

Before leaving there was a call on the intercom: "This is the Captain speaking. I do not want to be an alarmist but must remind you that we are still at war. The enemy is desperate and out to do as much harm as possible. He has submarines right on our door step. They have even entered the Mersey and after leaving Liverpool we may be attacked but we have a good escort of two destroyers. My advise is that any ladies who have trousers, sleep in them. Notices have been posted as to where the various groups are to assemble in case of an emergency. Please study these and should there be an alarm please do not panic, just go quietly to your assembly post and await further instructions. Now go to bed and sleep well".

Well, we duly left Liverpool and some time later I was on deck and we saw the destroyers go full steam ahead and presently there were two or three crunches, depth charges. We were advised later that they had spotted and destroyed an enemy sub. For the rest of the night everything was quiet. Later I believe, two ships were sunk quite close to us. Well the Andes was a fast ship and we were soon well on our way to Free Town.

As soon as we were out of the danger Zone I was invited up to the Captains cabin and we had a long chat about shipping as he being a Royal Mail Line skipper and I a Union-Castle senior official we had quite a lot to talk about. After that I visited his cabin on several occasions.

At Free Town all the Naval personnel left the ship to be transported over land by air to North Africa.

The last time I was in Free Town was, as I mentioned earlier, in 1917 on my way to England in the old Gaika to join the Royal Air Force. None of us went ashore excepting those landing here.

Until our arrival at Free Town the Naval ratings had helped with the cleaning of the decks etc. When we left we thought that our natives would carry on but they refused blankly at first, until I threatened to put the two ringleaders ashore into cells. It was just a try on. They received various privileges for work, extra food etc.

After a stay of two days we once more put to sea on the last lap which took eight days to Cape Town, so in actual sailing time it had taken fourteen days to reach our destination. There were no deck chairs but I was very fortunate for, in asking the chap in the shop if there were any deck chairs to be had, he offered me his. This chair was in great demand. There were no benches so one just squatted on the deck.

We were thrilled to be once more in Table Bay looking up at the old mountain and its many crags and wooded slopes and at the foot the City of Cape Town.

Our arrival was of course secret, only a few being advised. The two young Welsh boys, or rather farmers from the Peddie district, of the Kaffrarian Rifles Peddie platoon, and I were met by the two East London Members of Parliament, Andrew Latimer and Miles Warren, who we were very pleased to meet again as they were both friends of mine.

From the ship we were taken to the Castle where we were to be vetted and receive various documents, money and rail warrants etc. Here I met many friends including Esme Castleman who was stationed in the Castle serving with the Radar Section and she phoned through on their private line to Lorna who was a Sergeant in the Radar section in East London. On hearing that I was due in East London in a day or so she applied for and got her discharge fight away.

Two Cape Times Representatives arrived and I had my photograph taken with Miles Warren and Andrew Latimar. It is a very good photo but being dressed in Battle Dress it does not show my ribs, for I now weighed 130 pounds as against my normal pre-war weight of 190 pounds.

The Welsh lads and I were the only ones travelling to East London and we had to take the evening train via the Garden route. Well, we had a good night's rest and arrived in Port Elizabeth early the following morning to be met by a friend of ours Harry Mill to whom Lorna and I had been Bestman and Bridesmaid at their wedding.

Lorna had phoned /