

# A Voyage from Southampton to Sydney April - May 1975

## Aboard MV Shota Rustaveli

An account of a voyage undertaken by Russell Twomey sailing from the UK back home to Australia on board the Russian-flagged MV Shota Rustaveli, chartered by the now defunct English-based CTC Line, a budget travel company that did not own any vessels but operated low-cost cruises and mainline voyages both within Europe and the Australian/New Zealand markets, all chartered from The Black Sea Shipping Company.



*Photo: Courtesy Vitold Muratov*

**07 April:** Took the Boat Train from Waterloo Station, on the south bank of the Thames in London at 11:15am and arrived alongside the Southampton dock at 12:30pm, right at the berth where the sleek 20,000GRT Russian liner awaited her 750 passengers who will join for the voyage to Sydney via the Panama Canal.

Boarded at 2pm and sailed at 5pm. Stood at the rail beside one of the ship's Entertainment staff, madly waving goodbye to his wife and young child on the dock. (This individual was to be seen constantly paying way too much attention to one particularly attractive and unattached young lady throughout the entire voyage).

Stowed suitcases in our two berth outside cabin, and surveyed our home for the next 32 days. The cabin is very spacious, but the linoleum floor, bright white painted walls and cupboards and red vinyl settee give it a rather stark utilitarian look. Toilet and bath facilities are to be found in blocks at intervals along the interior of the entire deck.

Fortunately, the décor of the public rooms does not suffer from the same lack of attention, and in fact has quite a homely feel about them.

Passed by some of the world's famous liners at their berths (QE2, Pendennis Castle, Southampton Castle, Australis, Ellinis and Arcadia) as Shota Rustaveli glided down the Solent and quite close to the Isle of Wight and the Needles on the port side. Entered the English Channel at 7pm and dropped the pilot.

Dinner seating was at 8pm, and all hope that the rather basic and unappetising meal was due to first-day bedding-down. (Alas, that was to be the norm for the entire voyage, and unfortunately actually became far worse).

**08 April:** Well, we know we have hit the Atlantic in all its glory! Woke up to the ship pitching heavily, grey skies and a howling wind. Unsurprisingly, there were very few in the dining room for breakfast this morning, most of the passengers holed up in their cabins seasick. Fortunately, this not an affliction that I suffer from, in fact I am quite enjoying myself, but sadly at the expense of others. It is mesmerising to watch her bow dive into an Atlantic roller with the ensuing spray washing over the foredeck.

At 9:30am an announcement came over the public address system that all passengers are to report immediately to the Forward Lounge to be addressed by the Captain. After some time standing around it was quite clear that some unfortunates just couldn't face the challenge of complying, but after a few impatient and sharp words from the Captain standing on the band rostrum, several crew scurried off to return with those miserable miscreants in tow who had dared to defy the command.

Looking around the captive audience, there is a real cross-section of age groups on this trip. Probably the main groups would be young singles between 21 and 30 years, and married couples between 25 and 45 years, not many ankle-biters in sight. No doubt the more well-heeled are heading to Australia on a P&O liner.

The next 10 minutes were bizarre to say the least. After a short word of welcome, we were told in great detail and no uncertain terms that we are on a Russian vessel, subject to Russian law, and should anyone dare to step over the line, the full force of Russian justice will be brought down on the head of the miscreant. Remembering that this is at a time when the Iron Curtain is very much rusted into place, images of life in Siberia seem rather real! Having delivered his ultimatum, all were all summarily dismissed to return to their cabins and take up seasickness again at their own leisure. Some welcome!

Since it was definitely not a day to be out on deck, the remainder of today was spent in one of the bars playing board games and reading. After dinner the movie "Airport 75" was shown in the cinema, but unfortunately the last reel of the movie was shown after the first, and the second one last. (Sadly, it took several movies and several attempts at explaining the order in which the reels should be shown before this problem was to be rectified).

We have soon learnt that our Russian crew do not possess a good command of English, in fact very little at all.

The most exciting thing about dinner tonight was the damp tablecloths and table fiddles erected to prevent crockery and glasses from flying off the dining tables.

**09 April:** Woke to the same heavy pitching, but another dimension had been added, a slow roll as well. In nautical terms this is referred to as "corkscrewing" and is the most unpleasant movement for those unfortunates that suffer from "mal-de-mer". I have to admit though, whilst it sounds bad, I must give credit to the designers and builders of the good ship Shota Rustaveli, if not for her solid construction and deep hull, things could be a lot worse; her sea-keeping qualities are excellent. But after all, she was built for the North Atlantic trade.

And that presents another advantage at this stage of the voyage, her glassed-in Promenade Deck enables people to walk most of the length of the main deck protected from the nasty Atlantic gale. Outside temperature at noon was 8c!

We were advised that the Captain's Welcome Dinner" was to be held tonight and suits and cocktail dresses are the expected dress. In anticipation of a decent meal, excitement abounded and we didn't mind getting all "dolled up" for the occasion. We should have known better, neither the Captain or a decent meal attended.

**10 April:** Yet another wild weather day, and the ship is still ploughing through very rough seas, no reduction in her movement. Way too windy to venture out in the open, so had to be content with reading and playing board games in the Iberia Bar. Outside temperature up to 14c at noon.

At 11am all passengers were called to their emergency stations for lifeboat drill. Yes, I know what you're thinking, don't they do that before departure? Nup, but then I wonder who would be first to the boats if an emergency did occur! Fortunately our lifeboat station is on the enclosed Promenade Deck, so not too onerous.

Very little happening this afternoon so just sat around reading and playing board games with several other couples. I wonder where the movies are? Dinner hasn't changed; a typical menu (ordered from a Roneo sheet of paper) consists of a sardine or potato salad appetiser, a choice of two soups, mains of either one of a fish dish or a meat stew, cheese platter or ice cream and fruit salad. The main issue is the food is tasteless and servings are very small.

**11 April:** Everyone is asking when will we get away from this lousy weather. Last night I woke up on several occasions to the ship pitching into a steep sea with the accompanying slamming shudder as she noses out of one valley and into another. Attended Russian language classes in the lounge at 11am. No wonder they seem so grumpy, it's not an easy language to learn. It also seemed that the conversation was more about the glorious achievements of the Soviet Union since the shackles of capitalist oppression were thrown asunder, rather than learning basic Russian words so that we can communicate with the crew.

Later in the day the seas were just getting worse, spray is now reaching the Boat Deck, so no one is venturing outside, and the slamming motion is getting on everyone's nerves a bit. It's getting so bad that you hold on to your

drink, you wouldn't dare put it on a table. Attended a quiz night after dinner and came equal first. No prize, just the glory.

**12 April:** And again with the heavy seas, although the outside temperature has climbed to 17c at midday; something to do with heading steadily in a south-west direction perhaps?

By now we are starting to work out who's who in the zoo. There's a young woman with a very young baby that she seems to constantly breastfeed with a total lack of modesty in all the public rooms; there's a CSIRO scientist and his wife who are returning home after a 2 year secondment in the UK, and beginning to wonder why they just didn't opt to be flown home; there's a cohort of young penniless adults returning after an extended working holiday in the UK (that's the group I consider myself to be in); and there's the Ships Drunks! Yep, it started with a bloke in his mid-40's and a woman of indeterminable age who met onboard on Day 2 and became inseparable. Worse than that, every single day from early morning to late at night they just gravitate between the ship's bars and when they can no longer stand (which is every few hours or so), they just fall down asleep wherever they may happen to be at the time, and when they wake up again, off they go. Even on the main staircase! They crew just leave them alone as they aren't doing any harm to anyone other than themselves.

**13 April:** Well, at last the seas are abating. We have learned that we have avoided the worst of a very severe mid-Atlantic hurricane by circling to the south of the eye. Would not have liked to sail right into it, which would have been the direct path as we head towards the Caribbean and Panama Canal.

Russian language lessons again at 11am; I can say "yes", "no", "thank you" and "good day". I don't think the Russians understand me though.

Still too cold and windy to enjoy the open decks, so yes, it's a choice of one of the three bars onboard and a good book. After dinner the movie *Bandalero* was run and they ran the reels in the right order. Pity, the movie was that bad that changing the sequence would have been really more entertaining!

**14 April:** Still overcast, but midday temperature rocketed up to 22c! Attended the Keep Fit class after breakfast and spent the rest of the morning in a deck chair with a book and a drink. I wonder, am I wasting my time?? I think I'll be strong and skip the classes, not the glasses.

Wind has dropped and now it is quite enjoyable on deck. The ship's Neptune Pool has been filled and since it has a glass dome over the top of it, it is quite pleasant to take a dip.

But, there's likely to be trouble afoot! The Ship's Drunks have another member, a bloke about the same age as the other one has emerged from God knows where, and now they are a threesome. They are harmless until about midday when the tank is pretty much full and, I assume because one of them apparently must have hearing problems, they begin to shout over one another. This lasts until they fall asleep again. I actually saw the three of them propped up against a wall in the Iberia Bar later in the afternoon, leaning on each other and dead to the world. All three are as skinny as rakes, and come to think of it, I haven't seen them at dinner or any other meal for that matter.

**15 April:** Yay, the sun is out! Joined the Bridge Visit after breakfast which lasted half an hour, then into swimwear and out on deck to sunbake. This afternoon's entertainment was a Russian liqueur tasting, very thick and very sweet! Roaring 20's Night after dinner, quite a lot of fun.

**16 April:** A hot, humid day. We entered the Caribbean Sea via the Mana Passage between the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico at 5am this morning. Seas as expected, are dead calm and the midday temperature reached 30c.

There is a very gradual but noticeable list to port occurring of recent days, and now it is quite pronounced and people are commenting. I suspect that either the fuel bunkers or fresh water tanks have not been trimmed to maintain a level ship, but to uncover the actual cause I spoke to one of the Deck Officers who had the misfortune to pass by me this afternoon, and asked him what was the reason. His sharp reply was "there is no list, I don't know what you are talking about!" This left me a bit nonplussed and when I passed this on to others around me, there was much laughter. We all agreed that there is at least a 10 degree list and it is a bit disconcerting, but even more so when vehemently denied.

Won the daily run tote today with a distance steamed of 463nm noon yesterday to noon today, and collected the princely sum of £4.50! Also won the Trivia Quiz after dinner and collected a certificate! Yay!

**17 April:** Hot, humid and sunny again! Keep Fit classes again, and lounging in the very hot sun. The thing that most people are disconcerted about is that the list is becoming even more pronounced now, and although the sea is quite flat, there is an underlying swell that is making the vessel roll uncomfortably. I tried to approach the subject with another officer who spoke quite good English and got the same response "you are just imagining it". I mentioned to him that I am not the only one, after which he just turned around and walked away. There's clearly something wrong with their transfer pumps, or maybe they think this is normal? Who knows, but they certainly don't want to discuss the obvious!

Before leaving England I debated whether to take UK pounds or change everything to US dollars, and decided on the latter. Just as well, as the pound has sunk deep in value after the UK budget was presented last Tuesday!

Saw a few marlin jumping out of the sea today, and we are able to tune our radio to several US stations.

**18 April:** A highlight of the voyage – the transit of the Panama Canal! Up at 3am to watch the ship pull past the breakwater at Colon, and Customs formalities completed soon after. One thing is immediately obvious, the Shota Rustaveli is back on an even keel. Whatever had caused the worrying list to port has now been rectified!

We entered the first of the 3 Gatun Locks at 6:30am. It seemed a fairly quick process to be raised 85' and enter Lake Gatun, which we had crossed by 10:30am.

It's is very hot, 35c and really humid with passing brief showers. As we sailed through Gaillard Cut we almost scrapped the side of a large bulk tanker which became a talking point for some time afterwards. We were told that usually 40 vessels transit the Canal each day, but it was much busier with 45 going through today.

Passed through a narrow channel with thick jungle right down to the water edge on each side, so close you could almost touch it, and then steep rich brown cliffs passed by further on.

Next was the Pedro Miguel Locks where we dropped down 38', followed by the Miraflores Locks and so into the basin and then berthed at Bilbao port at 2:30pm. Six of us went ashore together and walked towards the city centre. Items were very expensive so no purchases made.

The city is very dirty and rather run down. Being the adventurous (read "stupid") types, curiosity got the better of us so we walked down a road leading to what looked to be a shanty town, grotty but very, very colourful. We started to feel a little uncomfortable because we were being stared at from both sides of the street, when suddenly there were two police cars racing down the road behind us with sirens blaring. They pulled up just behind us and shouted to turn around and come back towards them, which of course we did. We got a right dressing down! The short story was that we were walking into a "no go zone", where even they don't dare enter. As one of them said, "you go in there and you may never come out". They called it a barrio, which I guess in Spanish means slum. That was enough for us, and we caught a taxi back to the ship.

**19 April:** Sailed from Bilbao at 1:30am. We are now in the Pacific Ocean, and next stop is exotic Tahiti. Seas are flat and seem very blue compared to the Atlantic. After Keep Fit classes went to a slide presentation on Moscow and Leningrad (both of which I have visited, but that's another weird story) but it was rather poorly done and seemed to focus more on the wonderful deeds of Lenin than the cities themselves.

Played shuffleboard with others before lunch. Noticed that the service in the dining room is starting to deteriorate markedly, surly attitudes from the table stewardesses and quality and quantity of the food dropping even further. I wonder what's going on; it's becoming quite a topic of conversation among the passengers.

After dinner went to see "The Marseilles Contract", but again the projectionist screwed up getting reels 2 and 4 around the wrong way. Protests from the crowd only got him angry, and we descended into laughter in the end, nothing else we could do.

**20 April:** Calm seas again and very hot. After Keep Fit classes it was just laze around, read and go for a swim. Dining room standards not improving. Saw another terrible movie after dinner, "Island at the Top of the World", but at least the reels were in the right sequence!

**21 April:** Another hot day and calm seas. After Keep Fit classes a “tug-of-war” was held against the Russian crew and we were soundly beaten. They didn’t smile or joke through it like we did, seemed to be a matter of honour for them to win. Each of us received a brochure on Russia as our prize for losing, more propaganda perhaps?

Dinner was a disaster for our table of 8! The main course was beef stroganoff and the others all received 3 pieces of meat swamped in gravy, but I was served just one small piece on my plate. It looked very lonely. I asked the stewardess (politely) if I could have the same amount as the others had received. She looked at me blankly, turned around and walked away. A minute later, the Head Stewardess came storming across the dining room with the stewardess in tow. She stood at the end of the table and demanded to know who had made the request. I put up my hand and explained that I was very hungry and had only one piece. With that she turned to the stewardess and said something in Russian, then announced that because I had made a complaint, none of us was getting anything more to eat tonight, and to leave! The stewardess hurriedly collected everyone’s plate, still with unfinished food on them and scurried off. We sat there non-plussed for a few moments taking this all in and then decided to leave. I don’t think I’m popular at the moment! But I have certainly learned not to complain about anything!

Went to the quiz and came second, and then the Horse Racing after that.

**22 April:** Sunny day and a long low swell running, but quite comfortable. A swim and relax during the morning. We had the “Crossing the Line” ceremony at 3pm with a reasonably good turn-out. Still, a lot of fun but since I am now a “Shellback” having crossed the Equator by sea several times now, I didn’t get chosen for particular attention. First-timers (victims) are called “Pollywogs”.

Dinner went off without a hitch thank goodness! Just as if nothing had happened last night, but still very mediocre food and not a lot of it. And I just accepted whatever I was given. An “Equatorial Ball” was held tonight and it was quite enjoyable, a lot of very funny costumes.

**23 April:** Yet another sunny day and hot, 30c. After Keep Fit I decided I would try the yoga class, but don’t think I am cut out for sitting still for too long and doing strange movements. After lunch we all watched the Russian crew having their own Crossing the Line ceremony, a rather subdued affair. They are certainly kept quite apart from us and not encouraged to get into a conversation with passengers. They really don’t seem to be very happy, even though they are the lucky ones being able to leave the USSR legitimately, but we think they are very closely supervised in case they get the idea to jump ship and claim asylum at some port.

Saw the movie “Ransom” with Sean Connery after dinner, quite a good movie.

**24 April:** An overcast day but still very humid. Sunbathing and watching a movie, “The Front Page” with Jack Lemon and Walter Mathieu was today’s entertainment. Quite a funny movie. A quiz and a scavenger hunt were tonight’s highlights.

**25 April:** Another glorious sunny day at sea. Keep Fit class, then down to the Thos. Cook office to change some travellers cheques in preparation for our call at Papeete in a few days’ time. Sunbaking on deck, and after lunch went to see “Murder on the Orient Express” with a whole host of famous actors, enjoyable but a bit drawn out. Had a few drinks at the Neptune Bar beside the pool, then watched the passengers compete against the crew in volleyball. They beat the passengers hands-down. Quiz after dinner in the main lounge.

**26 April:** Sunny and clear, 31c. After breakfast I entered the deck quoits competition and won! After lunch another Russian liner hove into view, on her way to England via the Panama. She is the old Cunard liner Carmania, now painted all white and renamed Leonid Sobinov, also chartered by CTC Lines, so no doubt loaded with young Aussies and Kiwis taking up their “rite of passage” working holiday in the UK. She too has the large Hammer & Sickle on a red band to both sides of the funnel.

Both ships stopped about a mile from each other and our ship sent a lifeboat across to them with some of the crew and some boxes. Whilst we sat there just drifting, a whole school of sharks circled our ship, coming up as close as the hull. We remained until 4:30pm when both ships got underway again. Drinks in the Iberia Bar before dinner, and a Pub Night held during the evening.

**27 April:** Still calm seas and hot, 32c. We have a cabin radio which usually just plays piped music, but now we can tune in to Radio Australia. Deck quoits on again today, I lost this time.

The Children's Fancy Dress Party held after lunch, very clever costumes made by the proud mums onboard! They paraded right around the Promenade and open decks. Had a few drinks in the Pirosmeni Bar before dinner, and after that went to see "The Man With the Golden Gun", a James Bond movie.

**28 April:** And again smooth seas and hot. Starting to see a few islands, low and covered with palm trees as we travel the passage leading to Tahiti. Just what you imagine the South Seas to look like. Quiz again in the lounge after dinner (which is certainly not getting any better).

**29 April:** Today Papeete after 10 days at sea from Bilbao. A hot and humid day with some passing tropical downpours. Stood on the forward observation deck at sunrise looking at the spectacular view of tall cumulus clouds reaching up into the sky with the rising sun casting all colours on them, very beautiful and not to be forgotten.

Entered the channel leading into the port at 6:30am, and alongside at 8am. Had to wait back whilst the Russian crew were taken ashore for a tour, attended by some very serious looking men – KGB minders perhaps? Then we were allowed to leave the ship. A group of us walked into town and hired a VW jeep and took off for a drive around the island via the coast. Passed lush thick green vegetation and spectacular steep mountains and valleys on the left, and the blue Pacific Ocean breaking on the reefs to the right. Lovely blue lagoons all along the coast. Heavy sweet scent of the tropical flowers very prominent, a real paradise.

Swam in the soft warm waters of one lagoon, then had lunch at a restaurant over the water and could see colourful tropical fish swimming beneath. Had a wonderful fish meal for lunch. Drove back to Papeete in the afternoon and then took a walk around the rather small rambling township. We departed for our next port, Auckland at 4pm.

Sailed past the very mountainous island of Morea on the way out, the tops of which were shrouded in cloud. Quiz again after dinner and an early night.

**30 April:** A moderate sea today and a strong breeze blowing, but still reached 29c. The ship is pitching quite noticeably into a head sea. Keep Fit at 10am, the deck quoits competition, but didn't win.

This afternoon I was looking at the navigation chart that is posted up on the Promenade Deck for the passengers to view, tracking our course for the voyage, now at this stage as we head toward Auckland and Sydney. I raised my eyebrows when I noticed that the course pencilled in for the leg from Papeete to Auckland bypassed New Zealand altogether and had us calling at tiny uninhabited Auckland Island, well to the south of New Zealand, in fact half way to the Antarctic, then from there a pencil line straight up to Sydney. An officer came up and was looking over my shoulder at the map, and so I just lightly mentioned that where we were heading was up there, the city of Auckland on the North Island. He looked at me rather darkly, and said I was wrong, the chart was right! I was stupid enough (I should have learned by now) to persist and said that was where the NZ bound passengers were expecting to disembark. He told me I didn't know what I was talking about and left. By coincidence, I just happened to pass some time later and there was the same officer putting up an amended chart. I couldn't help myself and jokingly said that I noticed that they had made the change to the city of Auckland. His reply was "no, we have just received a change of orders from Moscow, and now we are changing course for this place". At least I wasn't stupid enough to respond to that ridiculous statement!

Went to a Russian wine-tasting this afternoon, and decided that their wines are of poor quality, a very dry, bitter taste with lots of sediment. South Sea Island Night held on deck tonight.

**01 May:** Scattered cloud, 28c and a moderate sea. Entered the singles deck quoits competition this morning and won! Rest of the morning just sunbathing and a swim.

Another round of deck quoits in the arvo, and won that too! Later went on deck to watch the table tennis competition between the passengers and Russian crew, and after dinner the Passengers Variety show which was very entertaining. Some really great talent onboard.

The meals are getting progressively worse, really poor service and a bad attitude from the staff all round. People are talking in terms of disgusting and repulsive in relation to the non-existent quality of the food, and all seem to be looking forward to leaving the ship as soon as possible.

**02 May:** Starting to cool down a bit as we head south east towards Auckland, 24c today. Seas have dropped quite a bit. After Keep Fit played deck quoits again but lost this time.

Have had to put up with two really out-of-hand kids in the cabin next door since boarding, but today found out that they are running around the ship, each with a case of mumps. Complaints to the crew to have them quarantined until they pass the infectious stage fell on deaf ears.

An exhibition of marine paintings held in the Library this afternoon, and after that we just played scrabble until dinner time. The quality of the food is really getting out of hand now, many complaining but still falling on deaf ears. Crew don't care and don't want to know about it, pathetic really. Old Time Music Hall night in the lounge tonight.

**03 May:** Crossed the International Date Line today, so today lost to us forever!

**04 May:** Overcast with showers and a strong gusty wind and low swell. Since it is rather unpleasant out on deck did some washing and sewing this morning. Had a few words with the very unladylike individual in the next cabin about her kids, still with the mumps, screaming up and down the passageway for most of the morning and making a real racket against the walls.

We were handed our Auckland transit cards today. Quiz in the Iberia Bar before the Farewell Dinner tonight for those disembarking in Auckland. Everyone wondering how on Earth they could have the cheek to serve up a passable 5 course dinner, together with wines and unlimited vodka, when they have been happy to serve up the muck that passes for food for the past 26 days. Some feel insulted, others just grateful for at least one decent meal!

Crew put on a Russian Song and Dance Show tonight, the first time we have actually seen them looking half happy!

**05 May:** Really cooling down now, max of 17c today and strong winds. Played scrabble in the lounge with a couple during the morning because it was too miserable to go out on deck.

At 2:30pm we sighted the Great Barrier Island off Auckland and 2 hours later passed the magnificent volcanic island of Rangitoto. We berthed at 6:30pm with the Galileo berthed on the opposite side of the wharf. Again we had to wait until a group of Russian crew were herded ashore accompanied by the same "minders" then we were permitted to leave the ship. Went up Queen Street with a group from the ship and found a restaurant for dinner, \$2.50 each for a huge steak and chips! We gorged ourselves as it was the first edible food for a long while, and actually couldn't finish it! Had a couple of drinks at a pub and back to the ship, a short walking distance away from the city centre.

**06 May:** Sunny, scattered showers and cool. After breakfast we went ashore, the Oronsay having just taken the berth previously vacated by the Galileo. Walked into the city centre and caught a local bus up to Mt. Eden overlooking the city below. Very scenic.

Back to the centre and window-shopped, the streets and arcades vastly more interesting than when I last called in here on the Canberra a few years ago. Had to buy a suitcase as have run out of room to get everything off the ship when arriving in Sydney. Back onboard at 11:30am, and sailed at 12:30pm.

The coastline heading north is very pretty, rugged green hills and rocky islands offshore. Cabaret Show after dinner.

**07 May:** Overcast, scattered showers and a moderate swell. Collected our Australian Immigration and Customs Declaration cards after breakfast, then a couple of board games before lunch. Watched the movie "The Undeclared" with John Wayne and Rock Hudson in the afternoon, not all that good really. Bought some duty free from the ship's shop. Quiz and Cabaret in the evening.

**08 May:** Scattered cloud and a low swell today. Attended medical inspection this morning and bought some more duty free. Scotch \$1.80 and Bourbon \$2.10 a bottle. Started packing during the day, there seems to be an awful lot!

Found a sheltered part of the deck to sit out on during the afternoon and watched 6 albatross following the ship, gliding up and down, sheering this way and that, and skimming fast over the top of the waves, quite graceful and beautiful to watch actually.

Went back to the cabin after dinner to find water sloshing across the floor; my fault, I left the porthole open before dinner to let some fresh air in and waves had entered the cabin, a bit of a mess to clean up.

A group of us were up at the Iberia Bar at 11:15pm when we noticed that the ship had stopped, so we all trooped out on deck to see what was the matter. In the light of our arc lamps hanging over the side of the ship we could just make out a Russian submarine sitting not far off our starboard side, also stopped, and one of our ship's boats ferrying 4 of the Russian crew across to her, together with some large crates of cargo. We pulled away at midnight and headed off again.

**09 May:** Clear skies and a low swell, 22c. Did the last of the packing and put suitcases outside the cabin door for collection. Word around the ship is that the 4 crew who were sent to the other vessel were two bar staff and two stewardesses that had become a bit too friendly with the passengers and showing too much interest in Australia. We believe that they might have been contemplating defection on arrival in Sydney.

Picked up our Australian Landing Cards, showed our vaccination certificates and sat in the lounge until the Australian coast came over the horizon at 11:30am. Sailed through the Heads at 12:30pm and berthed at 13 Pyrmont at 1:30pm.

We were prevented from leaving the ship until 4pm as one of the three Ship's Drunks had thrown himself off the stern of the vessel (apparently as we turned off Bradley's Head) and officials would not clear the ship as we were one passenger short on the passenger manifest. He had asked the woman, the third drunk in their little coterie, to marry him but she declined as apparently the other drunk had asked first and she had accepted. So, over the side he went and we all had to remain onboard until he was successfully rescued and accounted for! What a relief to be home!

**End of a Remarkable Voyage!**