

Diary of a Voyage from Melbourne Australia to London

SS Runic – White Star Line 12,482GRT

29 November 1902 – 16 January 1903



Photo courtesy State Library of Victoria – Alan C. Green photographer

This document is a transcript from a hand-written diary contained in an Australian Schools exercise book, providing an account of a voyage undertaken by Herbert Russell Jackson, an officer with the White Star Line who travelled as a super nummary aboard the SS Runic to England to join another of the company's vessels.

The diary was specifically written for the benefit of his future wife, Kitty (Catherine) Russell-Jackson (nee Boyes) whom he left back in Melbourne. Transcript edited by their grandson, Russell Twomey.

Embarkation

29 November: As the time approached for our departure crowds of people assembled on the pier to see their friends off and wish them "bon voyage". There was much weeping and many pathetic scenes were witnessed. Mothers and sisters seeing their dearest ones off and lovers wishing their sweethearts "goodbye and speedy return".

I was accompanied by two friends, Jack McPherson and Ross Newton who would come and see me off, although I always wished to go alone.

As I stood on the ship my thoughts turned to St Kilda and the many happy times I have had there, and wondered how long it would be before I returned and if, when I did, I should see my old pals.

Ah, Kitty, since you crossed my path I have looked at things in a different light. Maybe someday you will learn how much I thought of you. On this, my day of departure on a long voyage, I only wish you may meet others who would have done as much for you as I would have done, as then you would be well thought of.

Well dear, to return to our trip. We let go the ropes at 1pm and gradually withdrew from the town wherein my girl resides, and commenced our long trip. Soon the pier was out of sight and St Kilda loomed in the distance which we passed at 1:30pm.

I saw the pier and wondered if you would be there, but concluded that you would be having your lunch.

Frankston and Dromana were soon left behind us, and Sorrento and Queenscliff sighted. You will know these little towns no doubt. I thought of asking the captain if he knew you, but remembered that he bore a different name.

We passed the "Hygeia" in the Bay returning from Queenscliff, and soon after the Heads appeared, and at 5pm we steamed into the mighty ocean and on our course to Adelaide, the first stopping place.

At 5:30pm the bugle sounded for tea, and after partaking of a little refreshment I paced the deck and my thoughts were very sad indeed. Later on we played solo whist and retired to bed at 10:30pm.

The weather was cold and raining, the water rough and many people were soon sick.

30 November: Rose at 8am and paced the deck for half an hour until breakfast. Many passengers were absent already but yours truly was there alright and had a good meal.

After I looked around and surveyed the ship and passengers I concluded that there were some very nice people onboard. We numbered about 300 (less than expected). I came across people that I knew and had a chat.

Weather much warmer and more pleasant today. Devine service held in the saloon by Rev. Haines and the text was "God is love". Not many people attended owing to sickness, but we had a nice sermon.

After dinner now I am writing this for my dear girl behind me. I am reading Sir Arthur Conon Doyle's "Lady in Scarlet", and eating a big apple. We passed the SS "Westralia" this morning and the "Marloo" an AUSN boat also.

The time is 4pm Sunday afternoon, and the band will be playing at St Kilda. Expect you will be there and having tea at "Ellimatta" - think of me! We are in sight of land about 10 miles out to sea and keeping the coast in sight all day. Attended service again this evening. Bed at 9:30pm.

01 December: Passed Kangaroo Island at 4am and took the pilot onboard. Rose up at 6am and had a bath, dressed and on deck at 7am and had a brisk walk. Coastline still in sight.

We arrived at Largs Bay, Adelaide at 10am. The SS Barbarossa a German mail boat was in port. At 11am the SS "Orontes" Orient SS Co new boat with English mails arrived. Wrote to my darling Kitty.

Many passengers went ashore but I stayed onboard and played quoits and won nearly every game. Had some good fun, several ladies joined in the fun as well. Wishing Kitty had been there.

About 40 extra passengers expected from this port. Things have been fairly quiet up to now owing to so many of the passengers being sick. A lady onboard has been very chatty during the day and it will be interesting to see how things progress. Am being very firm and am not going to flirt with anyone. Still, I shall await events.

If only someone whom I love so dearly had been with me, how happy I should be! We expect to leave Adelaide on Wednesday morning and arrive Cape Town on Christmas Day. Shall be thinking of a girl far away and who may honour me with similar thoughts if she keeps her word.

As I am writing this a terrible noise is being made by the engines going, taking in cargo and my ears are fairly ringing! You will just about be thinking of bed, so am I, so good night. I will retire to my cot, sleep well and dream of me.

02 December: Rose very early, the sea was very rough in the bay. Many passengers went onshore to see the town but I remained onboard.

Towards noon the sea became very choppy and the cargo lighters alongside broke loose which was somewhat exciting. Received a letter from my dear girl and read it many times over. Enclosed photos were pretty good I thought.

Left Adelaide at 7pm and we are on our way to Cape Town, 21 days run ahead of us. Retired early.

03 December: About 250 miles at sea and fairly rough, we are in the Australian Bight. General meeting held to form officials to arrange sports etc. A very large gathering assembled in the smoke room and I was elected on the committee, and afterwards appointed Chairman, but resigned that post to be elected Secretary of the General Committee.

I got subscription lists out and collected £15, but as we required about £30 shall have to try and arrange to get the balance somehow.

Was thinking of Kitty and wishing she was onboard with me to help me arrange the dance programme etc. We are to have one or two Balls during the voyage.

Many people still sick. Have played nearly all the best quoit players onboard and have been barred from entering further tournaments. A rumour is afloat that I am a professional but that is all nonsense.

04 December: About 600 miles from Adelaide and sea fair and sun very warm. A big meeting was held to arrange for sports and amusements owing to much dissatisfaction being shown by passengers towards the committee and also lack of funds. As I am Secretary I had to make a speech to explain matters. After a great deal of discussion the committee was elected unanimously. Shall be kept very busy during the voyage, but not too busy to keep this diary for my girl.

After lunch we played cricket and had some good games. Being used to sea life was an advantage and consequently I bowled the whole side out for 2 runs amid much laughter and consternation. Am elected captain of the cricket team to play against the crew.

A concert was held in the Dining Saloon, organised by two of us and passed off very well indeed. I'm beginning to get very prominent now, everyone doesn't know what a larrikin I really am. I collected £30 for sports and amusements today.

05 December: Up rather early and had a good walk before 8am. Commenced writing up all the entries for the various sports. Collected about 100 names and was working hard all day. A dance was arranged but owing to the rough weather I had to postpone it until more favourable circumstances.

06 December: Changed my cabin for a larger one today, and found being secretary for sports rather tiring. Collected entries for all the different events and over 200 names now, so we should have some good fun.

Arranged for the Fancy Dress Ball to be held 19 December, hope it is a success. I have often wished you were here.

07 December: Divine service held onboard in the saloon. I had a nice job canvassing for a choir! What next! I managed to get 18 singers together and we had a service of songs lasting 45 minutes, much to the annoyance of those who consented to sing on condition that the service would be over in 30 minutes.

I managed to run a "Tattersalls Sweep" on the number of miles the ship ran, the prize of 30 shillings was won by Mrs. Costin. Had a long chat to a Miss Johnstone who has left home and kinfolk for the first time, to visit her brother in South Africa.

08 December: Weather calm and beautifully tranquil. Was very busy all day arranging sports and managed after a lot of mucking about to get them started.

I played deck quoits but due to a lot of ill-feeling withdrew and now devote my whole time to the amusements for others. This evening I arranged a dance and we had a very good time, finished about 11pm. You would enjoy these little impromptu affairs with no formality about them at all.

09 December: Working hard at the sports all day. A lot of deck billiards was played. Ping pong was started in earnest and some good games were witnessed, we have some really clever players onboard.

Collected subscriptions for a "Baby Show" – what next! I managed to collect 10/- and then had to seek out the mothers to get them to enter! It was the worst job I have had to tackle in my life. Of course they all had the best baby onboard!

We are now well out to sea and looking forward to Cape Town.

10 December: Busy all morning with sports. Billiards and quoits in full swing and much fun caused by the chaps shaping up for the first time. Have no time to myself now, but always manage to spare a few moments to write this to my girl.

A great night tonight, I arranged a smoking concert and about 150 fellows swarmed into the Smoking Saloon. Talk about talent – did it come out! A lot of the chaps got drunk and had a lively time of it!

I sang "Glorious Bert" and got a terrific reception, they wouldn't let me sit down, and I had to give an encore. I recited "The Geebung Polo Club" which also went over well. Bed at 1am! Awful!

11 December: Sports every day, matches and amusements afforded for the passengers generally.

Ping pong was in great demand and the tournament is going strong. Had afternoon tea with the ladies, they are very kind to me. In the evening I managed to get up an impromptu concert which passed off tip top. A man sang "Oh Promise Me" and I was sad just thinking of you. I remember your words that you would try and forget me, but I wonder how much of that was really true. I am patiently waiting for your letter which is to greet me on arrival in London.

12 December: Weather beautiful and calm, sun shining very brightly. People onboard are starting to get very chummy with one another.

I organised another Baby Show today, oh my what a time! What fun! We did have a beano! Mothers dressed their young in all the regalia to try and catch the judges eye. A lot of people wanted me to be a judge but as I care more about my carcass than risk it among the mothers, I wisely declined. Talk about jealousy, you just can't conceive what it was like here. However, we balloted for the winner and when I announced the result there was tremendous cheering.

After dinner I got up a whist party in the dining saloon and we spent a very pleasant evening.

13 December: Sports going all the morning and great excitement was created. People seem to be enjoying themselves alright and therefore I am happy.

After dinner the sea become rather rough indeed, huge waves breaking over the forward deck. It was the heaviest sea we have had yet. I had previously arranged for a cricket match against the crew and not wanting to be beaten by the sea, I gathered as many passengers like myself who could stand the sea and we played. The crew on this ship are very good players and take a lot of beating, but I managed to get a couple of very good bowlers.

The sea gradually become rougher until 8pm when I had arranged a "Grand Concert" in the dining saloon, but it simply had to be postponed as the waves were breaking right over the ship and we were running into a storm. We rolled and pitched fearfully, and people were soon sick! It reminded me of a previous storm I once weathered in the Indian Ocean.

People were becoming a bit frightened and we had to reassure them. We are about 1,000 miles from a little island named St Paul in the middle of the Indian Ocean. I retired to my little cot at 10pm, resting peacefully knowing full well that our good ship would weather this safely.

14 December: I arose at 7am and at once noticed that the sea had calmed down a great deal. I worked all morning writing up the sports schedule for the following week.

Divine service was held but very few people attended owing to sea sickness. After dinner I sat in a quiet part of the ship and took a bit of a rest. The sea became calmer every passing hour.

15 December: Busy until breakfast working up the sports schedule for today. The sea is quite tranquil now and we had some good races. Everybody entered into the fun which lasted all the day. We commenced with the potato races and the ladies entered in great numbers. It was rather funny to see them run until the ship gave a great lurch.

In the evening we had a Grand Concert in the dining saloon, postponed from last Saturday. It was a great affair, and the captain and officers accepted my invitation and attended.

16 December: Sea again choppy and a strong wind blowing. Sports had to be postponed owing to a heavy sea running.

We worked up a "Mock Trial by Jury", and played it in the saloon tonight. You will know all about these shows. I was the Judge's Associate. It was very funny no mistake and we had the whole crowd roaring with laughter, we had real lawyers onboard who created a great deal of fun and we all wore courtroom regalia.

The captain and officers attended and had a very good time.

17 December: Sports going all day, and kept very busy indeed. Much fun was caused when the whole of the cast of "Trial By Jury" came on deck in their robes to have our photos taken. We are lucky to have a good photographer onboard.

I arranged a concert and dance on deck tonight and we all had a very pleasant evening. People are starting to prepare themselves for Friday when we have a great event, the Fancy Dress Ball. People are also looking forward to Cape Town now, only 6 days away.

18 December: Up early arranging the sports for the day. At 10:30am I sent the gong around the ship and got all the passengers together. We had a lot of competition among the ladies for the prizes. The egg and spoon races created a great deal of amusement, but "marking the pig's eye" was even funnier still. Of course dear you will know that these sports are the life and soul of the ship.

After dinner we arranged a "tug of war" between the married and single men. A great contest was witnessed and the single men won the two pulls. Mr Molesworth gave us an address on his travels in Ceylon and other Eastern countries and a very interesting hour was spent. Arranged the program and supper for the Ball tomorrow night. Played poker for an hour then to bed.

19 December: Arose at 6am and was working until 10am, then spent all day arranging the Fancy Dress Party for the evening.

Sports were on all day, and we had great fun indeed. Finished up all tournaments and got things ready for the distribution of prizes for tomorrow evening. After tea the deck was cleared for the great tournament of fancy costumes.

I led the parade being the MC and walked with Miss Carlyle dressed as Britannia. There was a very good procession consisting of 40 couples in good costumes. After parading around the brilliantly lit decks the

Ball commenced. Dancing was indulged in until supper when a heavy storm bringing a deluge of rain swept down upon us with terrifying fury. Of course we had an awning up and that protected us a great deal.

I had a splendid supper table arranged with claret, lemonade, lime juice and all sorts of delicacies. Although the rain was bad the people enjoyed themselves so much they kept it up until midnight.

I wish Kitty had been here, you would have enjoyed yourself, and I promise I didn't flirt with anyone!

Finally got to bed at 2am feeling somewhat tired.

20 December: Sports being finished I was kept awfully busy arranging a balance sheet of monies entrusted into my care, working up until 3pm. We played the return match against the crew First XI and got a good beating. Afternoon tea was provided by the ladies and a good time was had by all.

The final concert and prize presentation was held in the evening with great success. Many speeches were given and I came in for a lot of "soft soap", being secretary. About 40 prizes were given out.

21 December: Divine service was held onboard and a collection was taken for the first time for the account of the widows and orphans of sailors. Had a very quiet day. We passed a large fully-rigged sailing ship about 5 miles away from us and she looked very good.

22 December: People are getting ready to leave at Cape Town and were busy packing. I arranged a concert on deck for the children and gave them their prizes, after which we played some games. The little kiddies thoroughly enjoyed themselves and had a jolly good tuck in to the tea provided for them.

23 December: People anxiously looking out for land all morning which appeared in sight at noon. Crowds of anxious passengers were assembled on deck talking and chatting merrily together, others crying and so forth. I recalled in my mind my arrival in Melbourne last year.

At 5pm the rugged coastline was very distinct with huge rocks known as the "12 Apostles" were sighted, very rugged and looking very majestic indeed. I remember some rocks known by the same name in the Mediterranean off the coast of Sicily. During the day a tremendous shoal of porpoises followed the ship. Several whales and sharks were also to be seen, the area is well known for its shark-infested waters. It makes one feel creepy to wonder what would happen if we were wrecked!

At 7pm the huge tableland at the base of which Cape Town is built appeared on the horizon and then we knew how close we really were. Dropped anchor in the harbour at 7:30pm. Crowds of vessels were here from all parts of the world, and several of the Union Castle mail boats were in port.

All night the scene was lovely with all the ship's lights and those on shore making the scene look like a huge pleasure ground lit with Chinese lanterns.

Later we had our usual evening entertainment and a smoking concert was held; a very good time. A testimonial was held to thank me for all my efforts as secretary of the committee, and I received a terrific ovation with cups and saucers being rattled – imagine 300 people rattling crockery together!

24 December: Breakfast at 6:30am. The passengers were sent ashore after inspection by the medical officer. There was the usual weeping and farewells.

The passengers for London were not allowed to go ashore owing to a smallpox epidemic raging in the town. Of course we were much disappointed, having been onboard for 22 days without seeing land in a practical sense. We lost about 150 passengers and took onboard 80, chiefly soldiers and their wives. Wrote a card and a letter to Kitty, and after leaving Cape Town at 3:30pm we departed on our long journey to England. People soon settled down when tea came on the scene.

We spent the evening having a few drinks and singing Christmas carols.

25 December: Christmas Day at sea, 300 mile NW of Cape Town. I arose early and paced the deck before the early-birds were about. My thoughts turned to St Kilda, and I wished my dear Kitty all the joy my heart could give.

About 8am people started to assemble on deck and wish each other the compliments of the season. Everyone seemed to be in a good temper today, and life therefor seemed to be worth living. Kitty dear, you don't know how much I have thought of you and wished you were with me.

After breakfast I chatted and strolled with two of the passengers who came aboard in Cape Town and they told me of some of their experiences. We had divine service at 10:30am and Cannon Nunns preached a very good and wholesome sermon. Nearly all the passengers, and all the ship's officers attended. We had lunch at midday and dinner at 6:30pm for a change. Of course being Christmas, we had the usual spread for dinner, turkey, plum pudding and wine. Naturally we feasted long and well, especially me!

26 December: Boxing Day, and 600 miles from Cape Town. I was out at 7am preparing my papers for the meeting to be held to elect a committee to carry on the sports from Cape Town to London, our duties having ended at that port. A very large attendance, and I was re-elected secretary and treasurer, and thanked everyone for their kind words. My efforts to collect subscriptions was productive and collected £25.

In the evening I arranged a concert which was well attended. We have some good talent onboard now, so I will probably be able to organise some very good concerts etc.

The Champion Comedian of South Africa, Mr Winterbottom is onboard, and with him a very clever violinist who both gave their services tonight and were loudly cheered.

27 December: At sea 900 miles from Cape Town. Out on deck early again and did some more writing before breakfast. Collected entries for the various sports during the day.

After dinner I arranged a cricket match against the crew, but we were beaten by 11 runs. The ladies again provided afternoon tea for the players and a jolly good time was had.

After supper at 8:30pm I got up an impromptu dance on deck and we kept going until 11pm when the lights were extinguished!

28 December: Sea calm and sun shining brightly. Divine service held and largely attended. Organised a sweep on the run, and arranging a programme of sports including billiards and quoits.

Weather getting very warm now being near the Equator. Passed a Union Castle mail boat on her way to Cape Town. I was thinking of "Ellimatta" all today, my visits to that glorious place pass through my mind. I expect you will be flirting with some of your numerous boyfriends whilst poor me is helpless and far away!

29 December: Now 1,500 miles from Cape Town, very warm and only 3 days to the Equator. White suits are the order of the day, but people beginning to feel the heat greatly.

Sports discontinued owing to the heat, but some people continued playing ping pong. The heat is horrible, the sun is absent, but the air was fearfully muggy and close. Many people slept on deck, no doubt the place to be. It reminded me of the Red Sea.

A poor fellow evidently in a rapid state of consumption was in an awful state. He boarded in Cape Town and is going home to die. I felt very sorry indeed for him. The ladies were very good and did everything they could to relieve him.

30 December: Heat simply terrible, muggy and about 110 degrees in the shade. Many people are now feeling the extreme change from the cold weather. I could not bear to go to my cabin being as hot as it

was. Several people just wore white trousers and a shirt with no collar. Needless to say, no sports were held at all.

We had a grand concert in the dining saloon at night. All the huge electric fans are going which made the place tolerable. We had a professional violinist, Mr Marx who played a few pieces for us which were greeted with loud applause. Mr Winterbottom sang several very good comic songs which caused much amusement, and I sold programmes and made myself generally useful.

31 December: Last day of the old year! And what a year! Weather still terribly hot and most unpleasant. I shall be glad when we are out of this weather, we are now in what is termed as "The Doldrums".

I arranged a little dance tonight. Fancy dancing in this weather, but people will still do it! My idea was to keep them alive until midnight when we had a service to let the old year out and the new year in. About 40 people stayed up after the service and sang "Auld Lang Syne" and "God Save the King".

Many fellows stayed behind and promenaded the deck singing comic songs, they thoroughly enjoyed themselves. At 2am we retired to one of the larger cabins and had a few drinks. I had a few drinks and wished you much happiness. We finally dispersed at 3:30am feeling somewhat tired.

01 January: People were up early and wishing each other the compliments of the season, and all good wishes. I arose at 8am feeling a little tired. The weather was fearfully hot and clammy, and everyone is feeling it. People were laying about in every nook and cranny trying to evade the heat but with little or no success. We are almost on the Equator which we cross tonight at 12am and then towards cooler weather. Much more of this and we should all have melted.

02 January: We kept up the old time custom of Father Neptune today. All persons not having previously crossed the Equator were given "The Order of the Bath". We shaved them first, and for a razor we used a large stick. After shaving they were flung head first into a large bath which had been erected. About 20 fellows were ducked and much fun was witnessed.

People were resting all afternoon and evening, the hot weather having taken a lot out of them.

03 January: Sports were commenced today, and a good deal of fun was had. A tug-of-war was held between the South African passengers and the Australians, but the former won easily much to the disgust of the latter.

Potato sack races were run but not many passengers completed the course this time. The Australians were much better sports than the other nations. Weather is getting cooler and we are now off the west coast of Africa nearing Cape Verde. I'm looking forward to Teneriffe and then home. Only 2 more weeks and I shall be looking out for your letter.

04 January: Beautiful day and weather nice and cool. Divine service held in the saloon. People are taking things easy and most of them are reading. I organised a sweep on the ship's run and managed to get about £20 for the prize. I was also thinking of you and wondering if you would be doing the St Kilda Esplanade with one of your boyfriends. You will remember our little trip to Elsternwick, my what a time we had! As you read these lines please recall in your mind those little chats on St Kilda Beach. We were both very happy then. I am now, but perhaps you may have changed since I left, eh? You see Kitty, even though I am far away, I am still thinking of you!

05 January: We are now only 50 miles from land off the African coast, Cape Verde laying to our starboard.

Sports were held all day and much amusement afforded. We passed a cargo steamer only a quarter mile off and bound for Cape Town. A fully-rigged sailing ship was also sighted in the distance.

During the evening we had a smoking concert which was very successful indeed. The professional gents came forward to help me and therefore everything was tip-top. Singing carried on until late and several were "merry". It was 2am before I got to bed.

06 January: Sports going all day as usual. In the evening I arranged for another "mock trial" which went off splendidly.

We told the Chief Steward off for giving us a little too much rice for our meals, and he got awfully wild about it. Poor chap got awfully annoyed and I had to tell him not to take it too personally which was the best to do under the circumstances. Getting near Teneriffe, only 400 miles.

07 January: Weather rather choppy and fairly cool now. Steaming into cold winds. A Fancy Dress Ball was held on deck and about 40 people turned up, not as many as expected owing to the rough seas. Many ladies were seasick and consequently many men danced together. A splendid supper was prepared with free wine. People have all been talking about landing in Teneriffe.

08 January: Weather gets colder every day, quite a change from the tropical weather experienced just a few days ago. Most people were resting all day but I got some to finish up the sports. We also played ping pong and had some interesting games.

During the evening the smoking room was crowded with lots of fellows playing cards, others chess, and so forth. We arrive in Teneriffe in the morning and everyone is contemplating going ashore.

09 January: Arrived at dawn. The town looks very picturesque from the ship. The people are chiefly Spanish and French.

We went ashore at 10am in small boats as we were over a mile from the landing stage. The town lays at the foot of a great mountain 12,580 feet high. We were accompanied by a guide who escorted us to the principal streets, which were very narrow and dirty, and the places of interest.

First we visited the Post Office which is a very squalid place for a government building. Here the work is done by two Spanish men and one woman who only sells the stamps. We next went to the fruit market where fruit is very cheap. Oranges and lemons were 3 pence per dozen. The place reminds me of the Eastern markets in Melbourne.

After leaving the smell of fruit we crossed over the street and inspected the theatre. There is no pit, all the seats are arranged in galleries of which there are 4 tiers. The Italian Opera were performing that night but time prevented us from attending.

After that we toured around the old church built centuries ago. As usual in these places, there was an abundance of marble everywhere. It reminded me of my visit to the cathedral in Naples, except not so grand. The usual number of beggars were there – fancy having notices stuck up in churches such as "Beware of the Pickpockets"!

Wended our way to the cleaner atmosphere of the Gardens. They are not behind in this respect for there is an indispensable bandstand that so reminded me of St Kilda.

Having taken as extensive a tour as our time would permit we naturally refreshed the inner man at a Spanish café and had some wine.

Landing back at the pierhead at 12 noon, the appointed time for returning, we found that about 20 passengers were left behind somewhere. As the ship was leaving in one hour's time we naturally felt anxious about them. However, we all left and went onboard.

The captain was told that these people were behind, but said that if they did not turn up by 1:30pm, he should leave them. They landed onboard at 1:45pm and we drew up the anchor and steamed on for England.

Weather became very rough indeed and a lot of people were sick and turned in for the night.

10 January: 250 miles from Teneriffe, and weather very rough. We are getting the tail-end of a storm raging in the Bay of Biscay. We were told that several ships had been delayed because of the weather. Of course people were soon sick again, and to top it all off it rained in torrents and things were miserable.

I got up a whist party and we played nearly all day to pass the time. Whilst we were playing a very heavy thunderstorm raged for about 3 hours; it was awful! Needless to say everyone retired early.

11 January: The sea subsided somewhat today and people were happier. Divine service held in the dining room, but only a few attended as much seasickness still prevailing from the weather yesterday.

Every Sunday my thoughts turn to St Kilda and I spend the time thinking of you Kitty, and I keep thinking about the course of events that led me to you. I often wonder how many more happy days I shall spend there if I am permitted! Probably you will tire of hearing this so often, but believe me I was so happy then and cannot help saying so. Good night my lady and pleasant dreams.

12 January: Sea beautiful and calm and the weather nice and cool. As we are nearing the end of our journey I have got many of the sports finished off. A large number of the men participated and we had some great fun. At night I arranged an impromptu concert which went off very well.

People are now getting excited as we are getting near the end of our journey. I too am excited. Several ships sighted today as we are now near the regular course of vessels trading to the Mediterranean. Many of the smaller ships seemed to be having a rough time of it, although the seas seemed calm to us, being on a very large boat.

13 January: We entered the Bay of Biscay this morning. This is reputed to be a terrible place, but did not seem terrible to us. Of course the waves were fairly big but then so was our ship and we were pretty steady. Many ships were seen and had a fearful time of it.

The wind blew from off the land all day, but had it been from off the sea we would have been in the thick of it.

We played cards nearly all day, and had quite a time of it. It gets colder every day, and today is terrible, particularly having been in the tropics a short time ago. I spent some time in one of the officer's cabins tonight having a few drinks and cigars, and spinning a few yarns all evening. Bed at 11:30pm.

14 January: We are still in the Bay of Biscay which is still moderately rough. Wind still from the north east and luckily Plymouth will be reached soon after midnight, and so I arranged a final concert and distribution of prizes. I got 2nd prize for ping pong.

At 8pm we saw the lights of the Lizard Head lighthouse which shone brilliantly. We knew we were very near now and people sang and rejoiced. We sang "Only Another Day to Roam" and everybody joined in. After the concert about 20 of us fellows continued our rejoicing until past midnight and I retired at 1am. In two hours we will be in Plymouth where 100 passengers are getting off.

15 January: Plymouth reached at 3:30am, but I overslept and was not awake when we left again, we were only there for one and a half hours.

All day we were in sight of the land, and dozens of vessels were to be seen. I packed up my traps today. The passengers subscribed to a testimonial for me and I received £5 – not too bad! We played cards all

evening, which is to be our last! Before retiring I walked the deck and thought of Good Old Australia, and my dear little lady over there. I wonder how long it will be before I see you again? But I kept my promise and wrote this diary of life onboard.

16 January: We arrived at Southend and anchored awaiting the tide. About 10am we proceeded up the Thames, passing Gravesend and very quickly at 11am we were off Tilbury, our berth, but we couldn't get into the dock until 3pm. When we finally did, a special train was waiting to convey us to the Greatest City in the World.

After our baggage had been examined we boarded the train and were soon heading towards the city, reaching there at 5pm.

Goodbye Kitty for the present. This completes my diary and hoping you may derive a little pleasure in reading it. Ever yours, Bert.