

24th April 1943.

It has taken me since July 1940 to take a note of my travels and adventures since joining the Royal Navy. And so I intend to commence from today, and hope to be able to record events which should be of interest to myself and possibly others in years to come. My reason for delaying this record is extremely feeble-lack of patience, time, and ability to concentrate fully upon something, which many other people would "give their right Hand" to be able to experience in order to get away from the regular monotony of everyday life.

I shall go back to the beginning of the War, when I was working at the Post Office Research Station at Dollis Hill, London. My work was of a photographic nature-Commercial work in conjunction with the research laboratories. War was declared, and a month or so later, I put in my first request to be released and join up. This was refused on the grounds that my work was of a sufficiently important nature, to warrant my being in a reserved position! This struck me as being very amusing, especially as the wage I was receiving-low, due to my age which was then 19-was hardly on a par with 'an important job'! However I was not quite discouraged, and put in several more requests-all of which were turned down. I very reluctantly decided to wait until registering with my age group in March 1940, and even then I was forced to wait until July 1940! Although the Navy had always been my first choice, during the months in which I desparately attempted to do something useful I had tried the H.A.C.-too young! The London Scottish-could find no Scottish blood in my veins, couldn't even bluff. The Navy-had to wait until I registered as they were full up at the time.

So on July 19th, I reported to Chatham where I was kitted up with about a hundred other recruits. After a week there, chiefly spent waiting about all day long and going through various odd routines, I was drafted down to H.M.S. Wildfire, at Sheerness for Boom Defense training. We lived under canvas here for nearly three months, doing extensive Field training, seamanship, and a Wiremans course. My next draft was to H.M.S. Rooke, at Rosyth. There after a short spell in a converted school, I went on board my ~~XXX~~ first ship-H.M. Trawler "Star of the Realm". I spent a couple of months on her, doing about the most useless job a young energetic chap could possibly do for the war effort. Most of the time we were one of the Gate ships, and apart from tiring watchkeeping, the only seamanship I ever did was to put a Senhouse slip on the cable when the Gate was closed, and take it off again when she was about to open again!!! Another month and I would have cracked up-it was essentially an old man's job. The only advantage of the

particular job was that we worked 48 hours 'on' and 48 hours 'off', which meant that I could take the train into Edinburgh for two days leave at a time. This was most welcome to me, and the moment that my watchkeeping time was completed, I would dash off there to enjoy myself. It was there that I received the most genuine hospitality that I have ever had. I met Bunty McDonald at a Dance at the Palais, and upon chumming up I was invited home to meet her Aunt, with whom she lived. Mrs Anderson is one of those typical Scottish Highland women who will do anything for anyone. With the result that a good 50% of my time ashore was spent at her home, where I would be put up for the night, given Breakfast in bed and generally treated as one of the family. Bunty often complained quite jokingly that I was treated far better than she was!! I was extremely sorry to leave Edinburgh.

I had been selected for a Commission whilst at Sheernes and the usual procedure was for candidates from Boom Defense to go through another period of training at H.M.S. Collingwood, down at Fareham, Hants. I had been unfortunate in that I had been drafted to my Trawler, and so several months were wasted. However I was to go at last. With several other ratings I started off on the trip South. With the usual Naval thoroughness, when we arrived at the training Base nobody knew anything about us - and what was more, being Boom Defense ratings, nobody cared anything about us!! We soon cleared that point up however, and were initiated into the Camp. The training was more thorough than that which I had received previously, but in my opinion not so enjoyable. At the end of two months we were all called before the Commodore who interviewed us individually. Despite the fact that I had received excellent recommendations from my Instructors, he turned me down flat for some unknown reason! Naturally I was pretty cut-up, particularly at the prospect of returning to Boom Defense, so I decided to make a nuisance of myself - quite legally of course - so that I could at least get into Active Service. I finished my course, and was drafted into R.N.B. Portsmouth (H.M.S. Victory) There I was to languish for three months, experiencing all of the 'Blitzes' which ruined half of the Barracks, and most of the city. How we nearly all survived that, I do not know. This would be our routine for the whole time - After a normal day's work of removing debris and mutilated bodies, or removing furniture from bombed-out houses, or coaling a ship in the Harbour, we would be detailed off for Firewatching, either in the Barracks or the Dockyard (the Dockworkers considered that they had done their share towards the War, and would go and watch the fires in the town from nearby Hills!!) My particular abode for firewatching was the school block whose roof had already been blasted skyhigh - and a Pal and I had to squat on a narrow beam up there, and deal with any incendiaries

which dropped down in that area! Fortunately for us none ever did, but the thought of attempting to do the impossible was sufficiently nerve-wracking! Every other night I went ashore and would have a 'peaceful' night at Madden's Hotel, which was a Seaman's Hotel. One particular night Eddie Anstee suggested that we go over to Cosham, which was about 5 miles away, and try to stay with some private people. I was not keen at first, as it was so far away and transport was so difficult, but he eventually persuaded me to do so. That night Madden's received a direct hit, and three weeks later over 200 bodies had been dug out of the ruins! We always went to Cosham after that, and found some very nice folk with whom to stay. At the end of this three months I was on the verge of a nervous breakdown, and having been re-considered for a commission I received my next draft to an ex-U.S. Coastguard Cutter (U.S.S. Tahoe) renamed H.M.S. Fishguard. All C.W. (Commissioned Warrant) Candidates had to serve at least 3 months at Sea during that period, and my time on board a Boom Defense ship did not count at all.

The next nine months seemed to pass very quickly, and long sea trips into the Atlantic and six week trips down to Bathurst in British Gambia, all helped one to feel that at last one was doing something really useful from the Active point of view. Bathurst greatly disappointed me. On approaching the port from the Sea, one sees a neat looking array of buildings along the front. But what a contrast ashore, the buildings were filthy and most of the populace diseased- chiefly it appears, Venereal. Prices ashore for anything, especially Fruit were exorbitant. This was undoubtedly caused by the influx of the Matelot, with his notorious reputation of throwing money away as soon as he steps on shore! Oranges would be costing a dear each, and no amount of threat or bargaining would make the dealer change his price, because he knew that somebody was bound to buy.

We used to go swimming from Government House, where a changing room had been placed at our disposal. The beach shelved quite rapidly, so that one could only bathe in 5 feet of water, there being Sharks outside that limit. There was very little of interest ashore, but one could get quite a few good snaps.

Five minutes after returning from leave, whilst the ship was at Belfast, I was ordered to pack my Kitbag and Hammock and report to H.M.S. King Alfred at Brighton. I and four other C.Ws had been waiting for our reliefs all this time, and now we were going without waiting for them! We were as happy as Sandboys! By the way we celebrated in true style! To cut things short, we all passed our Final Selection Board-6 out of 10 failed!-and started our training as Cadets. I was very proud of my dinky little white capband, which we all had to wear-I felt that

I had well and truly earned it, despite what others might have thought!

Three months of really hard work, and I passed through my Exams, and on my 22nd Birthday wore my Officer's Uniform for the first time! The best Birthday present I have ever had! I spent an excellent leave after that - and was recalled to do an Anti-Gas course down at Devonport (H.M.S. Drake). From there I did a weeks Gunnery course at Whale Island (H.M.S. Excellent) and finally proceeded right up North to Fort William, in the wilds of Bonnie Scotland, and at the foot of Ben Nevis. There we were to do a month's course for Coastal Forces (H.M.S. St Christopher) One day three of us achieved a great ambition, that of climbing to the top of Ben Nevis. It seemed very strange to start off in blazing sunshine and finish off in icy snow, and a blizzard! The Wren stewards were sore at us when we returned late, but we soon smoothed them over!

At the completion of this course, everyone is on nerves edge to find out what sort of appointments they will have. I had requested Motor Gunboats or M.T.B.s but I was certainly not disappointed when, with three others, I was told that I would be going out to Canada to pick up some new ships which were being built there. After a month's indefinite leave we set off to the other side on board the U.S.S. Munargo which was an armed transport.

Ten days of glorious weather, and the calmest seas I had ever seen in the North Atlantic. We arrived in Boston on 29th June, and there I looked up Diana and Hugh Stubbins, who were the relatives of some friends in England. Needless to say we soon got a party going. Two days later we arrived to report in Halifax, and further travelled on to Weymouth in Nova Scotia. This tiny, sleepy village had never seen the Navy before, so we all created quite a stir. Met Buck Buchanan, Tony Lewis, George Turner there, and together with my party - consisting of Peter Wardle, Reg Foster, Sam Barder and myself, we all billeted in the Goodwin Hotel.

The Goodwins had run a very profitable Commercial Hotel in years gone past, and with the money Mr Goodwin had saved the two daughters had completed their education by travelling. Unfortunately, however Mr Goodwin had died and financial trouble had developed. Consequently Mrs Goodwin and the two daughters had to re-open the Hotel, and were forced to do most of the work themselves, as Cooks etc were almost impossible to obtain. Consequently they turned out the best food that I have tasted - apart from home food, of course! - and the service was excellent. Three of the nicest people I have ever met. We all helped them as much as we could.

The firm which was building our ships was French-Canadian, and the largest craft that they had attempted to build

prior to these, was about a 30 ft craft! Thus they were very slow at the job indeed, and took approximately six months to complete our ships! Then, too, they were under no sort of wartime compulsion, and once or twice the workmen struck because they were not paid more money!

The four of us became a little tired after a few weeks, just sitting down and sleeping most of the day, so we asked to work on Canadian M/Ls. This request was granted, and we split up, I being attached to Q072, with Doug Howard as my Skipper. He was a great lad, and we all used to have some great parties together. We had chummed up with several R.C.N. Nurses, and would nearly always go out together. There was Kay Robinson and I, Anna Chalmers and Peter, Jane -- and Sam. Reg was a free-lance!! After about six weeks we thought that we would try for some leave and combine it with business. This, fortunately, was granted--so we set off for Ottawa to see our chief there, and try to discover our future position. Spent just over a day in Ottawa, and was greatly impressed with the City's cleanliness. Then we returned to Montreal, and spent four hectic days, until we suddenly had a recall. Montreal is a typical French city, full of Night Clubs, and gay shops. A great surprise was to find so many French-Canadians who could not speak a word of English! Then came the long trip back to Weymouth. As might be expected we still had to wait around there, and so, after commissioning one ship, with Peter as Acting C.O. and myself volunteering as his No. 1, I decided to shoot off to New York, and duly arrived there in two days!

Imagine the surprise of Aunt Ray and family when they received my cable from Boston--this was my third attempt to get to N.Y.--as we had not seen each other for nearly 19 years! I spent three weeks there that time, with only \$40 at hand. Having to return to Halifax again, as it had been decided to hand over our ship to the U.S.N. I decided to return again if possible, this time with some real cash in hand. I was told that I would be going out to West Africa via England, and had several days to wait, so that I could go on leave again for a week! This time, armed with \$280, I set forth for New York once more. There I met the other three lads, who were waiting to go on to the West Indies (!!), and Peter and I went out together. Five nights of Night clubs, getting up at 1030 each morning, and dining and dancing until 0630 the next morning, and then up again! I had a terrific relapse three days after arriving back in Halifax!!

New York fascinated me. The people on the whole were so hospitable to we servicemen, that they could not do enough for us. If one were to accept all the invitations going for Cocktail parties and Dinner and Dances etc, one could keep on the move for 24 hrs out of 24!! *Quite a few did.*

I spent a lot of my time there just wandering around the City with my camera, walking for hours, and hours each day. The buildings were so contrasting and magnificently constructed, and the typical American gadgets so convenient and novel that one could not possibly compare it to London. My favourite haunts were the Hamburger Cafes, where I would just literally stuff myself with the luscious things!! The Coffee was superb and so were the Women!!

Sam and I accepted an invitation to go to Greenwich, in Connecticut. The hosts were very well-to-do, and over the week-end we went to Yale, and saw the first Football match of the season. This match amused Sam and I. Americans are on the whole rather excitable people, and though everyone had a perfect view from their seat, the crowd would insist upon rising to their feet every five minutes or so, whilst Sam and I were the only two who retained theirs! (How typically English!) I had to smile when Sam started following suit towards the finish and laughed even more when I did the same! Certainly very catching!!

I said goodbye with regret when I had to leave my Pals, as I had to get aboard my return ship. I met Don Beverley, who was my C.O. for the first time, and together with Buck Buchanan, we all embarked upon the Queen Elizabeth. What a glorious ship this is, although with nearly thirteen thousand men and 200 C.W.A.C.s (Canadian Women's Army Corps) on board, she was rather crowded. It took just on four days to get to Greenock, and here was I back in England again. This time it was the family's turn to be surprised, especially at the load of tinned foods etc, which I brought with me.

A month later Don, Buck and I embarked on board the "Amstelkirk" which was to take us to W. Africa. We had a great variety of people on board, Government officials - some of whom were going on to Turkey - Nurses, RAF, and Navy. After about four days at sea, and having lost over ten ships by enemy action, our Dutch Skipper decided to scoot off on his own, which we duly did. This meant everybody keeping a watch, backed up by the R.N. It was amazing that several men who were absolutely capable 'fucked' the job, and men who were too old pulled their weight beautifully.

We three became great friends with 'Shorty', who was going to nurse at the European Hospital at Takoradi. The four of us always stuck together, although Don was the favourite! Three weeks later we left the Amstelkirk at Freetown, and boarded the "Highland Brigade" which was to take us to Takoradi on the Gold Coast. It took us another week to get there, and within two hours of disembarking, Don and I joined our ship - M.L. 266. The two men we were relieving had been there nearly 14 months, and had expected us two months previously.

Imagine how pleased they were when they saw us arrive on board! We took over completely after two days, and they sailed away.

Takoradi is a poor spot for entertainment, as might be expected, since it is only a small Port (although the only one on the Gold Coast), and there is no township to speak of. About a twenty five minute walk from the Dockyard is the Takoradi Sports Club, which is the only club in the district. Here a Dance is held on Wednesdays and Saturdays - the latter day having an R.A.F. Band once a fortnight. Here one may see a fair sized crowd of men with few women to dance with. There are probably about 500 men to 1 woman in Takoradi, or the whole West Coast for that matter. And the then most of these women consist of R.A.F. Nursing Sisters, or Sisters from the European Hospital.

We had our first tough break as soon as we arrived on board ship. It appeared that our engines were in a bad shape, but we were going to have new ones fitted as soon as they arrived from the U.K. Apparently they did arrive with the Amstelkerk, and were actually landed at the end of January. Due to the inefficiency of a certain so-called Engineer Officer ashore, they were not eventually fitted until the middle of March! During this period my job was to try and get the ship into fighting and an efficient shape. A great percentage of this task consisted of getting stores from shore, which again were under the charge of the E.O. Here was the toughest job of all, for as the E.O. pointed out to me quite correctly - time after time "You people must realise that we are over 3000 miles away from Home and supplies are practically negligible". But even then with the supplies that were available, I had to fight like fury to get even a fraction of those which I required. Eventually things got to such a stage that we would have a row every time I went into his office! He acted exactly the same to each Officer who attempted to get his ship into an efficient shape, and was thoroughly despised by every sea-going Officer for his lack of co-operation and incivility, and arrogant attitude. He was a real nasty piece of work, and in every one's opinion was a menace to the War effort.

The chief trouble which was always constant on board was - Rust. Everything exposed to the air would turn rusty in a day, and required continuous maintenance, e.g. Guardrails, which would have to be replaced every couple of months, and then scraped and boiled-oiled almost every day. Guns were the same, and required constant maintenance. To cut things short everyone on board worked solidly all day to get the ship into shape, and the crew rarely had a 'Make and Mend'. How glad we were to get our new Engines and be able to go over to the Jetty under our own power instead of having to rely upon somebody else to tow us!

Eventually after terrific messing about by the Base staff, we were ready for Sea, and the beginning of April saw us doing short patrols to get the Engines worked in.

Some form of recreation had to be found for the crew to prevent all going very stale and demoralised. So after a lot of correspondence we arranged for everyone to go on leave for four to five days. The ship's company went in three watches, with an Officer each time. The place chosen was Kumasi, which is the Capital of Ashanti, and nearly 200 miles inland. The train service consisted of one train a day, and the journey took nearly 8 hours through dusty Bush! I stayed with a Mr Briscoe who was the 'Mahogany King' up there. He was a grand chap, and was a great Host. I was taken around in his car, and spent a day right in the Bush looking over the Mahogany trees and the lumber camps hastily rigged up. His assistant 'Mac' took me with him. Mac was a jolly good bloke—he was about 48, Irish, weedily built and the heaviest drinker I have ever met. We shared the same bedroom, and he would wake up about 2 or 3 in the morning and swallow a tumbler full of Whiskey which was invariably by his bedside. The first thing he did upon awakening was to take another drop! He was half tight practically all-day long. But despite his age, Habits and physique, he had done his job this war. He was one of the first volunteers to join the Royal West African Forces when they marched right across Africa and helped to wipe up the Italians in East Africa back in 1941. A great chap. I understand that he died from consumption in May of 1943. He certainly was very consumptive when I knew him.

Amongst other things I saw up and near Kumasi were Rubber plantations, Pineapples, Cocoa plantations and the King of Ashanti's Palace. But for the long and deadly slow trip into the Bush, I should have met the King on the Sunday morning—naturally I was greatly disappointed. Anyway thus ended a very enjoyable four days' leave in Kumasi.

Then again on several Sundays, we organised picnics for the whole ship's Company, and we would borrow the Truck and travel out to Bushwa—35 miles away and Bathe and have fun on the beach. This appeared to be just what the Doctor ordered, for the lads could really 'set about us' in the water, and air a few grievances! N.B. We could do the same, too!! So we all had plenty of fun, and it is amazing what a difference it made to all.

Whilst at Takoradi, I met Sally E----, of the R.A.F. and saw her very frequently when in Port.

We were now on top line for sea, and the word which sounded like music to us was—'Operational'. Our first trip was to be Freetown, and we looked forward to meeting old pals there again. So at the very beginning of April we said goodbye to Takoradi and went forth----

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This month has started off pretty well for us. The very first day we had urgent sailing orders, and left Port about 0700. We had to go out about 70 odd miles and screen a Merchant ship - "which was in difficulties". We duly arrived at the spot, escorting an Admiralty Tug at the same time, and found that the ship in question was on fire. The Tug went on ahead and scouted around with the prospect of taking her in tow, whilst we stood off. Having quite a while to wait, and seeing a few lifeboats drifting around, we decided to investigate the possibilities of salvaging one or two and trying to get salvage money for them. The next hour or so was delightful for me, as I had decided to do the dirty work myself and get the boats in tow. With a hefty swell on this was a great deal harder than I had expected! So I had the Coxswain give me a hand, and we managed to get two of them in tow. Much enjoyment was had in salvaging some of the boats' contents and we made up for some of our depleted stores. Chiefly, we hoisted two of the Barricoes inboard, as we had been forced to sail with only a few small bottles of water - such was the urgency, that not a minute was available for watering ship. Having taken the boats in tow, we got under way again, but as luck would have it the first boat swamped as our 2nd Lt. gave a Port 20 turn!! It was decided to try and bail her out and save the boat, so several Hands stripped down and commenced bailing. Just our darned luck, but we suddenly received orders to go alongside the burning ship and take off survivors. With great reluctance we cast the two boats adrift and headed towards the distressed vessel. Imagine taking a ship carrying 2000 gallons of 100 Octane Petrol alongside a blazing ship!! We all turned grey at the thought of it. However we had had our orders so there was nothing that we could do, and the poor blighters had to be rescued anyway. The next fifteen minutes was hair-raising. We managed to get our Bow on to the ship's side, and yelled to the crew to jump on board as quickly as they could. All this time sparks and flames were shooting all over us, and we expected to meet the Lord at any moment! However we did not do so, and got away in time. I interpreted the crew, who were Belgians, and discovered that they were one of five ships which had been torpedoed the night before, but luckily none of their men had been killed or injured. These men were later passed over to the Tug, and we proceeded to escort the Tug, now towing the ship, into Port. The ship burned furiously all night, and sank just before we entered the Boom!! What rotten luck!

Within three hours of tying up in Port we had a further batch of sailing orders, this time doing several jobs at once. We had to join a Convoy and help to escort part of the way to

Takoradi, and then break off and screen a ship at Marshall, in Liberia.

Freetown always did depress me. This time it seemed even worse. What with swinging around the Buoy once each hour almost, and then having to whip out the fenders to bear off another ML which was swinging around the other way and bearing down upon your stern at terrific speed. Then again there was no proper jetty where one could fuel and water ship as soon as returning from Sea. One had to make a special trip all round the Harbour and try and find one of the few ~~RAKER~~ petrol ships, tie up alongside and waste an hour or so before going off to find a water ship and waste another few precious hours sleep. Kline Bay was so far out from Freetown itself and transport so bad that one was not in the least tempted to venture forth, except when the supplies of stores required one to do so. Then one had to travel to two or three separate places to get one order, and that was a morning wasted to start off with.

The one advantage we found there was the possibility of longish sea trips which would keep us miles away from any Base staff (with respects to those who were 'one of the Boys!') and where we felt that we could a job of work without any hindrance from certain people ashore! Unfortunately we never got a trip to Dakar, although several ships had that chance.

Freetown certainly is crowded during wartime - too crowded in fact. In town there was one place where one could get some @hop - "The Lion and Palm", run by Naafi. The Lunches served there were quite tasty and fairly reasonable - hurrah for Naafi!!

LAGOS, -NIGERIA.

we arrived in Lagos on the 17th May, after a 36 hour sea trip. We'd been hoping for a trip to this place for a long time, and at last we were on our way after only an hour or so's notice

The entrance into Lagos Harbour is a great contrast to any other port along this western Coast. The fine buildings, quite a distance apart are not of the type which look attractive from the Sea and then prove to be a great disappointment when viewed from close-up. The first one is the Lagos Yatching Club-a well-situated and spacious abode for the amateur yachtsmen of Lagos. And next, passing Government House, and 'Piping the Governor', we are amazed at the smart Guard of Honour which gives us a 'Present Arms'.

It did not take me long to nip ashore after making fast alongside the Jetty. Official business had to be attended to at first, but as soon as finished I had a look around the town. There were more shops to be seen in Lagos than all the other places I had been to in West Africa-and several excellent stores too. Managed to buy many articles which could not be obtained elsewhere. Lagos has that reputation, no doubt due to the fact that it is a vast transit camp for civilians as well as Military, who eventually go on to the Near East.

That evening, being Sunday-no Dances or Cinema-and with the possibility of returning to Takoradi the next day, four of us decided to go a bit wild for the evening. We started off at the Grand Hotel where we had a scrumpious Meal (This and the Bristol Hotel are the Hotels here). Then after the usual drinking we finally end up at a Wog Dance. Note:-we were 'sober' enough not to dance! What a contrast, but we all had good fun-and slept very well!

The two main streets of Lagos are the Marina, which runs along the sea front, and Broad street, which runs parallel to it. It is along these two streets that the main business is transacted. Naafi have a huge store on Broad street. This town boasts of four Cinemas, which is something to boast about! The day before we sailed, I went along to the Ikoyi Club, which is the European Club. What a magnificent place! Had a really luxurious Lunch there and then sat along the veranda for a couple of hours in the cool breeze which was wafting through the whole building. The Dance floor was after a style of the Dome in Brighton, only rather more exclusive! Gosh, how I'd love to have gone to a dance there-it must be just too smashing. Still perhaps the next time we visit this place we shall arrive on a more convenient day.

Practically opposite the club are the Mess and Chalets of the employees of the B.O.A.C. (British Overseas Airways Corp.)

What a beautiful set-up this 'independent settlement' these lucky people have. Never have I seen such luxury as I have here- for the tronics that is. These employees each have their own room in a chalet, and share a magnificent Mess. There is even a swimming pool, apart from the usual Tennis, Squash, etc. We happen to be honorary members of the Pool so managed to have two swims- one after a party, at about three in the morning! And the other the day upon which we left. The girls were too tired that day, so we went in on our own some.

A very nice type of Girl seems to come to this B.O.A.C. Branch, and of course they all live in style. The climate too is not nearly so humid as Tak. or Freetown, and where the Club and B.O.A.C. are situated, they swear that there is not a Mosquito within miles. And to prove it they do not use Mosquito nets! It is most certainly an ideal location.

After two and a half days we sailed for Takoradi again, hoping that we maybe able to return very shortly.

It was just before we sailed that Thompson, who had been our Cook, asked if he could be our new Wardroom servant. As he was a very clean lad and would have left- his home was in Lagos- as he could not stand the heat of the Galley, we took him on. French, who was our previous Boy, had deserted back at Takoradi before we had left. He was a very hard worker- in Port- but at Sea he would be 'flaked out' most of the day, and would walk around the ship in a wholesome daze! A further fault was that he was too educated, as he had reached matric. standard. Thompson is a great sailor, and never quivers at all. He is going to be a jolly good Boy after a bit of training. His knowledge of English is rather limited, and his inevitable answer to a question or order is 'Yes, Sir'!!! The funniest experience I had with him was when he went ashore at Freetown with a friend of his who was steward on another ship. He spent most of his savings in drinking Palm Wine and, upon returning on board in the usual 'non-comprehensive' state, he insisted amid sobs, and moans about the money he had spent, that the Coxswain of the next ship had pushed him into the water. And staggering off to the Pocsle, he warned me to lock away the Verey's Pistol, or else he would shoot the Coxswain with it!! Needless to say he didn't!! Most of the day one can hear gurgles of laughter coming from Thompson, as he jokes with the Crew.