. Have already sent will to bank.

Painted

5th

Turned in with mixed feelings but very tired. Out at 3. War declared. Hemp onto buoy to get ship round. Left steam cutter and motorboat at buoy. Left at 4. Cheered by Dido and destroyers. Picked up E6 and towed(?) her. Ariel ditto E9. Uneventful forenoon until we heard news 3rd Flotilla had sunk Konigen Augusta Louise. 40 survivors, laid mines, 11,000 ton minelayer. Good news. Cheered everyone up immensely. Kept 4-6. They prepared for night defence at 5. {GSH} relieved me. Kept 8-11. Quite dark in places. Smoked largely. Found (mittens) before dinner. Great help. Off watch 11.20 {stringer}. Went below to W.R. and slept in chair till 1.15 when we shipped E6. Hauled in 11" manila. Back to chair in W.R. 2-6 till 6.10. Then turned in till 7. Out at 7. Fine day, not a top on. Bad egg this. Hear German Fleet up in Norway Fiord. Hope Battle Fleet find them. Do hope this all over soon. Poor old J, hope this is not too worrying. Hear German Ambassador leaves Harwich today

20 August

Suddenly ordered to Chatham to scrape bottom & [] up brickwork. Left Patrol & proceeded.

[21st Aug]

Arrived 6am Sheerness & proceeded up to Chatham. Docked. Engaged scraping bottom & painting. Damned hard work. Arranging about coaling. Came out of dock 3.45am Friday & proceeded to no3 basin & coaled. Up at 2.45. Tired to death by 7pm. Left Saturday morning 8am.

[22nd Aug]

Ordered to Ostend. What excitement. Hear Germans are there & we are to bombard. No luck. Ordered to Patrol. Same old nip up & down.

Sighted airship(?)

[24th Aug]

Suddenly Patrol cancelled. Com T[yrwhit] is transferring to Arethusa. 26 ½ kts not 21. Com T left in TBD. Left me in charge. 90' from anywhere or anyone, went over minefield. 15 miles out. Thought saw S/m. Only Maryland's boat. Proceeded alongside Himalaya. Coaled 190 tons. Left 9.50. Pitch dark. However D.V. Secured to buoy. 1am C... returned. He goes on Wednesday to Arethusa. What luck!!

Tuesday [25th]

Had 5 letters from Jinks. 1 from home & { } from Clarice. Wrote to J. Painting upper works. Light grey.

[26th Aug]

Turning the Rats! over to Arethusa. Selfish exploit by T re motorboat. Got rid of them by noon. Thesiger arrived. He appears delightful. 3 diminutive cadets also came. Sailed 1pm to join Euryalus at Nore. 18kts. Ordered to Ostend. Hope we have a show. Arrived 6.30 & { }. Sapphire here & 4 4 funnellers.

[27th]

4 am weighed & proceeded to Downs to find 3 tugs. & Euyradice. Found Euyradice but no trip. ↓ at Margate & then came back to Ostend 2.30. By morning passed P of W & 3 Battleships. Crammed full of men & munitions. Hope for []. He is nice. J at Ostend. 4 more battleships arrived (Bethell [?]). Weighed and proceeded 5 astern of Euryalus. We are to form supporting force C. Tomorrow is to be another grand sweep. Kept morning. { } very merry & bright. Sighted supposed 8pm. Turned out to be 4 TBDs. Chased at 18 kts. Dutch. Chased cruiser = Dutch. They have no business to be out. Lovely day. Hear flotilla. Put manilla round forebridge as protection. Are in action. In company Euryalis Aboukir Cressy Hogue Bacchante Arethusa & I beat {B...ger} at quoits. Bought a clay pipe at canteen. Started to write to J.

Heard Liverpool has sunk Mainz German cruiser 4580 tons. No casualties (B). 7 officers 109 men prisoners. Remainder presume drowned or killed poor devils. Later intercepted W/T signal from Com S. saying he has 180 prisoners aboard & many British wounded.

4.30 Sighted Firedrake Lurcher Liberty & Laurel. Liberty no mast & badly knocked about. {Bartlette?} killed 1st shot. Laurel belching steam. Funnels bashed about & looking very parlous indeed. Lowered both sea boats sent PMs. Told to tow Laurel & take over her wounded. Took her in tow 3 ½ ". Paid out grass and gave her another nine. Both parted. Near shave for {Loats} & self!! Enemy's destroyers reported ENE. Prepared all guns. Laurel now steaming under her own steam. Manilla ready, hope we wont have to use it. Large ship reported on bow. One of our own cruisers. Escorting Laurel into Sherness where we should coal. First real taste of the war. Horrible. But wish we had not missed it. Heard Fearless has effected temporary repairs & is proceeding. Arethusa's boilers are wrong & she is being towed!!! Don't want Com T back here at all. PMO says horrible sights. Poor chaps. All above still Friday. Quite tired. Liberty expended all ammunition (7 hours) Say they got in 2 torpedoes out of 4 at large ship. Do hope so. What are S/m's doing.

2 September

Laurel signalled following damage.

Centre {gun} & platform totally wrecked. 1 torpedo tube & after body of torpedo pierced. After funnel requiring renewal. Foremost funnel considerably pierced. After boiler requires large repairs and all boilers complete overhaul. Large part of machinery will require opening up. New length main steam pipe required. Several holes in U/D. { } tanks aships ride. Lighting will require overhaul.

Piped down in forenoon

Listening to German W/T

Saturday [29th] Very foggy. Arrived Nore 11 Am. Saw crowds of german prisoners. **Cresy & Hogue Bacchante** also wounded. Went alongside C08 for coal. The tug helping us had the dead on board at the time.

Finished coaling (Party 94 + 4) 7.45. 350 tons quite quiet coaling. Liberty passed with no mast. Also Arethusa. Cheered ships. Quite pathetic we got an ovation when we came in. Why were we not nearer. Own W/T is bad. Marconi operators!!!!
Secured to no 7 buoy 9 o'clock Good sleep.

Sunday. Dinning & prayers. Captain went round magazines. We leave at 3.15 for Bacchante at Nore. Lovely day. Received 15 RNR stokers extra. Good egg. They were told they wanted 15 volunteers for a passenger ship round coast, however are very glad to leave barracks. Port closed on account of fog. Left at 3.45. Joined up with **Bacchante, Hogue and Cressy**. Patrolling.

Monday. Joined up with 10 TBD's of 1st Flotilla. Left alone with them.

Tuesday. Heard Germans had 900 casualties at Heligoland. Not bad. **Bacchante, Hogue & Cressy** arrived 10 am. Lovely day. Yesterday Sturrgen[?] boarded a trawler. No catch. 102 class TBD's { } the others. Yesterday nasty day, rolling. Glass very high. Today (Tuesday) putting Japanese Grass line round Forebridge.

Wednesday 2nd [September] Ordered to Sheerness to coal, water & provision. Thank goodness as get our mail & hear from Jinks. Ordered to Duckbridge collier. Go down 11am. Hear we must be at Nore by 1pm. Steam for 16 kts. This gives us ½ hour to coal!! Hell of a panic. Winches not ready. Get in 23 tons & leave at 12. Seane White, capt's steward & canteen manager behind. No fresh food or milk aboard. Sail under sealed orders. Captain tells us. Red hot & hope for the best. Receive 5 letters from j & 3 from home. Red hot. Also box of soap!! Cleaning ships and preparing for action. Hope for fun tomorrow. Lovely day. Grand fleet should do fine shooting in this weather. No joss 5pm ordered back, we all return at 8 kts to the Nore. Captain & I lost twice to Arbuthnot & Harrison at quoits. Quite stiff after bean bags yesterday. Played again today. Harrison Cruse & I. Branigen heard from Badcock. We are sending a wreath to poor W.
Show appears to have been given away or else it was due to fog.

8 September

Same collier ordered out to us next day. Thursday Didn't arrive, we are afraid we shall be left again with no coal. So panic & share from Hogue. We cannot enter harbour on account of dense fog.

Coal. Gear poor, takes a long time rigging. Enter Sheerness & secure to quay 5.30.

Devil of a shock. I am appointed to Vengeance. Skipper Great[?] Grieve[?] & I.

Friday. Saturday wartime. Captain goes aboard Dougalis & Admiral wires up to Admiralty to ask that I may be left for another 3 months

X See July 13th.

13 July

See Sept 8th for 4th

... as I am executive officer of ships & should not go as he has only just joined himself. Good excuse and ripping of him. He & S went for a walk 5pm- 6.20. Jolly good. Good show on a Sunday with luck. Yarn from Stringers brother who had it from Chief Gunner of Mainz. When she was sinking Liberty went up to her to save survivors. Captain ordered his guns to fire.

They refused so he came down himself & fired so his crew shot him. Stokers coming up from below were shot by their own officers. What a state they must be in.

We went to flying ground Isle of Grain. Marine officer took us round. Showed us machines they were up in over Ostend, also German machine, also machine with chip out of propeller given by a Territorial Sentry that morning.

Captain appears to have arranged lots of things in Flagship. We do not patrol but go out for all shows & are to be used on occasion, so we should see our share. Hurray.

Saturday [5th Sept]

Off at 8 after various false summons. Hear of the scheme. Red hot & should be fruitful!! Putting gym[?] mats round after control & will put awnings round fore control. Captain gave a dissertation on mines & then { } in spite of sinking of Speedy.

Hear there are mines everywhere. 3' from surface near Dorrington[?] & Sark & in heaps of places, sincerely trust we do not bump one. Hear of Admirals volunteering to serve as Lieutenants if they may fight. Red hot. Blowing a little, north cone hoisted. Hope it doesn't blow. Feel quite cheery as don't care what happens if we get a show but we must get sufficiently close think we shall this time. No luck. Postponed. Patrolling again.

Sunday.[6th Sept] Not so much sea. Beautiful sun. Hope for show tomorrow morning.

Boarding everything. No go. Everything given away. Think it must be the damned Dutch.

Monday [7th Sept]. Into Sheerness & coal from Duckbridge. Rotten coal. Receive handkerchiefs from J. hear from Mary & 2 from J. Hear cannot stay in Amethyst D___. Moan to Badcock.

Tuesday.[8th Sept] In all day. Out on Wednesday for a stint.

Thursday 10th September [1914]

All ready for immediate action. Breakfast at 3.30. Soup cocoa. Biscuit. Chocolate & apple.

Went on deck 4am for morning. Sight 2 destroyers. Yards[?] man[?] [] Lurcher & {Fin.... }

Go a sound off action[?], everything on top line. Meet Fearless & 1st Flotilla coming back

NBG. Sight Aeroplane, up rifles, but she goes away. Hope Heligoland show comes off. This is

sickening. Hear Army are doing well. Hope show will be over soon. Packing up. Heavy firing heard from Northwards. NBG think it must be thunder. Kept 7-8. Lot of lightning. Glass falling.

Friday. [11th] Spread on beam. Lapwing & Sigard & Amethyst. 3 miles. **Euryalus** on beam then **Hogue** each with 2 destroyers. Boarding everything. We go in today 5pm & coal tomorrow. Raining & blowing. Rolling a bit. ? do I leave on arriving in harbour. TBD reports [] so we turn round quick.

In Afternoon SW gale come on. Rain squalls & heavy rolling. Most unpleasant. What a chance for Germany's battle cruisers. Most unpleasant. Very.

Arrived in Saturday [12th] morning 10am. Went alongside C109 to coal. Did quite well. Finished by 3.3 pm. Received 1 letter from J dated Sunday before, think my mails must be going to V. How nice. Wrote PC to J & home, also letter to J. Peaceful Sunday 9½ hours sleep.

Out Monday [14th] at 5.30. Shipped from buoy 6am. High following sea, rather unpleasant. Blowing fairly hard. Think we are on same old patrol. "**Broad 14s**". Most damnable day on record. Rolling hard. Turned in blowing SW gale. Rolling over 40 & taking it in green. No sleep at all. Out all night. Ammunition flinging about. Some cartridges overboard. Carried away sea boat (p). Lost 2 anchors[?]. Lower half of P torpedo door. Got extraordinarily wet securing S torpedo. Fiddles on table. Thought proolonger mast[?] was going over side. P torpedo badly bumped due to bucket from galley. Worst night we had. Kept morning as usual, very sleepy. Next day bad but not so bad. **Mess deck** a dreadful sight. By ourselves with **Hogue**. Piped down all day. **Euryalus relieved Hogue**.

Tuesday patrolling

Wednesday [16th] **Bacchante & Aboukir** joined up & 12 destroyers. Heard 4 cruisers & some destroyers had escaped from Emden, hope we catch them. Much better weather.

Thursday [17th] Started rolling glass going down, hope there is not another gale coming on. On our own with 4 destroyers from yesterday. Payne made splendid cocoa this morning. Yesterday Burns did but rather too thick.

31 July

Friday [18th] Horrible day & terrific night. Rolling & pitching badly. No sleep, nothing carried away as everything is too well lashed down. 2am past 2 mysterious steamers, SL would not work due to large quantity of water therein. Turned round a chased & so we got in at 4pm instead of 8am. Wonder if J's letters will come or not. Do hope so. Quite a nightmare of a morning. Afternoon better & sunny.

1 August

Sunday Coaled alongside Himalaya.

15 September

Friday 18th Cont.

Arrived in about 4. Went alongside C9 & secured for night. Very sensible. Started next morning 5.30. Averaged over 80 tons per
Finished by 11am. Washed down with depot coaling [fasty] of 50.
Started painting ships light gray.
Heard from Admiralty that I must join Vengeance on Monday. Thank goodness I had packed.
Wired up to J, hope it fetches up.

Dined with the captain. Quite a nice dinner & [Santesone] etc. Quite sleepy. Went to bed at 10. Left ship Sunday 9am. Difficulty in getting gear along pier however managed it in the end & caught 9.55 train. Arrived town before noon, having changed once. Put gear into cloak room & went by motor bus to St P where I had lunch. Discovered I had looked at wrong train & time was 1.45 however it was ½ an hour late & J arrived looking awfully pretty. Went to Goring hotel by taxi what swash. Engaged room 57 & went out for a walk after [snog] & hug!! In Park. Back for tea then out again. Back for a very good dinner & then early to bed [] 9.30. Real hot bath. Did not get to sleep till after 2!!!
Heavenly, J wearing most transparent nightie. Quite Parisienne!!

Monday [21st] Breakfast 9.30. Went to A&N stores. Bought some nut chocolate, Lunch at Paddington Station. Caught 1.30 train. Then a tram. Arrived Heysham at 7.30. Found Vengeance alongside wall having finished coaling. Thank goodness. Quite an open reception. Some quite good fellows here.

Tues [22nd] Turned out 7.30 found 6 letters for me + bar soap. Good egg. After breakfast went round ship with Gunner T. Funny old ship. Met captain. He looks alright & very nice. Hope this is so. Had lunch. In cabin after spreading gear out. Carpenters putting up {slab}. Lovely day. Ship all dismantled and looking funny. Talk of bad boilers and trimmings over. Left C.O.

Wed Turned out at 5.30 & told hands off, all ready to leave at 6.20. rather foggy. Left at 7.30. Going round ship and learning about her.
Kept 6-8 ns C.O. Bordered 1 ship. Good communications.
Smart no Gun officer [?]
Admiral came on board at noon.

Thurs [24th] Pottering about ship and learning.
Kept 1st watch
Major no from officer
Boarded Caple Co Jank steamer. Piccadilly looking
Nearly rammed at in {dampher} by steamer whose dynamo failed.
Received 9 letter today from J Hurray.
Also 2 from home. Fine day.

[Friday] G.O's all persons. Beautiful & Sunny

Sunday went to church. Not much of a sermon. Beautifully hot in afternoon.
Having a {syam} with owner about 8pm & my belt
Hear 8pm attacked Atlentine in Straits of Dover 2pm

[Monday] Minor look out for the { } morning
Put look outs aloft
8.30 mail TB arrived
2 letters from darling J. 1 from mother & 1 from Mrs Bigg. Wind rising.
Major { } Thanked memso for blue jerseys.

[Tuesday] Looking out for 8pm this night
Not allowed to use S.L.s
Nice & hot
Slept in D.D. till 2.50. Ripping

Wednesday
Wrote J Arbuthnot Mrs C. Wharton & mother
Lovely day. Long may it continue.
Fitting up telephone for W/O war station with Captain & Gillespie. Spelling Bee with major & munroe

[Thursday] No cup {covers} nice day

3 Oct
Arrived Sunday night Exedos. Passed Ajax in sound. Looking ripping.

21 February
22nd Jan '15 Friday
9pm left St V & sailed.

27 February
29th Jan 1915
Arrived Gib. 7am. Kept gun watch all night only 2 hrs sleep. Very cold.
Beat Argonaut hockey 3-2 Desperately wet. Felt little seedy. Dewing[?] gingered.

Received at Gib 10 letters from J & laundry.

30th
Coaled ship 6.15. Left buoy & proceeded to quay. Rigged stages. Fearfully wet & squally. { } usual people sloped[?]. Knocked off 2am. Restarted 7.30. Drawing 12 torpedoes for { } and Wear. Admiral joined. Sailed 5.30 pm

1st Feb 1915
Enjoyed last night in very much. Nice { } Off to Malta (?) What operation will there be. Feel quite bucked up.

[Was in Dardanelles by mid February]

